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Standards Based Social Emotional Learning for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Standards Based Social Emotional Learning for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

by

Cortney D. Roberts, M.Ed.

Marissa L. Kase, M.Ed.

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of

Lynn University of Boca Raton

Presented in Partial Fulfillments of the Requirements for the Degree

of

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

Approved by

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Jennie Trocchio, Ph.D.

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Abstract

Standards Based Social Emotional Learning for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

by

Cortney D. Roberts, M.Ed.

Marissa L. Kase, M.Ed.

Dissertation Chair: Jennie Trocchio, Ph.D.

This study investigates how professionals in the field perceive the usefulness of the *Kase-Roberts Curriculum for Social Emotional Learning for Students with Autism*. The study included 176 participants from divisions of the Council for Exceptional Children. Most of the participants had over 10 years of teaching experience (M= 13.42, SD= 1.6) which helped to increase the credibly of overall survey responses. Data was collected through a Likert scale online survey created by SurveyMonkey^{TM} and analysis of survey items were carried out. Results of the survey revealed that a total of 172 (98.29 %) participants are interested in the Kase-Roberts Curriculum and also showed that 7 (4.00%) of participants selected Disagree when asked, "I believe it is part of the teacher's job to teach children how to manage distress and other upsetting feelings", indicating that the majority of educators perceive that it is the teachers responsibility to teach students how to manage distress and other upsetting feelings. The Kase-Roberts curriculum was developed to provide educators with a meaningful resource to address the social emotional needs of students with Autism while also meeting state standards for academic instruction in literacy.

Keywords: Autism, social-emotional learning, curriculum, students, survey

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At the completion of the work I would like to express a heartfelt thanks to my faith in God, for allowing me to have the mental and physical health to see this through. I also would like to thank my mother, Rhonda Strickland (Desi) and my father, Lester Roberts (Barbara) for their overwhelming support and for being my biggest cheerleaders. To my best friend Nakia Walker, I would like to thank you for being an example of how to always strive for excellence. To my siblings, Jasmine Lee and Alexander Miller thanks for having faith in me. To my God-Family (Annette, Sheryl, Armel & R.J.), thanks for always supporting me from my days at FAMU. To my entire family, I thank you for always keeping me encouraged, having my back and keeping me grounded. To my co-workers in Broward County Public Schools, School Climate & Discipline Department, I thank you for your overwhelming support and for keeping me in good spirits through pound-cake and laughter.

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Cortney

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Dedication

I, Cortney D. Roberts sincerely dedicate this work to my grandmothers, the late Minnie Pearl Roberts and Vivian Laverne McDougle along with my entire family, close friends and to all the black and brown children who are doing their very best to be GREAT.

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Dedication

I, Marissa L. Kase dedicate this work to my parents David and Stacy Kase.

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Social and emotional abilities are said to be indicators of how well a person adjusts to his or her environment, adapts to change and, ultimately, how successful she or he will be in life (Brotto, 2018). Addressing social emotional learning is even more critical in the educational programing for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Students with autism typically have difficulties with social skills which may impact how they are able to participate in academic lessons (Brotto, 2018).

Students with autism benefit from explicit instruction in the area of Social Emotional Learning (SEL), strengthening interpersonal and intrapersonal skills that aide in a student's ability to participate in learning and allowing them to be contributors to their academic experience. A barrier that exists in this area includes the limited materials and programs available to teachers in order to include Social Emotional Learning instruction as a part of a general education program. An additional barrier includes the limited supports for teachers in using the few available SEL programs properly (Brotto, 2018).

Background

Teaching and learning in schools are strongly influenced by social, emotional, and academic components (Zins, Weisberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). Students typically do not learn alone but rather in collaboration with their teachers, in the company of their peers, and with the encouragement of their families. Emotions can facilitate or impede children's academic engagement, work ethic, commitment, and ultimate school success. Research shows that relationships and emotional processes affect how and what we learn within the school

environment. Therefore, schools and families must effectively teach emotional identification

and regulation, work ethic, problem solving, perseverance, and relationship building. All these

factors play a role in the educational process and benefit of all students, especially those with

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Frey, Haynes, 1997).

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs have been found to be effective,

demonstrating immediate improvements specifically in the areas of mental health, social skills,

and academic achievement. Moreover, according to a 2017 meta-analysis from the Collaborative

Academic of Social Emotional Learning (CASEL), these improvements continue to benefit

students for months and even years after the program has concluded. This study further revealed

that up to 18 years later, students exposed to SEL in school continue to do better than their peers

on a number of indicators including: positive social behaviors and attitudes, skills such as

empathy and teamwork, and academics. They have also been found to have had fewer conduct

problems, less emotional distress, and lower drug use among many other benefits (CASEL,

2017).

Although typical child development includes a natural acquisition of social skills,

children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) often require additional instruction and assistance

to master these skills (White, 2007). While the cause of ASD is unknown, it is known that the

disability impacts an individual's ability to socially interact, communicate, and behave.

Individuals with autism struggle to understand certain social aspects such as nonverbal behavior

both of themselves and others. These individuals also tend to lack interest in or avoid social

interactions and therefore struggle to develop appropriate peer relationships (White, 2007).

Difficulty engaging in social interactions and developing relationships also stems from

individuals with ASD lacking social or emotional reciprocity which involves the back-and-forth

flow of social interactions. These areas of concern generally create social anxiety, avoidance of social situations, overstimulation in social settings, and even social rejection (Cotugno, 2009). It is critical that additional time is taken to counteract these areas of deficit to increase the individual's ability to socially interact and lower the degree of social anxiety and/or rejection.

Statement of Problem

As a result of evolving legislation and educational initiatives focused on the importance of inclusive practices, today more than 95 percent of students with physical, emotional, learning, cognitive, visual, and hearing disabilities receive some or all of their education in regular classrooms (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). In 2000, the most recent year for which data are available, 47 percent of students with disabilities spent at least 80 percent of their school day in the general-education classroom, up from 31 percent in 1988-89. These numbers have even greater significance for students with autism because general education classes frequently lack the structured social-emotional learning instruction that these children need (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

Autism is the fastest-growing disability in the country (Dybvik, 2004). The U.S. Department of Education statistics show the number of children diagnosed with autism being served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act has grown more than fivefold during the 1990s (Dybvik, 2004). As more students with autism are being diagnosed with ASD, there is also an increase in services being received in general education classrooms. This leads to additional teachers responsible for educating students with autism, but not being properly trained or equipped with appropriate materials and curriculum to address the areas necessary to meet the needs of students with autism (Dybvik, 2004).

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According to the Florida Department of Education, students with disabilities placed in inclusive classrooms are more likely to participate in state standardized assessments. This can pose a challenge to both teachers and students since characteristics of students with autism suggest that explicit instruction in social emotional skills is essential to their overall academic success (Bauminger, 2002). Therefore, many teachers have the task of finding ways to teach social emotional skills to students with autism as well as prepare them for state standards assessments.

Insufficient availability of research based, and high-quality materials have been found to impede the teacher's ability to adequately instruct students with autism, which may then impact the academic performance of those students with autism (Bauminger, 2002). Typically, the materials that teachers use to teach SEL are produced in a workbook format, requiring teachers to reprint worksheets for implementation, and review directions for use without access to other supports and guidance for implementation (Bauminger, 2002). Additionally, most general education classrooms do not have a designated time for SEL instruction within their daily schedule. This is inadequate because teachers already spend large amounts of time to prepare and independently learn how to appropriately use materials. The time it would take for general education teachers to modify curriculum materials to meet the unique SEL needs of their students with autism is immense. In addition to the time needed to adapt the materials, they would also need to find the time within their already tight schedule to implement a program with fidelity to truly meet the needs of the students.

Having a curriculum as well as resources designed specifically to meet the needs of students with autism within the general curriculum would be beneficial for teachers because it would provide them with the opportunity to integrate critical social and emotional skills into

daily standards-based instruction as opposed to having to try to carve out time for this essential instruction. Also, embedding an outline of resources to support teachers in using the material would be an additional essential asset to include so that teachers are able to deliver SEL instruction with confidence and fidelity, leading to instruction that is more beneficial to the students. Additionally, these supports would allow teachers to easily identify modes of support without interfering with time needed for lesson planning and instruction. Data supports that students that receive instruction in social emotional learning show an eleven percent increase in scores on standardized achievement assessments (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg 2004).

This particular curriculum design is especially important for 3rd grade students and teachers because of the student's participation in statewide assessments. In Florida, 3rd grade is a mandatory retention state which means that formal assessments are used to measure student learning to such a degree that if a minimum is not met, they must repeat third grade. These assessments are also used as a measure of teacher effectiveness. Therefore, there is additional pressure for teachers and students in the 3rd grade to meet state standards and a heavy focus in academic areas, leading to limited available time to target important SEL needs of the students. Infusing SEL skill instruction into standards-based lessons allows the opportunity for teachers to explicitly teach SEL skills in addition to practicing state standards on which the students will be assessed. Therefore, having a curriculum designed to address the SEL skills and teach standards simultaneously will remedy the issue of lack of resources and time available to teach students with autism SEL and academic standards concurrently.

Purpose of Study

The primary purpose of this study is to demonstrate the need for a Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum that is embedded with 3rd grade Florida Academic Standards and Access

Point literacy standards and geared toward students with ASD. This is important because

teachers of students with autism would benefit from instructional materials that address

academics as well as social emotional skills (Cotugno, A., 2009).

The secondary purpose of this study is to inform the need for a professional development

guide that will aide teachers in the use of a SEL Curriculum that is embedded with 3rd grade

literacy standards and geared toward students with ASD. This is important because it will

increase the usability of instructional materials that address academics and social emotional skills

for students with autism (Hagelskamp, C., Brackett, M., Rivers, S., & Salovey, P, 2013).

Significance of the Study

Social Emotional Learning is essential to the academic and social development of

children with Autism (Pratt and Bellini, 2012). It is equally important that teachers have

appropriate resources and professional development in order to provide highly quality instruction

in the area of social emotional skills (Pratt and Bellini, 2012). If social emotional learning

instruction is not delivered with fidelity and confidence, then the instruction loses its

effectiveness. If teachers are provided with training in the curriculum or materials used to

deliver this instruction, they will be more likely to understand the importance of effective

delivery of instruction and will be more confident in providing students with the instruction they

need (The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorder, 2018).

Although students with autism benefit from SEL instruction, it is rarely used consistently

in the general education classroom. Teachers commonly have very tight schedules and pressures

to drill tested subject areas leaving little, if any, time available in the daily schedule for SEL

instruction (Vernaza, 2012). If a curriculum existed that tied SEL instruction in with literacy

standards and instruction, then teachers would have a greater opportunity to present SEL content

to their students daily. This would lead to an increase in exposure to crucial SEL concepts for all

students, especially those with autism.

The significance of this study is to inform the need of Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

curriculums with embedded literacy standards that are intended for use for students with ASD.

This study is essential in providing a resource to address the instruction for students with ASD as

well as provide a framework and guide for a professional development that can support the

implementation of SEL curriculums that embed literacy standards. This will improve teacher

practices and impact student academic achievement of students with autism.

Research Question

1. How useful do experts in the field perceive the "Kase Roberts Curriculum for Social-
    Emotional Learning for Students with Autism" for providing social-emotional learning
    instruction?

Limitations of Dissertations in Practice Study

The study is limited in the following conditions:

The participants of the survey may consist of current or retired educators across the

United States that have varied years of teaching experience in exceptional student education.

This may impact their responses due to developed bias over a period within the education

profession.

This study is based on informing the need of a standards based social emotional learning

program for students with autism. Survey participants may not accurately respond to questions

depending on their experiences with teaching Social Emotional Learning or teaching students

with ASD because of varying levels of experience and comfort with the presented content. The

goal of the study is to determine if such a program and curriculum would be welcomed and

appreciated.

Definitions of Terms

- **Autism Spectrum Disorder-** refers to "a developmental disability significantly

  affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident

  before age three, that adversely affects a child's educational performance." (United

  States Department of Education, 2002).

- **Curriculum**- the main plan that influences the change in the way which individuals

  learn and is the basis from which content is selected and organized (Armstrong, D.

  1989).

- **Professional Development-**The term 'professional development' means activities

  that"(A) are an integral part of school and local educational agency strategies for

  providing educators (including teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized

  instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, and, as applicable, early childhood

  educators) with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to succeed in a

  well-rounded education and to meet the challenging State academic standards; and"(B)

  are sustained (not stand-alone, 1-day, or short term workshops), intensive, collaborative,

  job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused…(Act, E.S.S., 2015).

- **Professional Learning Community-**a professional learning community (PLC) as "a

  group of people working interdependently toward the same goal by using preselected

material and various platforms to collaborate, share, and strengthen knowledge on an instructional practice and or academic topic (Rick DuFour, 2004).

- **Social Emotional Learning-**Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. (Zins, J. E. (Ed.), 2004).

- **Standards-based-** Refers to systems of instruction, assessment, grading, and academic reporting that are based on students demonstrating understanding or mastery of the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn as they progress through their education (Lawrence-Brown, D., 2004).

- **Access Points-** Defined by the Florida Department of Education, Access points are the revision to the Florida Standards; access points for students with significant cognitive disabilities have been developed. These access points are expectations written for students with significant cognitive disabilities to access the general education curriculum. Embedded in the Florida Standards, access points reflect the core intent of the Standards with reduced levels of complexity (Florida Department of Education, 2018)

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is steadily a growing topic in education. Literature reveals the many positive impacts that social skills have on education outcomes as well as the social, personal, and life skills that are used in many facets of life including relationship building and employment. Social Emotional Learning is also directly linked to the educational experiences of students with autism and is identified in the research to benefit not only academics but overall social and life skills. However, a barrier that is encountered by teachers is the lack of resources available to include social emotional skills instruction into the general education curriculum, in which students with autism are participating. In addition, teachers lack the professional development supports to ensure the proper use of materials to teach students with autism. Continued review of literature will highlight essential information on students with autism, social emotional learning, and professional development in order to provide a critical overview of content in these areas (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012).

According to the National Academy of Science, "Sixty percent of children enter school with the cognitive skills need to be successful, but only 40% have the social-emotional skills needed to succeed in kindergarten" (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). Social-emotional learning (SEL) is comprised of a variety of skills that are essential for both children and adults to develop. Although this is an essential skill for academics, it is rarely taught explicitly in the school environment (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). This is because so much time is spent focusing on tested standards and content that little to no time remains for non-tested, yet critical content such as SEL. This is especially important for children with ASD because they typically lack the necessary understanding of social rules, social norms, emotional identification, and emotional

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regulation needed to succeed not only in school, but in other facets of life (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012).

Social Emotional Learning

Some of the skills essential for the development of children and adults include the ability to apply preconceived knowledge and skills, to understand and regulate emotions, positive goal setting, empathy, responsible decision-making skills, as well as developing positive personal and professional relationships (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). When an individual possesses the skills to accurately express and regulate their emotions, they are more likely to exhibit positive, goal-oriented behavior. Emotional regulation is a foundational skill for students that can be directly connected to other developmental tasks. Emotional regulation also provides children with the ability to think about how they are going to react to their emotions as opposed to just acting based on their feelings (Curby, Brown, Bassett, & Denham, 2015). The ability to self-regulate is what makes the difference between the child that gets angry and throws a chair in the classroom and the child that gets angry and takes deep breaths while counting to ten.

Most of the facets of SEL can be broken into two categories: emotional knowledge and solving social problems. The combination of these skills is referred to as Social-Emotional Competence. Competent behavior is a combination of social-emotional competence as well as other emotional skills. All the above-mentioned emotional concepts along with relational and prosocial skills are woven together to create the framework for this concept of social-emotional competence (Curby, Brown, et al., 2015).

Emotional knowledge is the ability for a student to recognize emotional indicators and develop both academic and social behaviors (Curby, Brown, et al., 2015). Previous literature

divides emotional knowledge into two separate categories: emotional expression and situational emotions. Understanding situational emotions is a complex concept because it involves the student being able to perceive and interpret emotions that are not as obvious. The purpose of both forms of knowledge is to allow students to accomplish age-appropriate goals such as being able to read a social situation and respond appropriately (Curby, Brown, et al., 2015). It has been shown that when emotional information is delivered congruently from multiple sources, the emotion is better conveyed. For example, if someone cries while they are talking about the death of a loved one, it is easier perceived that they are sad.

Children with autism may also have difficulty identifying a person's emotion based on their facial expression. While they are generally able to identify someone as happy based on their facial expression, they have been found to struggle with more negative emotions especially fear. A study was conducted in 2015 by Denise Davidson and Dina Tell that involved both children with autism and typically developing children looking at three different types of photos: congruent photos where the facial expression matched the situation, incongruent photos where the facial expression did not match the situation, and situational only cues were the individual in the photo's face was blurred out.

The study concluded that children with autism scored comparatively to their typically developing peers in congruent conditions and relied heavily on facial expressions during incongruent conditions despite previous research (Davidson & Tell, 2015). This study puts into perspective both emotional expression and situational emotion which make up emotional knowledge. The findings of this study show a need for students with autism to be able to accurately identify the facial expressions of others and the corresponding emotions that go with them since they rely so heavily on this skill.

It is important to understand the skills and competencies that SEL consists of, but it is equally as important to understand the purpose behind programs geared toward teaching SEL (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). Social-Emotional Learning programs aim to teach students to identify and understand emotions that impact behavior, appreciate the interests and needs of others, find positive solutions to solve conflicts with peers by instilling problem-solving skills, and to use social, emotional, and cognitive skills in order to establish positive relationships (Schonfeld, Adams, et al., 2015). These are critical skills because they are required in order for students for form positive relationship with both peers and adults. Teaching these skills is especially critical for children with autism because they tend to have deficits in these areas which lead to an inability to form relationships (Schonfeld, Adams, et al., 2015). Teaching students with autism these skills will allow them the opportunity to strengthen these deficits and form relationships that will help them grow and flourish. SEL programs are based on the research, illustrating that children learn better when they are surrounded by people, they have formed meaningful relationships with that encourage them to challenge themselves and remain engaged (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). This is especially difficult for individuals with autism because they have been found to struggle with social engagement, over arousal in social situations, social rejection, and social avoidance (Cotugno, 2009).

Five of the most frequently mentioned goals in literature for students who partake in SEL programs include developing the student's self-awareness, self-management, ability to build positive relationships, responsible decision making, and social awareness (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). Effective SEL programs also have goals for entire schools as opposed to just for individuals. One of the goals for schools when implementing SEL programs on campus is to use the five individual goals to create a safer environment where less risky behavior occurs. The

literature shows that when high-quality SEL programs are implemented in schools with fidelity, they create a positive school culture that fosters academic, social, and emotional achievements (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). The programs that are implemented on a wide-scale platform have been found to have both direct and indirect influence of the development of students. McCormick, Cappella, O'Connor, and McClowry (2015) found that the "School climate reflects the norms, goals, values, and interpersonal relationships, teaching practices, and organizational structures of the school" (p. 103). The skills school-wide programs focus on include forming positive relationships, using critical thinking skills to handle real-life situations, managing emotions, and appreciating the perspective of others. The relationships targeted in SEL programs include student-teacher relationships as well as peer-relationships centered on respect and emotional support. A limitation of these school-wide SEL programs is that they often do not provide a way for administration to be directly involved in the implementation of the program which means the school-wide program is not being delivered from the top down.

A group of lawmakers have been in front of the 113th Congress introducing the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act which aims to increase the availability of these evidence-based programs (McCormick, Cappella, et al., 2015). The increase of evidence-based programs would also lead to an increase in students' ability to accurately and proficiently demonstrate situationally appropriate social skills which would lead to an increase in positive relationships as well as an increase in academic success.

Autism

Between the years of 2000 and 2014 the number of children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder has nearly tripled. In 2000 The Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that 1 in 150 eight-year-old children in the United States were diagnosed with

Autism Spectrum Disorder, compared to 2014 where it was reported that 1 in 59 eight-year-old children in the United Sates were diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). Autism Spectrum Disorder, hence forth referred to as ASD, is defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) as, "a neurodevelopmental disorder marked by deficits in two core areas: social communication and repetitive and restricted interests" (Sani Bozkurt & Vuran, 2014). Individuals with ASD also have limitations in the area of non-verbal behaviors a skill commonly used during social interactions (eye contact, voice tone, gestures, etc.), engaging in play with peers, and initiating play with peers (Akmanoglu, Yanardog, & Batu, 2014). Difficulty with social interactions is one of the most prominent reasons individuals with autism can benefit from consistent and research-based SEL instruction. Since the individuals with ASD naturally lack skills needed to have positive social interactions and build and maintain positive relationships, it is important that they are provided with instruction that will allow them to develop these skills so they may also benefit from the academic gains attached to these skills as will be later discussed.

Along with the social impacts of ASD there may be cognitive impairments which include deficits in performance planning, issues with flexibility of plans, and difficulty with performance monitoring. These three skills together are known as cognitive control which refers to the brains ability to match information present and decision-making skills with goals. Despite these cognitive impairments, individuals with ASD have shown comparable performance with their neurotypical peers regarding tasks involving attention, working memory, and inhibition. Previous studies have shown that individuals with ASD also struggle with conflict adaptation as well as have poor facial perception which impacts their ability to recognize affect (Worsham, Gray, et al., 2014).

One current SEL curriculum available to help teach social skills to children with special needs is "Promoting Social Success" (Siperstein, G. N., & Rickards, E. P., 2004). This curriculum was developed in 2004 with the aim of teaching special needs children social skills in order to help provide the skills needed to build positive peer relationships with their typically developing peers in general education. The curriculum was developed under the philosophy that social skills are the building blocks to a child's academic success and overall wellbeing. This philosophy is the reason it is so important to provide students with special needs the skills, to bridge the gap. This curriculum was field tested in over 400 elementary schools and focused on the cognitive skills behind social-emotional skills (Siperstein, & Rickards, 2004).

A common attribute of ASD is an impairment of social skills which include skills like initiation conversation, empathy, and reciprocal conversation, changes in routine, and appropriate responses to social situations. These areas greatly impact an individual's ability to interact with peers and others in their environment. Since these hindrances may impact daily life activities, it is important to teach social functionality (Bozkurt & Vuran, 2014). These impairments also may lead to failures in all aspects of relationship buildings, difficulty with sharing, having friends, and pretend play which play a large part in diagnosing ASD. Since students with ASD struggle with these play skills, when they do exhibit pretend play it tends to manifest as self-stimulatory behavior. When it is difficult for children to play, it is difficult for their peers to accept them. For this reason, teaching students with ASD about pretend play can help make sense of real-life situations, develop creative thinking, learn problem solving skills, build reason and logic, as well as improve language and communication (Ulke-Kurkcuoglu, 2015).

Social-Emotional Learning and Academic

When a student struggles with social skills or social interactions they are faced with a barrier that prevents them for fully absorbing academic skills and activities that are presented during classroom instruction. However, research has found that when a student is provided with a solid social- emotional foundation their minds are able to focus more on other cognitive resources which allow them to better attend and engage to classroom instruction (Curby, Brown, et al., 2015). Skills obtained from social-emotional learning prepare students to face real-life obstacles throughout their lives (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). One of the skills that is taught through social-emotional learning is prosocial behavior which can be directly linked to academic achievement from early childhood programs up through post-graduate programs (Curby, Brown, et al., 2015).   Another skill taught through these programs is problem-solving and even though it is taught in the context of solving personal or social problems, the same skills can be applied to solve academic problems (Schonfeld, Fredstrom, et al., 2015). Finally, the development of social competencies through SEL provides students with the skills to navigate elementary school as well as to engage in instructional activities which create a classroom environment cohesive to academic success (McCormick, Cappella, et al., 2015).

Social-Emotional Learning is connected to school success in the sense that it helps create a more engaging environment and an environment that is conducive to solving social problems. This environment ranges from the teachers, to the classroom, all the way through to the entire school campus (Schonfeld, Fredstrom, et al., 2015). If a teacher can teach students social skills as well as emotional regulation skills, they are also more likely to have positive classroom management techniques. Also, because of the students' ability to self-regulate there are likely to be less disruptive behaviors present in the classroom. When a teacher spends less time having to

directly manage behaviors, they can spend more time providing academic instruction (Schonfeld, Fredstrom, et al., 2015). On top of the classroom management benefits to teachers working with students with ASD, it has been found that when teachers foster positive relationships between themselves and students as well as between peers, students are more likely to explore the classroom and engage in learning activities (Schonfeld, Fredstrom, et al., 2015).

Social-Emotional Learning skills also allow students to function within the social environment of their classroom (Curby, Brown, et al., 2015). The culture of the classroom can also impact students' readiness to learn which impacts their overall academic performance (Schonfeld, Fredstrom, et al., 2015). When schools promote social-emotional learning they foster positive work habits, which leads to increased success in postsecondary education, attaining more meaningful careers, and producing well-rounded citizens (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). Creating a positive school climate has also been shown to increase grade point averages, reading levels, high-stakes testing scores, and school adjustment levels amongst students (McCormick, Cappella, et al., 2015). In sum, students who have a higher level of emotional competence tend to have a more positive attitude in regards to their school environment and experience compared to those students who enter school with a social-emotional disadvantage who tend to not enjoy school and because of this learn less (Curby, Brown, et al., 2015).

Research has shown that there are direct links between certain social aspects and specific academic skills. When it comes to pre-literacy skills, students who are more in tune with their emotions and the emotions of others and more cooperative do better with skills related to alphabet, print, and phonological knowledge. Students who are anxious or withdrawn struggle with skills related to print and phonological awareness and are more likely to struggle with social

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competency (Curby, Brown, et al., 2015). One study specifically found that social-emotional

competence is a major predictor of reading achievement (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). Another

study showed that students who received SEL scored roughly 11 points higher on high-stakes

testing (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). There is also a link between SEL and student success

with Common Core State Standards in the sense that the academic activities that Common Core

requires are centered on communication, collaboration, empathy, and behavior management in

order to successfully master goals set by both the curriculum and the student (Weissberg &

Cascarino, 2013).

Teaching Methods for Social-Emotional Learning

A variety of studies have been previously conducted in order to determine which

evidence-based practices can be most successfully used when teaching students with autism

pretend play and other social skills (Akmanoglu, Yanardog, & Batu, 2014). Some of the

strategies that have been found to be effective include: story-based intervention packages,

errorless teaching methods, video modeling, using peer tutors, as well as pivotal response

training (Akmanoglu, Yanardog, & Batu, 2014). These studies also found that when SEL

curriculums are delivered daily, delivered with a systematic approach, and teach the skills in the

accurate context, they are more successful (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). Research-based

methods are essential to appropriately teaching social-emotional learning because it increases the

chance for students to learn the targeted skills because the methods have been proven to be

successful. Some of the methods used for teaching social-emotional learning that have the most

research supporting them include social stories, video modeling, and errorless teaching.

Social Stories

Social stories are short stories that explain appropriate responses to different social situations using a combination of words and pictures that were created with the goal of teaching children with ASD what to expect in a variety of social circumstances as well as ways to appropriately respond to a given social situation (Gray & Garand 1993). These stories are created using a standardized ratio that requires for every directive sentence used within the story, the author must use of two to five perspective, descriptive, or affirmative sentences while maintaining the first-person student perspective view of the story. The reason these stories are written in first person is to provide an accurate description of the event occurring, demonstrate the correct response to the given situation, and provide insight into how the other person involved in the situation might feel.

Instruction related to social stories can be delivered by having the student read the story or an adult reading it too them and then answering a comprehension question about the target behavior. In addition to being found to be effective for many students, social stories have also been found to be a cost-effective resource. Social Stories meet the criteria of being cost effective because one story can be used to teach the same skill or target behavior for multiple students without needing to be reproduced, they are quick and easy to write and create, and it is a teacher friendly intervention to administer (Bozkurt & Vuran, 2014).

Though previous literature has proven that social stories play a huge role in teaching appropriate social skills to children with ASD, it is unclear as to what specific aspects of the intervention are functional in changing behavior. Some literature has found that social stories are more effective in reducing a target behavior as opposed to completely changing a behavior or

acquiring a new skill (Malmberg, Charlop, & Gershfeld, 2015). Social stories are frequently used alongside other teaching methods because there is a lack of evidence within the literature to support social stories as effective when used independently (Malmberg, Charlop, & Gershfeld, 2015). A 2014 study found that social stories were proven to be effective in teaching social skills to children with Autism, however they found that more research needs to continue to be collected for this method to be considered fully research based (Malmberg, Charlop, & Gershfeld, 2015).

Video Modeling

Another evidence-based practice that is frequently used when teaching social skills, play, self-care, communication, and academics to students with autism is video modeling (Ulke-Kurkcuoglu, 2015). Video modeling is a visual-based learning tool that works well with students with autism because these students frequently imitate videos or other forms of media (Malmberg, Charlop, & Gershfeld, 2015). Video modeling extends back to the Social Learning Theory developed by Bandura which suggests that humans learn by observing and copying others. In this study, Bandura defines modeling as, "A process by which a model demonstrates behavior that can be imitated by a learner" (Acar, Tekin-Iftar, & Yikmis, 2016). When video images are being composed to use for a video modeling intervention, behaviors can be modeled by an adult, a peer, or the students who needs to learn the behavior (Acar, Tekin-Iftar, & Yikmis, 2016).

Video modeling works by having the student watch a video that is usually less than two minutes and frequently watched twice, and then having the student perform the skill demonstrated in the video (Ulke-Kurkcuoglu, 2015). This is a preferred intervention for students with ASD because it requires minimal attention and language skills in order to be successfully implemented and mastered. Video modeling is considered economical because creating the

footage for the intervention is quick and simple to do and the same footage can be used with multiple students to teach the same target behavior (Malmberg, Charlop, & Gershfeld, 2015).

Research has shown that video modeling either used alone or in conjunction with another intervention, is an effective intervention (Jones, Lerman, & Lechago, 2014). One specific intervention that has been shown to be effective at teaching a variety of different skills to students with ASD when used in conjunction with video model is graduated guidance (Akmanoglu, Yanardog, & Batu, 2014). The graduated guidance procedure is used only with chained skills (skills comprised of several behaviors sequenced together to form a more complex skill), and it almost always involves using physical prompts. The concept of graduated guidance will be further explained below.

Errorless Teaching

The errorless teaching model is composed of a variety of different methods that have been shown through research to be effective at teaching students with ASD social skills and is based on the theory that when students feel like they are making positive progress, they will continue to be motivated to learn (Ulke- Kurkcuoglu, 2015). One type of Errorless Teaching Method was mentioned above, graduated guidance. Graduated guidance involves the teacher providing varying levels of prompting based on the students need at the time of the intervention, in order to successfully perform a target behavior (Akmanoglu, Yanardog, & Batu, 2014).

Another form of errorless teaching is least-to-most prompting. Least-to-most prompting involves providing a student with the least restrictive prompt in order to accomplish a target behavior and increasing the intensity of the prompt based on the need of the student. When using least-to-most prompting, the adult first gives the child a direction with no prompting of any

sort and waits for a response. If the child does not respond or does not respond correctly, then the adult will give a verbal or gestural prompt and once again wait for the child to respond. If the child still does not respond of responds incorrectly, then the adult moves to the next level of prompting and gives them a physical prompt (Ulke-Kurkcuoglu, 2015). This intervention has been proven to be extremely effective when teaching pretend play skills to students with ASD because it allows the student independence, but it also can be infused into interactions with the teacher (Ulke-Kurkcuoglu, 2015).

Social Emotional Learning and Students with Disabilities

Social-emotional learning programs improve the grades and behavior of all learners—but students with Special Needs, including those diagnosed with ASD, may benefit even more from lessons on mindfulness, self-regulation and cooperation, experts say (DeNisco, 2016). A common thread among students with disabilities and their academic environment is that at each level from elementary to secondary the students have documented goals. These goals are developed by a team of school-based professionals to address various areas of student needs, ranging from academics to socio-emotional growth and behavior. In accordance to the law, all special education students are provided with an Individual Education Plan (IEP), created to establish a plan of action, to monitor progress, and to develop goals that not only allow for the student to participate in the academic programs but also to develop social-emotional skills such as relationship building and self-awareness. These goals help to provide teachers with a guideline related to skills that must be targeted, considering all of a child's needs, including their social-emotional needs (DeNisco, 2016).

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Self-Determination

Self-determination is important for all people, including students with disabilities. The skills leading to enhanced self-determination, like goal setting, problem solving, and decision making, enable students to assume greater responsibility and control. Moreover, when students with disabilities show they can make things happen and take responsibility for planning and decision-making, others change how they view them and what they expect from them. People with disabilities have emphasized that having control over their lives, instead of having someone else make decisions for and about them, is important to their self-esteem and self-worth (Ward, 1996). Exceptional Student Education research has shown that students with disabilities who left school more self-determined were more than two times as likely as their peers who were not as self-determined to become employed one year after graduating from high school, and they earned considerably more in annual income. Three years after graduation, reports show that they also were more likely to have obtained employment that provided benefits like health coverage and vacation and were more likely to be living somewhere other than the family home (Wehmeyer & Palmer, in press; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997).

Current Trends in SEL

Despite trends in the development and implementation of SEL programs and curriculum materials into the instructional planning, there has been little focus on SEL skill development for students with identified developmental disabilities such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Very few of the evidence-based programs have been specifically researched with students with autism in mind, let alone as the primary target. It is not uncommon for SEL programs to require extensive writing assignments or long classroom discussions, tasks that may be impractical for students who have trouble writing or sitting still. Characteristics of learners with disabilities

specifically those diagnosed with ASD should be taken into consideration when developing

programs and materials that are used to explicitly provide instruction in SEL (Pratt &

Bellini,2012).

Effective Professional Development for Teachers

In the context of this study addressing the need professional development is essential to

the fidelity of implementation of a curriculum. Providing coaching and ongoing supports for the

use of instructional materials and practices has been shown to increase proper implementation

and was found to have an impact on overall teacher performance which supports academic

growth for students (Glattenhorn, 1987).

The high expectation of student performance leads curriculum makers to develop and

update materials that target enhancing academic and social-emotional skills of students. Along

with the development of curriculum materials, comes the task of providing training and

professional development to teachers to ensure that the implementation of developed programs

and curriculums are being done correctly and with fidelity. Professional development refers to

the development of a person in his or her professional role. According to Glattenhorn (1987), by

gaining increased experience in one's teaching role they systematically gain increased

experience in their professional growth through examination of their teaching ability. Having an

effective professional development model is essential for teachers to effectively implement new

programs and materials. A well-planned Professional development model is even more critical

when addressing the learning experiences of students with autism in the area of SEL because it is

so crucial that this instruction is implemented with fidelity (Glattenhorn, 1987).

Professional development looks different depending on the need and the setting of a

learning institution. Much broader in scope than career development, professional development

is defined as a growth that occurs through the professional cycle of a teacher (Glattenhorn,

1987). Professional development and other organized in-service programs are designed to foster

the growth of teachers that can be used for their further development (Crowther et al, 2000).

Based upon a review of several studies, Marzano (2003) concluded that the professional

development activities experienced by teachers have a positive impact on student achievement.

This helps school leaders to decide on the best models to adopt that will assist in carrying out the

plan for professional development. Research conducted by Joyce and Showers (1988) found that

teacher learning, and effective use of strategies are greatly increased when coaching, study

teams, and peer support are provided. The evidence linking good professional development and

increased student achievement is growing (Sparks & Hirsh, 2000).

Defining effective professional development can be a challenging task. Darling-

Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017), conducted a study that found that effective professional

development (PD) incorporates most, if not all, of the following elements:

- Content focused: PD that focuses on teaching strategies associated with specific

  curriculum content supports teacher learning within teachers' classroom contexts. This

  element includes an intentional focus on discipline-specific curriculum development

  and pedagogies in areas such as mathematics, science, or literacy.

- Incorporates active learning: Active learning engages teachers directly in designing and

  trying out teaching strategies, providing them an opportunity to engage in the same style

  of learning they are designing for their students. Such PD uses authentic artifacts,

  interactive activities, and other strategies to provide deeply embedded, highly

contextualized professional learning. This approach moves away from traditional

learning models and environments that are lecture based and have no direct connection

to teachers' classrooms and students.

- Supports collaboration: High-quality PD creates space for teachers to share ideas and

  collaborate in their learning, often in job-embedded contexts. By working

  collaboratively, teachers can create communities that positively change the culture and

  instruction of their entire grade level, department, school and/or district.

- Uses models of effective practice: Curricular models and modeling of instruction

  provide teachers with a clear vision of what best practices look like. Teachers may

  view models that include lesson plans, unit plans, sample student work, observations of

  peer teachers, and video or written cases of teaching.

- Provides coaching and expert support: Coaching and expert support involve the sharing

  of expertise about content and evidence-based practices, focused directly on teachers'

  individual needs.

- Offers feedback and reflection: High-quality professional learning frequently provides

  built-in time for teachers to think about, receive input on, and make changes to their

  practice by facilitating reflection and soliciting feedback. Feedback and reflection both

  help teachers to thoughtfully move toward the expert visions of practice.

- Sustained duration: Effective PD provides teachers with adequate time to learn,

  practice, implement, and reflect upon new strategies that facilitate changes in their

  practice.

Findings of this study also examined professional learning communities (PLCs) as an example of a PD model that incorporates several of these effective elements while also supporting student learning gains. This model for collaborative and job-embedded PD can be a source of efficacy and confidence for teachers and can result in widespread improvement within and beyond the school level. The use of the identified effective practices in professional development designs targeting academic supports for teachers in special education would likely have a similar result in regard to positives impact supporting social-emotional skill development (Darling- Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner, 2017).

Supporting Instructional Practices for Students with Disabilities

A study from the U.S. Department of Education revealed that between 1989 and 2013, the percentage of students with disabilities who were in a general education class for 80 percent or more of the school day increased from about 32 percent to nearly 62 percent. Research suggests as many as 85 percent of students with disabilities can master general-education content if they receive educational supports. Supports can include but are not limited to access to a special-education teacher, having test questions read aloud, or being allowed to sit in a certain part of the classroom. These are just a few of the instructional practices that can support students with disabilities.

Another practice is the use of academic support classes. These classes offer individualized and small group instruction to supplement instruction or reinforce a concept or skill. A student's IEP must identify the number of periods to be spent in the academic support class and the academic areas in which the student needs support. The academic support class may include both students with disabilities and students without disabilities.

The Center on Instruction (2007), states that best practice to support students with disabilities involves using high-quality, research based instructional strategies designed to enable progress in the general curriculum and preparation for adult life (IDEA, 2004). Supporting students with disabilities can include collaboration between general and special education teachers (Hollingsworth, 2001; Sindelar, Shearer, Yendol-Hoppey, & Liebert, 2006), application of universal design for learning principles and practices (Hitchcock, Meyer, Rose, & Jackson, 2002), and the creation of a climate of inclusion and multicultural responsiveness (Montgomery, 2001; Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, & Smith, 2004).

To assist in the implementation of high-quality, research-based instruction in academic and functional skills areas, teachers may require professional development and training in skills areas to include: (a) reading (Rivera, Moughamian, Lesaux, & Francis, 2008; Scammacca, Vaughn, Roberts, Wanzek, & Torgersen, 2007); (b) writing (Center on Instruction, 2007); (c) mathematics (Gersten, Chard, Jayanthi, Baker, Morphy, & Flojo, 2008; Jayanthi, Gersten, & Baker, 2008); (d) social/emotional skills (Denning, 2007; Maag, 2006); (e) vocational skills (Chadsey, 2007); and (f) functional life skills (Davis & Rehfeldt 2007) as supported by the Center on Instruction (2007).

Conclusion

According to the literature review, social-emotional learning is an essential component to the curriculum of students with autism. Additionally, adequate academic instruction is crucial for students with autism in order to prepare them to participate in state standardized assessments. The conclusion of our literature review as presented here demonstrates that SEL instruction has had appositive impact on academic achievement while also increasing prosocial skills and self-determination.

        The findings in literature sturdily infer that the development of a standards based social emotional curriculum along a professional development guide, is likely to have positive impacts on the academic outcomes and social behaviors of all students to include those with disabilities and most importantly those with ASD.

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CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter three details the research methodology that will be implemented in this study whose purpose is to identify how experts in the field perceive the usefulness of the Kase-Roberts curriculum of Social Emotional Learning for Students with Autism, for providing social-emotional learning instruction. Data will be collected through electronic surveys by members of the Council of Exceptional Children's various divisions. Thus, the research method is quantitative.

To address the research question of How useful, do experts in the field perceive the "Kase Roberts Curriculum for Social-Emotional Learning for Students with Autism" for providing social-emotional learning instruction?", the researchers will use a qualitative survey method. Implementation of a survey method means that the participants will answer questions administered through questionnaires. After participants answer the questions, researchers will analyze responses given. For the survey to be both reliable and valid it is important that the questions are constructed properly. The researchers will conduct a Cronbach's Alpha to measure the survey's internal reliability before administering. Response options will be designed using a Likert scale. These closed-ended questions are easy to analyze statistically but may limit the responses that participants can give (Jackson, 2009, p. 89).

The researchers will administer the survey to various divisions of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) via an online CEC community platform. CEC is a professional organization dedicated to improving the educational success of individuals with disabilities or gifts. CEC advocates for appropriate government policies, sets professional standards, provides

professional development, advocates for underserved individuals with exceptionalities, and helps

professionals obtain conditions and resources for effective professional practice. The CEC has

divisions and chapters throughout the United States with headquarters in Arlington, Virginia.

The CEC was chosen as participants because of the network of professionals that have

experiences in working with students with disabilities which includes those with autism. The

researchers intend to capture feedback from a minimum of a hundred participants. Participants

will receive an invitation to complete the survey by email for which they will be able to grant

consent electronically to partake in the survey. Participants will be able to withdraw consent at

any time by logging out of the survey. Researchers will use responses of those participants that

have completed a minimum of 80% of the survey.

The survey will consist of a brief description of the Kase-Roberts Curriculum of

Social Emotional Learning followed by developed questions to include some demographic

information as well as those that inquire about perceptions, needs and beliefs as it relates to the

product.

Need/Rational

SEL instruction benefits kids with autism (Aller, 2017). Presently, it is not being

done regularly in the classroom because teachers are not provided with allotted time to provide

instruction, appropriate materials, or training in those materials to provide the instruction with

confidence and fidelity (Elfers, 2009). This is especially critical in 3rd grade classrooms due to

the mandated state standardized testing and mandatory retention based on 3rd grade reading

assessments.

If there was a curriculum that simultaneously allowed teachers to target both state standards and social-emotional concepts, it would likely be used and have a positive impact on students, especially those with autism. There is also likely to be benefits to teachers as well by being able to address the SEL skills of students they are also addressing self-awareness and behavior management which leads to improved academics (Peyton, 2008). Simply providing teachers with a curriculum is not enough, however. In order for teachers to deliver social-emotional learning instruction with confidence and fidelity the curriculum needs to be accompanied by a corresponding professional development component so that the teachers are able to deliver the curriculum accurately and effectively.

Therefore, the researchers in this study will create a curriculum and an accompanying professional development guide to meet the needs of third grade students with autism and the teachers of those students. This curriculum will involve pairing social-emotional learning skills with Florida State Standards in Literacy and Florida Alternative Academic standards known as Access Points for third grade reading. Each section of the curriculum will tie one academic standard to one SEL based skill and provide a week's worth of activities including Interactive Read Alouds, shared reading, independent activities, and group activities.

This product, a curriculum that embeds literacy standards and SEL, is necessary in order for teachers to more easily and consistently provide social-emotional learning instruction to third grade students with autism without having to cut time that has been previously scheduled for academics. It will also allow teachers to be trained in the implementation of a social-emotional learning curriculum before implementing it which will increase the fidelity of instruction. Such a curriculum will also allow children with Autism to receive daily SEL instruction within their

classroom which will provide them will skills necessary to help them be more successful not only in social situations, but in their academic endeavors as well.

A survey is needed in order to prove that there is a necessity amongst teachers for such a product. The survey will allow for the researchers to better gage which components of the product need to be highlighted and which may need to be slightly altered to better meet the needs of the intended audience.

Description of the Product

Recognizing the need for a standards-based social emotional learning curriculum for students with ASD, a 36-week curriculum will be created that highlights research based instructional practices for teaching social emotional skills to students with autism. The curriculum will embed the Florida State Academic Standards in Literacy for 3rd grade (include access points).

Additionally, the curriculum will include a professional development guide for teachers and school leaders that will be designed to support the implementation of the curriculum. Each lesson will begin with an introduction of the strategy used and skill to be taught. The thirty-six skills chosen will be skills that research has shown to be an area of deficit for individuals with autism. These skills will be paired with research-based strategies such as social stories and errorless teaching that research has shown to be effective in teaching that skill or subset of skills.

The curriculum will then provide step by step guidance for implementation along with materials such as literacy sources, graphic organizers and a list of recommended props to use during instruction. Each lesson will be created to be taught weekly and be carried out in whole

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group or small group settings. The curriculum will include a table of contents to guide

instructional planning as well as a glossary of key terms.

The accompanying professional development guide will provide a framework and outline

the steps to create a professional learning community (PLC) that is directly linked to the

instructional strategies and content of the curriculum. For example, the guide will take a strategy

from the curriculum such as "video modeling" and help users to explore it in-depth by providing

resources and step-by-step guidance on how to use the tool. The exploration will lead to the

creation of a network of professional peers and mentors that allow for deeper understanding and

practice of implementation. The guide will include research-based components of a highly

functioning PLC and provides resources for teacher development as well as a systematic

approach to the development and maintenance of teacher knowledge and practices as related to

the content and material of this curriculum. The guide will be created with user friendly

language and navigation for use by classroom teachers as well as school leaders. Access to the

internet and basic computer skills are highly recommended but not required for use of the

professional development guide.

Population

The researchers will be submitting their survey to members of the Council for

Exceptional Children (CEC) online CEC community platform.   The researchers will only be

soliciting responses from members of certain branches of the CEC including: Division of

Autism and Developmental Disabilities (DADD), Council of Administrators of Special

Education (CASE), Division of Learning Disabilities (DLD), Council for Children with

Behavioral Disorders (CCBD), and Division for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

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Exceptional Learners (DDEL).   These branches were chosen since the members are experts in

the field related to the topic of the product.

Sample

The researchers will be using a convenient and purposeful sample. The

researchers are seeking to receive a combined total of no less than 100 completed surveys from

the various branches of the CEC.

Instrumentation

The survey (Appendix D) is designed to provide findings of the research question.

Response options of the survey are to include the following six options of a Likert scale:

Strongly Agree; A: Agree; N: Neutral; SD: Strongly Disagree; D: Disagree; and NIA: Not

applicable. Likert scale data correspond to data collected from questionnaires, where there are

several statements about a fact, situation, design or technique, and the respondents must specify

their level of agreement with each statement by marking one of several ordered alternatives.

Often, five choices are posed to respondents (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree,

disagree and strongly disagree) for each statement (Petrillo, Spritzer, Freitas, & Pimenta, 2011).

When responding to a Likert item, respondents specify their level of agreement or disagreement

on a symmetric agree-disagree scale for a series of statements. Thus, the range captures the

intensity of their feelings for a given item (Esterman, 2003). Survey items are based upon

literature review conducted by the researchers to include such items as "It is important for

teachers to help children with Autism Spectrum Disorder learn how to identify their emotions"

and "I have received frequent training about Social Emotional Learning." (Zhar, 2015).

The survey contains demographic items. Demographic information provides data regarding research participants and is necessary for the determination of whether the individuals in a study a representative sample of the target population for generalization purposes. Demographic variables are independent variables because they cannot be manipulated (Salkind, 2010). For example, survey items such as "What is the highest level of education you have completed?" will help the researchers to determine a representative sample of the researchers' target group.

The survey will consist of approximately thirty items and will take participants an estimation of 10-15 to complete. Researchers will then compute Cronbach's alpha to determine the internal consistency or how closely related the questions are as a group (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

The researchers will use the online survey platform, SurveyMonkeyTM in order to collect responses from the participants and to assist with analyzing data. SurveyMonkeyTM is an online survey platform which collects and analyzes responses from the research study participants. To complete the survey, the participants will read the Informed Consent (Appendix C) and select "OK". By clicking "OK" the participants are providing consent to the researchers to collect and report participant responses of the survey. There is no physical item the participants will be asked to sign to provide consent.

Data Collection

In order to collect the data for this study a variety of different platforms will be used to distribute the survey. The researchers will send an email (Appendix A) to the presidents of the selected branches of the CEC mentioned above to receive information in which to contact

members of those branches via email. The researchers will then create a flyer (Appendix B) that

briefly explains the purpose of the study and contains a quick response (QR) code that leads

directly to the survey. This survey will be distributed during a conference session the researchers

will be attending along with being distributed via email to the various branches. Once the QR

code on the flyer is scanned or the link under the flyer in the email is clicked, the participants

will be directed to the survey. The first page of the survey contains the consent form which

allows the researchers to obtain consent from the participant to use their answers anonymously in

their study. Following the obtainment of the participants' consent, the survey containing

approximately 30 questions will be presented for completion. Upon receiving the results of the

surveys, the researcher will run the data analysis described below.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (mean, mode, median, and average) and simple correlation analysis

such as Chi-Squares or crosstabulations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) will be run in the

SurveyMonkey program or the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Ethical Issues

Risks

There are minimal risks to participating in the survey. If for any reason the

participant feels uncomfortable at any point while completing the survey they may choose to stop

and not submit their responses to the researchers. All survey responses are anonymous.

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Benefits

Potential benefits from participation in this survey include the opportunity for the participant to provide feedback that will ultimately benefit students by allowing them the opportunity to receive social- emotional learning daily through reading instruction. It would also benefit teachers in the way that they would have the opportunity to work with a curriculum in which they were trained to use with confidence and fidelity.

Anonymity

The results of this survey will be presented as a part of the doctoral defense. The results of this survey will be coded in such a way that the respondent's identity will not be included. Though the survey company may collect an individual's IP address, the researchers do not access that information. The participants' identities are anonymous to the researchers. The researchers retain the right to use and publish unidentifiable data.

Storage

Results of the surveys will be kept on a password protected computer. The researchers will retain the surveys for a period of two years and then the survey will be permanently deleted from the device.

Researcher Bias

Some bias may arise since the researchers have experience in special education, especially dealing with students with autism. They also understand the benefits of providing these students with social-emotional learning instruction.

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Limitations

There are two primary limitations within this study. The first limitation is researcher bias stemming from their previous experience working in special education and with children with autism. The second limitation is that due to the length of the survey, participants may not answer all the questions.

Summary

Though there are many curriculum sources to address Social Emotional Learning for typical students, research show that there are few that specifically address the Social Emotional Learning for Students with ASD. There are also very of those curriculums to address Literacy Standards as well as provide a guide for professional development. Through anonymous online surveys given to industry experts this study seeks fill that void.

Executive Summary

Need

Teaching and learning in schools are strongly influenced by social, emotional, and academic components (Zins, Weisberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). Students typically do not learn alone but rather in collaboration with their teachers, in the company of their peers, and with the encouragement of their families. Emotions can facilitate or impede children's academic engagement, work ethic, commitment, and ultimate school success. Research shows that relationships and emotional processes affect how and what we learn within the school environment. Therefore, schools and families must effectively teach emotional identification and regulation, work ethic, problem-solving, perseverance, and relationship building. All these factors play a role in the educational process and benefit of all students, especially those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Frey, & Haynes, 1997).

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs are effective, demonstrating immediate improvements specifically in the areas of mental health, social skills, and academic achievement. Moreover, according to a 2017 meta-analysis from the Collaborative Academic of Social Emotional Learning (CASEL), these improvements continue to benefit students for months and even years after the program has concluded. This study further revealed that up to 18 years later, students exposed to SEL in school continue to do better than their peers on some indicators including positive social behaviors and attitudes, skills such as empathy and teamwork, and academics. They have also been found to have had fewer conduct problems, less emotional distress, and lower drug use among many other benefits (CASEL, 2017).

Although healthy child development includes a natural acquisition of social skills, children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) often require additional instruction and assistance to master these skills (White, 2007). While the cause of ASD is unknown, it is known that the disability impacts an individual's ability to interact, communicate, and behave socially. Individuals with autism struggle to understand certain social aspects such as nonverbal behavior both of themselves and others. These individuals also tend to lack interest in or avoid social interactions and therefore struggle to develop appropriate peer relationships (White, 2007).

Difficulty engaging in social interactions and developing relationships may also stem from individuals with ASD lacking social or emotional reciprocity which involves the back-and-forth flow of social interactions. These areas of concern generally create social anxiety, avoidance of social situations, overstimulation in social settings, and even social rejection (Cotugno, 2009). It is critical that additional time is taken to counteract these areas of deficit to increase the individual's ability to socially interact and lower the degree of social anxiety and rejection. For most teachers, this additional time to adequately address SEL in a classroom setting can be difficult to create with already full schedules. Creating this important time is especially difficult for teachers in third grade classrooms due to additional pressures to cover state standards and to prepare students for statewide assessments. Specifically, Florida State Statue 1008.25 requires mandatory retention for students in Grade 3 that do not score a level 2 or higher on the Florida Standards Assessment in English Language Arts (ELA) (Florida State K-20 Education Code, 2018). Using a social-emotional curriculum that embeds these ELA standards will increase the students' practice with these standards which enhances the students' ability to perform better on these assessments while additionally addressing the SEL needs of the students.

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The primary purpose of this study is to demonstrate the need for a Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum that is embedded with Grade 3 Florida State Literacy standards which include Access Point literacy standards and geared toward students with ASD. This is important because teachers of students with autism would benefit from instructional materials that address academics as well as social, emotional skills (Cotugno, 2009).

The secondary purpose of this study is to inform the need for a professional development guide that will aid teachers in the use of an SEL Curriculum that is embedded with Grade 3 literacy standards and geared toward students with ASD. This is important because it will increase the usability of instructional materials that address academics and social-emotional skills for students with autism (Hagelskamp, Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2013).

Research Question: How useful do experts in the field perceive *The Kase-Roberts Curriculum for Social-Emotional Learning for Students with Autism* for providing social-emotional learning instruction?

Description

Recognizing the need for a standards-based social-emotional learning curriculum for students with ASD, the researchers created *The Kase-Roberts Curriculum for Social-Emotional Learning for Students with Autism*. This curriculum includes instructional material for 36-weeks that highlights research-based instructional practices for teaching social, emotional skills to students with autism. The curriculum will embed the Florida State Academic Standards in Literacy for Grade 3. Integrating the SEL curriculum into the standards mandated at the Grade 3 level is especially important because it increases the students' practice with the standards on which they will be assessed on the Florida Standards Assessment.

The curriculum will additionally include a professional development guide for teachers and school leaders that will be designed to support the implementation of the curriculum. Each lesson will begin with an introduction of the strategy used and the skill to be taught. The 36 skills chosen will include the primary skills that research has shown to be an area of deficit for individuals with autism and essential to student success in academic settings. These skills will be paired with research-based instructional strategies such as social stories and errorless teaching that research has shown to be effective in teaching that skill or subset of skills particularly for students with autism.

The curriculum will then provide step by step guide for implementation along with materials such as literacy sources, graphic organizers and a list of recommended props to use during instruction. Each lesson will be created to be taught weekly and be carried out in whole group or small group settings. The curriculum will include a table of contents to guide instructional planning as well as a glossary of key terms.

The accompanying professional development guide will provide a framework, outlining the steps to create a Professional Learning Community (PLC) that is directly linked to the instructional strategies and content of the curriculum. A PLC is collaborative teacher groups that focus on learning and continual improvement (Eichelkraut, 2017). PLCs are valuable because studies suggest that well-developed PLCs have a positive impact on both teaching practice and student achievement (Vescio, Ross, Adams, 2008).

This guide will take a strategy from the curriculum such as "video modeling" and help users to explore it in-depth by providing resources and step-by-step guidance on how to use the approach. The use of the PLC guide will lead to the creation of a network of professional peers and mentors that allow for deeper understanding and practice of instructional strategies. The

guide will include research-based components of a highly functioning PLC and provide resources for teacher development as well as a systematic approach to the growth and maintenance of teacher knowledge and practices as related to the content and material of this curriculum. The guide will be created with user-friendly language and navigation to be used by classroom teachers as well as school leaders. Access to the internet and basic computer skills are highly recommended but not required for the use of the professional development guide. This guide is essential to implementation because it is a useful tool that assists teachers in the development of individualized strategies and the methods and materials necessary for them to be successful (Alsubaie, 2016).

Access to this product will require a written notice to the researchers who will provide the curriculum, as well as the guide (if applicable) in Portable Document Format (PDF) via email once a request has been reviewed and approved. The researchers developed this product with the intentions to be used primarily by teachers of students with autism in elementary schools. However, all teachers, as well as school leaders and educational program supervisors, are encouraged to request and implement this product if it meets the needs of the student population being served. There are no curriculum materials on the market to date that address social-emotional learning within existing literacy standards and is specifically created to address the needs of students with autism.

Methods to Collect Evidence

To answer the primary research question and to examine the perceptions of experts in the field related to the usefulness of the *Kase-Roberts Curriculum of Social Emotional Learning for Students with Autism*, a survey was used to collect and record subject responses.

The researchers created the survey based on questions that have been previously used in

scholarly research surveys and have undergone statistical analysis for validity and reliability.

The survey included demographic questions to help the researchers better understand the

background characteristics of the participants and to ensure that the target audience was

addressed. Survey items were written using a Likert scale format that allows respondents to

specify their level of agreement or disagreement on a symmetric agree-disagree scale for a series

of statements. The survey consisted of 31 questions which included an acknowledgment of

consent and took 5-7 minutes for participants to complete. The survey was then transcribed into

the Survey Monkey platform for distribution and analysis of responses from participants. A

secure weblink and quick-response (QR) code were created from the Survey Monkey platform to

provide options for participants to access and complete the survey.

The target population for this study included members from divisions of the Council of

Exceptional Children (CEC). Surveys were made accessible electronically via a Survey Monkey

weblink and a quick-response code that was imprinted on a flyer and distributed. Additional

methods of distribution included posting live flyers and the survey weblink onto social media

platforms of the divisions of the Council of Exceptional Children and emailing the President of

each division, requesting that they either provide the researchers with an email list of members or

email the survey request and weblink to members on behalf of the researchers. Consent was

provided by participants clicking "okay" on the surveys electronic consent form. Encryption was

enabled to protect the sensitive data of participants. Researchers also distributed surveys over

two days at the 2018 conference for the Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities

(DADD), which is a division of the Council of Exceptional Children. Throughout seven weeks

and a total of 204 invitations were sent via email. Requests were also posted on the social media

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page of the Council of Exceptional Children's Division on Autism and Developmental

Disabilities via Facebook^{TM}.

The SurveyMonkey platform instantly records participant responses to survey items once

they have completed the survey. The answers are then electronically stored and made accessible

to the researchers through a password-protected account. Survey Monkey organizes the data by

item and creates graphs and tables for those items. The researchers are also able to browse

individual responses; create and export dynamic charts; use the filter, compare, and show rules to

analyze specific data views and segments; view and categorize open-ended responses if

applicable, and download results in multiple formats (SurveyMonkey Inc., 2019). Data from the

surveys provided via SurveyMonkey reported in narratives and graphics formats. Researchers

clustered some survey items into common themes and provided discussion and summary as to

the what results indicated.

The results of this study provided the researchers with responses that fulfill the primary

questions posed by this study, including to demonstrate the need for a Social-Emotional

Learning Curriculum that is embedded with Grade 3 Florida State Standards and Access Points

and to inform the need for a professional development guide that will aid teachers in the use of

an SEL Curriculum that is embedded with Grade 3 literacy standards geared toward students

with ASD. Based on an analysis of survey response items, the researchers conclude there is a

need for an SEL curriculum for students with Autism as well as a need for ongoing professional

development practices to implement and sustain the use of this curriculum.

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Evidence

The sample included 176 professionals with a CEC membership who consented, completed and submitted the survey. Participating professionals included 12 males (6.29%) and 164 females (93.71%). The race/ethnicity of subjects included 1(0.57%) Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, 2 (1.1.4%) were Latin/Hispanic, 4 (2.29%) identified as Hispanic only, 4 (2.29%) were of Asian descent, 35 (20.0%) were Black or African American, 2 (1.14%) participants identified as Other, and 127 (72.57%) identified as White.

Questions related to professional experience indicated that 170 (97.14%) participants reported having a professional teaching certificate and that 173 (98%) participants indicated having 10 or more years of professional experience with working in education. Results indicate that most participants had over 10 years of teaching experience *(M*= 13.42, *SD*= 1.6). This finding helps the researchers to confirm the credibility of survey participants. Credibility is also supported by the outcome of a question about teaching experiences of participants. 148 (84%) participants had identified their teaching experiences in self-contained classrooms and inclusive educational settings (*M*= 4.2, *SD*= 0.87).

To support participants in answering the survey questions, a description of the product was embedded in the survey after the participants read and consented to complete the study.

Following the description of the product, participants were then asked, "After reading the description above, how interested are you in this curriculum?" Of those responding 145 (82.86%) participants answered Strongly Agree, 27 (15.43%) participants answered Agree, and 3 (1.71%) participants answered Neutral. Zero participants responded with Disagree or Strongly

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Disagreed. The results of this item support that a total of 172 (98.29 %) participants are

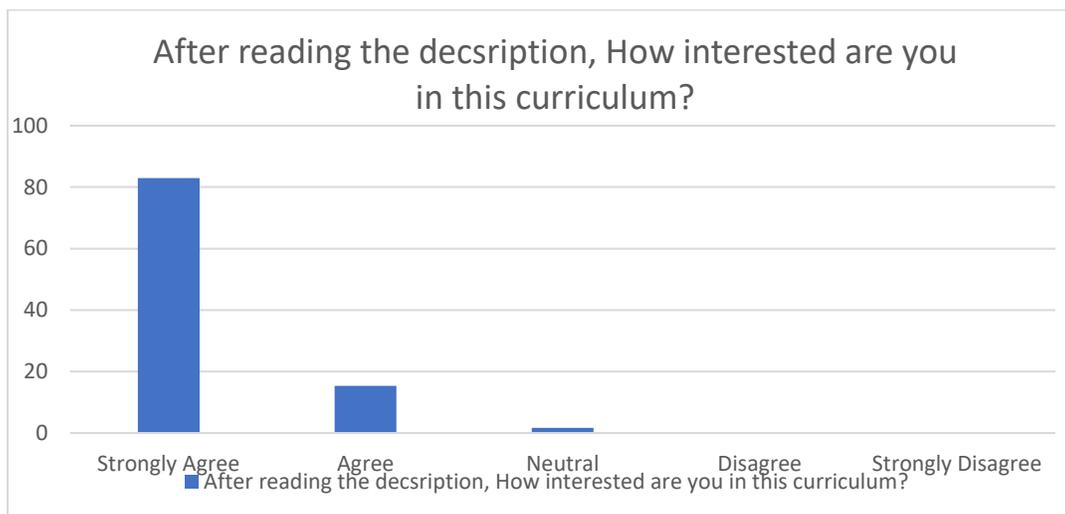interested in the Kase-Roberts Curriculum (See Figure 1 below).

Figure 1. Results of survey Item 2. Data retrieved from SurveyMonkey.com/Standards

Based Social Emotional Learning Program for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Beliefs about Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Instruction.

Participant responses to questions related to SEL instruction supported the idea of

educators accepting some responsibility for providing SEL instruction to students, especially to

students with autism. Specifically, four questions offered insight into how participants perceived

the importance of including SEL instruction into current instructional practices. Responses to

these questions are illustrated below in Table 1.

Table 1 :
Summary of Survey Items About Beliefs of SEL Instruction

Survey Item	Item 6	Item 15	Item 16	Item 17
	How relevant is Social Emotional Learning to your instruction of students with Autism?	It is important for teachers to help children learn how to identify their emotions?	It is essential for teachers to help children manage their own emotions.	I believe it is part of the teacher's job to teach children how to manage distress and other upsetting feelings
Strongly Agree	149 (85.14%)	106 (60.57%)	84 (48.00%)	80 (45.71%)
Agree	23 (12.57%)	67 (37.71%)	84 (47.43%)	79 (44.57%)
Neutral	4 (2.29%)	3 (1.71%)	8 (4.57%)	10 (5.71%)
Disagree	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (4.00%)
Strongly Disagree	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Totals (n= 176 participants)				

Note. Table displays raw number of participants into percentage as responded to the single item.

Summary of the above table indicates that participants fell within the Strongly Agree and Agree range as it relates to social-emotional learning and its importance to instruction. These results inform the researchers that education professionals have strong beliefs and understand the relevance of social-emotional learning and instruction. The table also shows that 7 (4.00%) of participants selected Disagree when asked, "I believe it is part of the teacher's job to teach children how to manage distress and other upsetting feelings", indicating that the majority of educators perceive that it is the teachers responsibility to teach students how to manage distress and other upsetting feelings.

Questions related to planning time for lessons and time allotted to implemented lessons reveal that 109 (62.64%) of participants indicated they do not have allotted prep time for social-emotional learning and 112 (64.00%) participants selected Strongly Disagree with having time to

implement social-emotional learning lessons. These results indicate that educators perceive that

school districts and schools do not sufficiently provide adequate time allotted to planning and

implementing instructional programs and strategies that focus on Social Emotional Learning for

school-aged children, especially those with disabilities. When asked "How often do you teach

social emotional learning?", results showed that educators taught social emotional skills 2 days

per week (M= 2.5, SD=0.78). This indicates to researchers that there are minimal instructional

days are being dedicated to teaching social skills to all students.

Professional Development.

Items related to professional development were developed to provide the

researchers with information on the participants' perceptions and experiences with receiving,

participating or being provided opportunities for extended learning or training in SEL concepts

or materials used for SEL instruction. In response to the relevance of PD in the implementation

of a new curriculum, it was found that 146 (83.43%) participants selected Strongly Agree, and 28

(16.00%) participants chose to Agree, demonstrating the perception that professional

development is relevant for new program implementation. Responses to the question, "How

relevant is a user's guide to your implementation of a new curriculum or program?" indicated

142 (81.14%) of participants to Strongly Agree and 30 (17.14%) participants Agree. This

reveals that the participants identify professional development and materials such as a user's

guide to be meaningful in the implementation of a program or curriculum.

To measure the perceived relevance of professional development related to the

execution of a new program or curriculum, the participants were asked, "How relevant is

professional development to your implementation of a new curriculum or program?" Responses

are illustrated below in Figure 2, indicating that 93 (53.14%) participants Strongly Agree and 73

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(41.17%) participants Agree that professional development impacts the application of programs
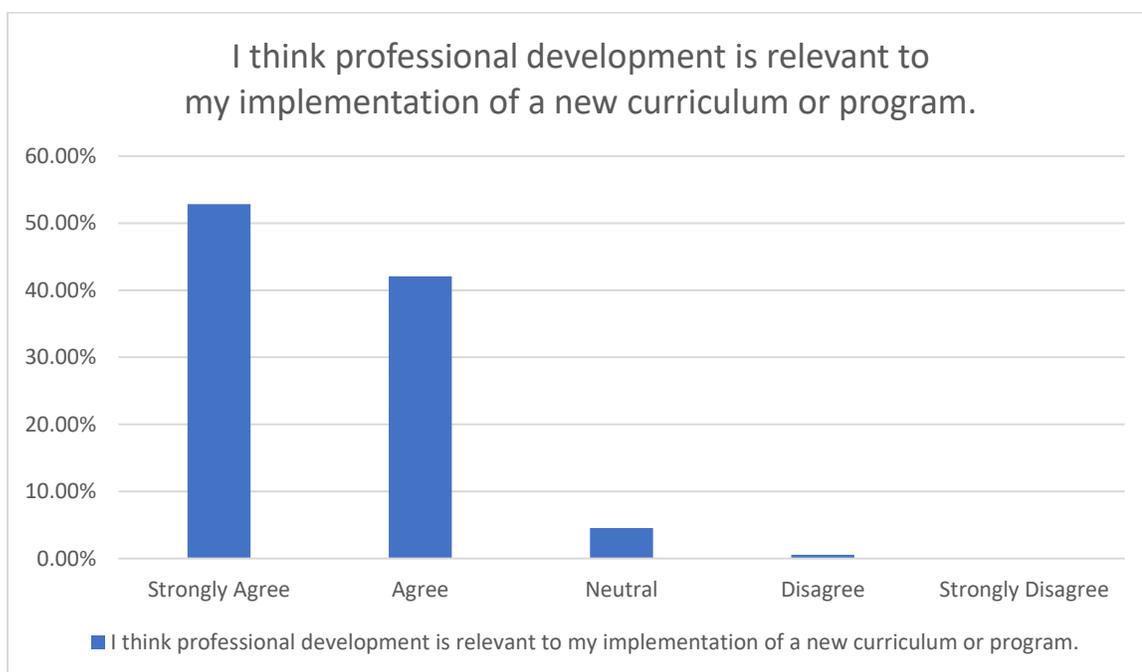
and curriculum.

Figure 2. Results of survey Item 30: How relevant is professional development to your

implementation of a new curriculum or program? Retrieved from SurveyMonkey.com/Standards

Based Social Emotional Learning Program for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Additional survey items provide the researchers with information about how

educators perceive the Kase-Roberts curriculum. In response to the statement, "I prefer helping

children to learn how to manage emotions with the aid of a structured SEL curriculum," 150

(86.21%) of participants prefer helping children to learn how to manage emotions with the aid of

a structured SEL curriculum. However, when participants were asked "I prefer to use my

resources (no curriculum) to teach emotional awareness," the results indicated that 121 (68.54 %)

of participants prefer to use their resources to teach emotional awareness. In comparing these

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item responses, the researchers concluded that the participants have a willingness to teach SEL

more preferably with a structure program or curriculum.

Questions related to the use of a pre-designed social-emotional learning program

showed that 95 (54.29%) of participants responded that they do not use a pre-designed

curriculum to teach social-emotional learning. Figure 3 below illustrates a breakdown of the

participants' responses related to the use of materials for teaching SEL. When asked, "How likely

are you to replace your current social-emotional skills program/ curriculum with a social-

emotional skills program/curriculum that embeds literacy standards?" it was found that a total of

106 (60.57%) Strongly Agree, demonstrating a willingness to replace a current SEL program. A

review of this data informs the researchers that the creation of a structured SEL curriculum is

highly likely to be supported by education professionals as identified as the target group of this
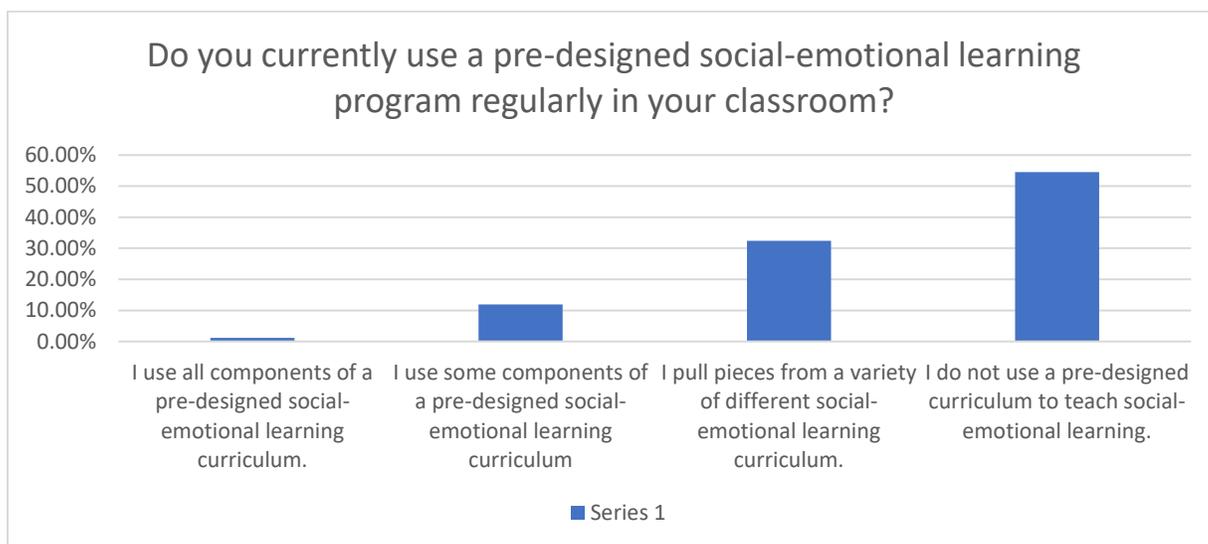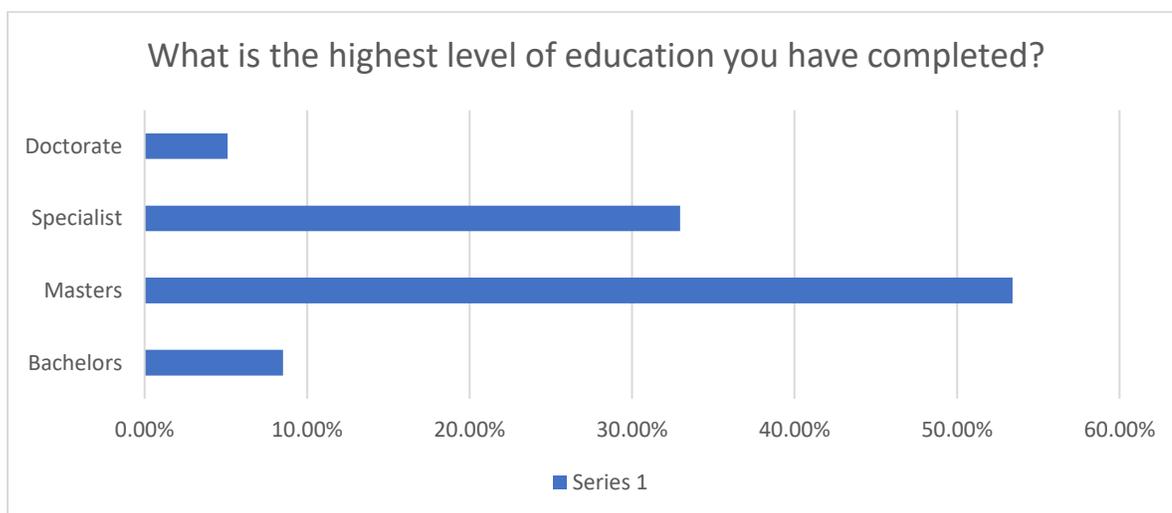
study.

Figure 3. Results of survey item 31: Do you currently use a pre-designed social-emotional

learning program regularly in your classroom. Retrieved from SurveyMonkey.com/Standards

Based Social Emotional Learning Program for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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   The results of the survey also revealed beliefs of a shared sense of responsibility among school staff to foster students' SEL skill development. This survey item reported that 34 (19.43%) participants Strongly Agree and 67 (38.29%) participants Agree that SEL skill development is a shared responsibility among school personnel.

   Participants were asked, "When you think about a standards-based curriculum for social-emotional learning for students with Autism, do you think of it as something you need or don't need?" Responses reveal that 127 (72.57 %) participants Strongly Agree, 42 (24.00%) Agree, 4 (2.29%) were Neutral and 2 (1.14%) selected Strongly Disagree. This informs the researchers that a total of 169 (96.57%) of the study participants support the need for a standards-based social-emotional learning curriculum for students with autism.

   Survey results revealed that 88 (50%) participants taught in both a self-contained classroom and inclusive classrooms containing students with Autism. Additionally, the participants they were surveyed about their levels of education. (See Figure 4 below)

Figure 4. Results of survey item 29: What is the highest level of education you have completed? Retrieved from SurveyMonkey.com/Standards Based Social Emotional Learning Program for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Summary

This executive summary reviewed the evidence to support the need for *The Kase-Roberts Curriculum for Social Emotional Learning for Student with Autism.* Data gathered and analyzed from SurveyMonkey was presented, and survey results were reported in narratives and graphic formats. Researchers clustered some survey items into common themes and provided discussion and summary as to what the results indicated.

This study's goal was to demonstrate the need for a Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum that is embedded with Grade 3 Florida Literacy Standards and Access Point literacy standards and geared toward students with ASD. Based on participant responses, this goal was accomplished by surveying participants and analyzing those responses which revealed participant feedback that supports the need for a social-emotional learning curriculum that embeds literacy standards.

Also, this study aimed to inform the need for a professional development guide that will aid teachers in the use of an SEL Curriculum that is embedded with Grade 3 literacy standards and geared toward students with ASD. Based on an analysis of survey item responses, it was found that there is a need for a SEL curriculum to be used for students with Autism, evidenced by the results of survey that asked participants, "How relevant is a user's guide to your implementation of a new curriculum or program?" as well as survey item 30 which posed the statement, "I think professional development is relevant to my implementation of a new

curriculum or program." Results demonstrated that 117 participants (66.4%) Strongly Agree on both items.

Limitations and Recommendations

Limiting factors to this study include sample size, instrument design, and the distribution model. Although the sample size was acceptable for the study. More participants would have produced a greater decrease in margin of error which would increase the validity and reliability of data collected from the survey responses. As it relates to the instrument design, the survey consisted of approximately 30 Likert-scale questions and provided no opportunity for open-ended responses. This flaw in the design may have forced participants to select a response choice when they may have wanted to provide additional input. Finally, the survey delivery was 100% electronic and required internet access. This distribution method may have prevented participants from completing the survey if there were experiencing difficulties related to internet connection or device malfunctions.

Recommendations and Future Research

The responses of survey participants indicate the necessity for additional instructional resources that cater to the needs of students with autism within a general education setting. Specifically, 98 % (176) of respondents indicated that they were interested in this curriculum and 96% (170) participants Strongly Agree or Agree that they need a standards-based curriculum for social, emotional learning for students with autism. Overall, throughout the survey participants were more likely to choose Strongly Agree and Agree to items that highlighted the importance of instruction of social-emotional learning skills to students as well as the necessity for professional development and resources to support students with disabilities, especially those with autism.

Based on this finding, it is recommended that the researchers continue the development of *The Kase-Roberts Curriculum for Social Emotional Learning for Students with Autism.* It is further recommended that schools and school districts should prioritize SEL instruction for all students and allow for a time within the school day for planning and implementation of such programs that address social-emotional learning for students with autism. This recommendation is based on the finding of the researchers that 90% (159) of participants believe it is part of the teacher's job to teach children how to manage distress and other upsetting feelings, while 66.8% (117) of participants Disagree or Strongly Disagree that their school allots regular prep time for SEL program planning.

It is also recommended that more professionals in the field of education need to be made aware of the benefits related to teaching social-emotional skills, supported by the finding that 76% (134) of participants either Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed to have received an adequate amount of training about SEL. Additionally, efforts should also be made to seek out the opportunities available to merge SEL instruction with academic standards. This practice will allow for additional supports with SEL skill instruction while students are also able to receive instruction on academic standards.

The researchers recommend that future research should be conducted to examine the effectiveness of *The Kase-Roberts Curriculum* once it has been published and educators have had the opportunity to implement the curriculum and engage in the professional development practices. It is also recommended that this study should be extended to include other disabilities such as Intellectual Disabled, Attention Deficit Disorder, Learning Disabled, and Developmental Delays.

Standards-Based Social Emotional Learning for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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This study investigates how professionals in the field perceive the usefulness of the *Kase-Roberts Curriculum for Social Emotional Learning for Students with Autism*. The study included 176 participants from divisions of the Council for Exceptional Children. Most of the participants had over 10 years of teaching experience (M= 13.42, SD= 1.6) which helped to increase the credibly of overall survey responses. Data was collected through a Likert scale online survey created by SurveyMonkey™ and analysis of survey items were carried out. Results of the survey revealed that a total of 172 (98.29 %) participants are interested in the Kase-Roberts Curriculum and also showed that 7 (4.00%) of participants selected Disagree when asked, "I believe it is part of the teacher's job to teach children how to manage distress and other upsetting feelings", indicating that the majority of educators perceive that it is the teachers responsibility to teach students how to manage distress and other upsetting feelings. The Kase-Roberts curriculum was developed to provide educators with a meaningful resource to address the social emotional needs of students with Autism while also meeting state standards for academic instruction in literacy.

Keywords: Autism, social-emotional learning, curriculum, students, survey

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Introduction

Teaching and learning in schools are strongly influenced by social, emotional, and academic components (Zins, Weisberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). Students typically do not learn alone but rather in collaboration with their teachers, in the company of their peers, and with the encouragement of their families. Emotions can facilitate or impede children's academic engagement, work ethic, commitment, and ultimate school success. Research shows that relationships and emotional processes affect how and what we learn within the school environment. Therefore, schools and families must effectively teach emotional identification and regulation, work ethic, problem-solving, perseverance, and relationship building. All these factors play a role in the educational process and benefit of all students, especially those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Frey, & Haynes, 1997).

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs are effective, demonstrating immediate improvements specifically in the areas of mental health, social skills, and academic achievement. Moreover, according to a 2017 meta-analysis from the Collaborative Academic of Social Emotional Learning (CASEL), these improvements continue to benefit students for months and even years after the program has concluded. This study further revealed that up to 18 years later, students exposed to SEL in school continue to do better than their peers on some indicators including positive social behaviors and attitudes, skills such as empathy and teamwork, and academics. They have also been found to have had fewer conduct problems, less emotional distress, and lower drug use among many other benefits (CASEL, 2017).

Although healthy child development includes a natural acquisition of social skills, children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) often require additional instruction and assistance to master these skills (White, 2007). While the cause of ASD is unknown, it is known that the

disability impacts an individual's ability to interact, communicate, and behave socially. Individuals with autism struggle to understand certain social aspects such as nonverbal behavior both of themselves and others. These individuals also tend to lack interest in or avoid social interactions and therefore struggle to develop appropriate peer relationships (White, 2007).

Difficulty engaging in social interactions and developing relationships may also stem from individuals with ASD lacking social or emotional reciprocity which involves the back-and-forth flow of social interactions. These areas of concern generally create social anxiety, avoidance of social situations, overstimulation in social settings, and even social rejection (Cotugno, 2009). It is critical that additional time is taken to counteract these areas of deficit to increase the individual's ability to socially interact and lower the degree of social anxiety and rejection. For most teachers, this additional time to adequately address SEL in a classroom setting can be difficult to create with already full schedules. Creating this important time is especially difficult for teachers in third grade classrooms due to additional pressures to cover state standards and to prepare students for statewide assessments. Specifically, Florida State Statue 1008.25 requires mandatory retention for students in Grade 3 that do not score a level 2 or higher on the Florida Standards Assessment in English Language Arts (ELA) (Florida State K-20 Education Code, 2018). Using a social-emotional curriculum that embeds these ELA standards will increase the students' practice with these standards which enhances the students' ability to perform better on these assessments while additionally addressing the SEL needs of the students.

Present Study

The primary purpose of this study is to demonstrate the need for a Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum that is embedded with Grade 3 Florida State Literacy standards which include Access Point literacy standards and geared toward students with ASD. This is important

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because teachers of students with autism would benefit from instructional materials that address

academics as well as social, emotional skills (Cotugno, 2009).

The secondary purpose of this study is to inform the need for a professional development

guide that will aid teachers in the use of an SEL Curriculum that is embedded with Grade 3

literacy standards and geared toward students with ASD. This is important because it will

increase the usability of instructional materials that address academics and social-emotional

skills for students with autism (Hagelskamp, Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2013).

Description

Recognizing the need for a standards-based social-emotional learning curriculum for

students with ASD, the researchers created *The Kase-Roberts Curriculum for Social-Emotional*

Learning for Students with Autism. This curriculum includes instructional material for 36-weeks

that highlights research-based instructional practices for teaching social, emotional skills to

students with autism. The curriculum will embed the Florida State Academic Standards in

Literacy for Grade 3. Integrating the SEL curriculum into the standards mandated at the Grade 3

level is especially important because it increases the students' practice with the standards on

which they will be assessed on the Florida Standards Assessment.

The curriculum will additionally include a professional development guide for teachers

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that research has shown to be effective in teaching that skill or subset of skills particularly for students with autism.

The curriculum will then provide step by step guide for implementation along with materials such as literacy sources, graphic organizers and a list of recommended props to use during instruction. Each lesson will be created to be taught weekly and be carried out in whole group or small group settings. The curriculum will include a table of contents to guide instructional planning as well as a glossary of key terms.

The accompanying professional development guide will provide a framework, outlining the steps to create a Professional Learning Community (PLC) that is directly linked to the instructional strategies and content of the curriculum. A PLC is collaborative teacher groups that focus on learning and continual improvement (Eichelkraut, 2017). PLCs are valuable because studies suggest that well-developed PLCs have a positive impact on both teaching practice and student achievement (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008).

This guide will take a strategy from the curriculum such as "video modeling" and help users to explore it in-depth by providing resources and step-by-step guidance on how to use the approach. The use of the PLC guide will lead to the creation of a network of professional peers and mentors that allow for deeper understanding and practice of instructional strategies. The guide will include research-based components of a highly functioning PLC and provide resources for teacher development as well as a systematic approach to the growth and maintenance of teacher knowledge and practices as related to the content and material of this curriculum. The guide will be created with user-friendly language and navigation to be used by classroom teachers as well as school leaders. Access to the internet and basic computer skills are highly recommended but not required for the use of the professional development guide. This

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Access to this product will require a written notice to the researchers who will provide the curriculum, as well as the guide (if applicable) in Portable Document Format (PDF) via email once a request has been reviewed and approved. The researchers developed this product with the intentions to be used primarily by teachers of students with autism in elementary schools. However, all teachers, as well as school leaders and educational program supervisors, are encouraged to request and implement this product if it meets the needs of the student population being served. There are no curriculum materials on the market to date that address social-emotional learning within existing literacy standards and is specifically created to address the needs of students with autism.

Methods

To answer the primary research question and to examine the perceptions of experts in the field related to the usefulness of the *Kase-Roberts Curriculum of Social Emotional Learning for Students with Autism*, a survey was used to collect and record subject responses. The researchers created the survey based on questions that have been previously used in scholarly research surveys and have undergone statistical analysis for validity and reliability.

The survey included demographic questions to help the researchers better understand the background characteristics of the participants and to ensure that the target audience was addressed. Survey items were written using a Likert scale format that allows respondents to specify their level of agreement or disagreement on a symmetric agree-disagree scale for a series

of statements. The survey consisted of 31 questions which included an acknowledgment of consent and took 5-7 minutes for participants to complete. The survey was then transcribed into the Survey Monkey platform for distribution and analysis of responses from participants. A secure weblink and quick-response (QR) code were created from the Survey Monkey platform to provide options for participants to access and complete the survey.

The target population for this study included members from divisions of the Council of Exceptional Children (CEC). Surveys were made accessible electronically via a Survey Monkey weblink and a quick-response code that was imprinted on a flyer and distributed. Additional methods of distribution included posting live flyers and the survey weblink onto social media platforms of the divisions of the Council of Exceptional Children and emailing the President of each divisions, requesting that they either provide the researchers with an email list of members or email the survey request and weblink to members on behalf of the researchers. Consent was provided by participants clicking "okay" on the surveys electronic consent form. Encryption was enabled to protect the sensitive data of participants. Researchers also distributed surveys over two days at the 2018 conference for the Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities (DADD), which is a division of the Council of Exceptional Children. Throughout seven weeks and a total of 204 invitations were sent via email. Requests were also posted on the social media page of the Council of Exceptional Children's Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities via Facebook[TM].

The SurveyMonkey platform instantly records participant responses to survey items once they have completed the survey. The answers are then electronically stored and made accessible to the researchers through a password-protected account. Survey Monkey organizes the data by item and creates graphs and tables for those items. The researchers are also able to browse

individual responses; create and export dynamic charts; use the filter, compare, and show rules to analyze specific data views and segments; view and categorize open-ended responses if applicable, and download results in multiple formats (SurveyMonkey Inc., 2019). Data from the surveys provided via SurveyMonkey reported in narratives and graphics formats. Researchers clustered some survey items into common themes and provided discussion and summary as to the what results indicated.

Results

The results of this study provided the researchers with responses that fulfill the primary questions posed by this study, including to demonstrate the need for a Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum that is embedded with Grade 3 Florida State Standards and Access Points and to inform the need for a professional development guide that will aid teachers in the use of an SEL Curriculum that is embedded with Grade 3 literacy standards geared toward students with ASD. Based on an analysis of survey response items, the researchers conclude there is a need for an SEL curriculum for students with Autism as well as a need for ongoing professional development practices to implement and sustain the use of this curriculum.

Participants

The sample included 176 professionals with a CEC membership who consented, completed and submitted the survey. Participating professionals included 12 males (6.29%) and 164 females (93.71%). The race/ethnicity of subjects included 1(0.57%) Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, 2 (1.1.4%) were Latin/Hispanic, 4 (2.29%) identified as Hispanic only, 4 (2.29%) were of Asian descent, 35 (20.0%) were Black or African American, 2 (1.14%) participants identified as Other, and 127 (72.57%) identified as White.

Questions related to professional experience indicated that 170 (97.14%) participants reported having a professional teaching certificate and that 173 (98%) participants indicated having 10 or more years of professional experience with working in education. Results indicate that most participants had over 10 years of teaching experience *(M=* 13.42, *SD=* 1.6). This finding helps the researchers to confirm the credibility of survey participants. Credibility is also supported by the outcome of a question about teaching experiences of participants. 148 (84%) participants had identified their teaching experiences in self-contained classrooms and inclusive educational settings (*M=* 4.2, *SD=* 0.87).

To support participants in answering the survey questions, a description of the product was embedded in the survey after the participants read and consented to complete the study.

Following the description of the product, participants were then asked, "After reading the description above, how interested are you in this curriculum?" Of those responding 145 (82.86%) participants answered Strongly Agree, 27 (15.43%) participants answered Agree, and 3 (1.71%) participants answered Neutral. Zero participants responded with Disagree or Strongly Disagreed. The results of this item support that a total of 172 (98.29 %) participants are interested in the Kase-Roberts Curriculum (See Figure 1).
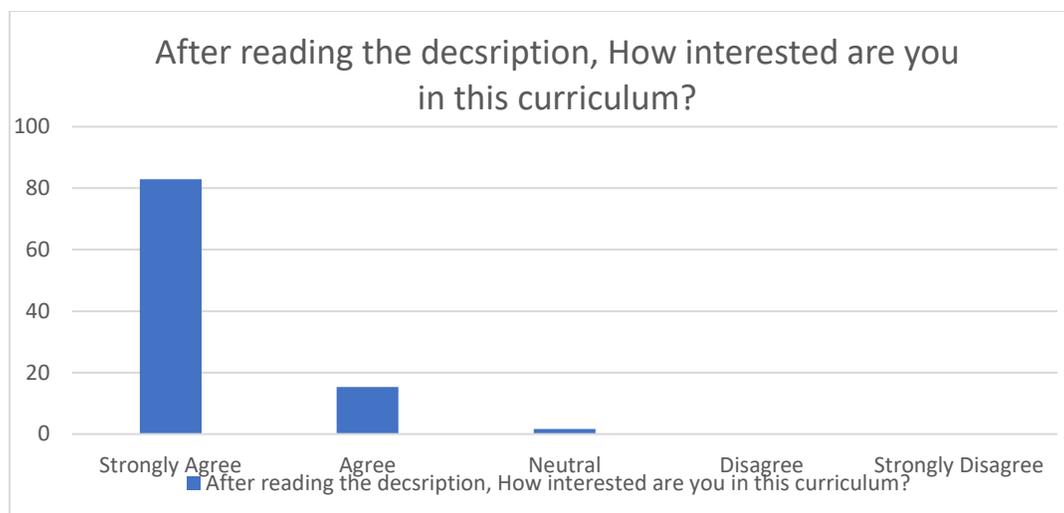
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Figure 1. Results of survey Item 2. Data retrieved from SurveyMonkey.com/Standards

Based Social Emotional Learning Program for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Beliefs about Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Instruction.

Participant responses to questions related to SEL instruction supported the idea of

educators accepting some responsibility for providing SEL instruction to students, especially to

students with autism. Specifically, four questions offered insight into how participants perceived

the importance of including SEL instruction into current instructional practices. Responses to

these questions are illustrated below in Table I.

Table 1 :
Summary of Survey Items About Beliefs of SEL Instruction

Survey Item	Item 6	Item 15	Item 16	Item 17
	How relevant is Social Emotional Learning to your instruction of students with Autism?	It is important for teachers to help children learn how to identify their emotions?	It is essential for teachers to help children manage their own emotions.	I believe it is part of the teacher's job to teach children how to manage distress and other upsetting feelings
Strongly Agree	149 (85.14%)	106 (60.57%)	84 (48.00%)	80 (45.71%)

Agree	23 (12.57%)	67 (37.71%)	84 (47.43%)	79 (44.57%)
Neutral	4 (2.29%)	3 (1.71%)	8 (4.57%)	10 (5.71%)
Disagree	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (4.00%)
Strongly Disagree	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Totals (n= 176 participants)				

Note. Table displays raw number of participants into percentage as responded to the single item.

Summary of the above table indicates that participants fell within the Strongly Agree and Agree range as it relates to social-emotional learning and its importance to instruction. These results inform the researchers that education professionals have strong beliefs and understand the relevance of social-emotional learning and instruction. The table also shows that 7 (4.00%) of participants selected Disagree when asked, "I believe it is part of the teacher's job to teach children how to manage distress and other upsetting feelings", indicating that the majority of educators perceive that it is the teachers responsibility to teach students how to manage distress and other upsetting feelings.

Questions related to planning time for lessons and time allotted to implemented lessons reveal that 109 (62.64%) of participants indicated they do not have allotted prep time for social-emotional learning and 112 (64.00%) participants selected Strongly Disagree with having time to implement social-emotional learning lessons. These results indicate that educators perceive that school districts and schools do not sufficiently provide adequate time allotted to planning and implementing instructional programs and strategies that focus on Social Emotional Learning for school-aged children, especially those with disabilities. When asked "How often do you teach social emotional learning?", results showed that educators taught social emotional skills 2 days

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per week (*M*= 2.5, *SD*=0.78). This indicates to researchers that there are minimal instructional

days are being dedicated to teaching social skills to all students.

Professional Development.

Items related to professional development were developed to provide the researchers with

information on the participants' perceptions and experiences with receiving, participating or

being provided opportunities for extended learning or training in SEL concepts or materials used

for SEL instruction. In response to the relevance of PD in the implementation of a new

curriculum, it was found that 146 (83.43%) participants selected Strongly Agree, and 28

(16.00%) participants chose to Agree, demonstrating the perception that professional

development is relevant for new program implementation. Responses to the question, "How

relevant is a user's guide to your implementation of a new curriculum or program?" indicated

142 (81.14%) of participants to Strongly Agree and 30 (17.14%) participants Agree. This

reveals that the participants identify professional development and materials such as a user's

guide to be meaningful in the implementation of a program or curriculum.

To measure the perceived relevance of professional development related to the execution

of a new program or curriculum, the participants were asked, "How relevant is professional

development to your implementation of a new curriculum or program?" Responses are illustrated

below in Figure 2, indicating that 93 (53.14%) participants Strongly Agree and 73 (41.17%)

participants Agree that professional development impacts the application of programs and
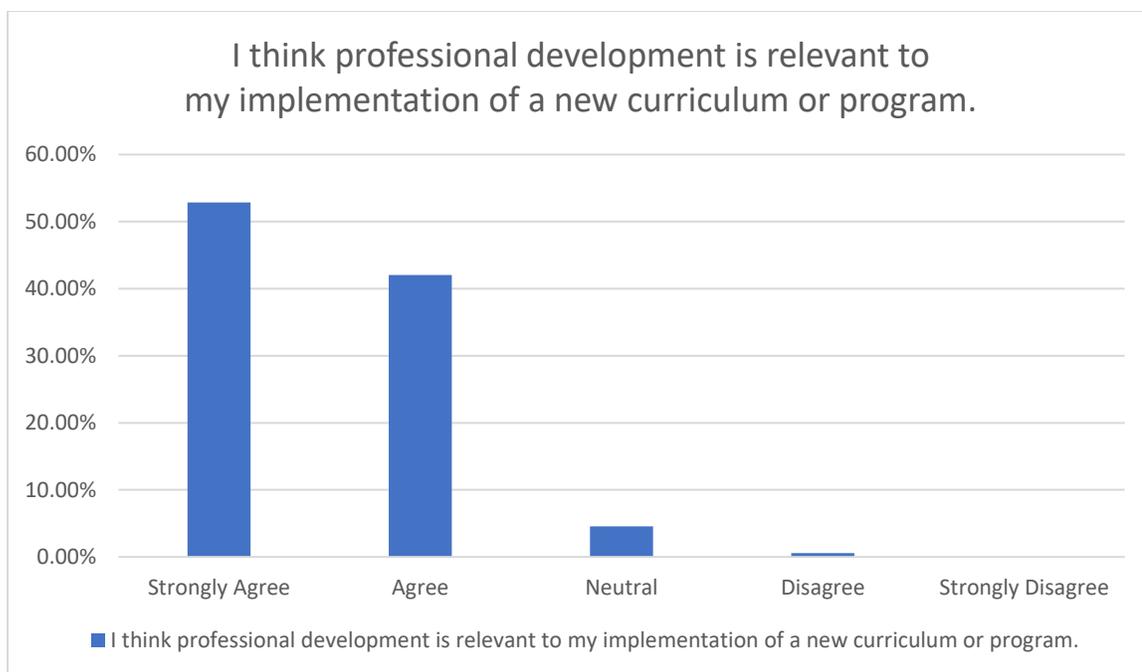
curriculum.

Figure 2. Results of survey Item 30: How relevant is professional development to your implementation of a new curriculum or program? Retrieved from SurveyMonkey.com/Standards Based Social Emotional Learning Program for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Additional survey items provide the researchers with information about how educators perceive the Kase-Roberts curriculum. In response to the statement, "I prefer helping children to learn how to manage emotions with the aid of a structured SEL curriculum," 150 (86.21%) of participants prefer helping children to learn how to manage emotions with the aid of a structured SEL curriculum. However, when participants were asked "I prefer to use my resources (no curriculum) to teach emotional awareness," the results indicated that 121 (68.54 %) of participants prefer to use their resources to teach emotional awareness. In comparing these item responses, the researchers concluded that the participants have a willingness to teach SEL more preferably with a structure program or curriculum.

Questions related to the use of a pre-designed social-emotional learning program showed that 95 (54.29%) of participants responded that they do not use a pre-designed curriculum to teach social-emotional learning. Figure 3 below illustrates a breakdown of the participants' responses related to the use of materials for teaching SEL. When asked, "How likely are you to replace your current social-emotional skills program/ curriculum with a social-emotional skills program/curriculum that embeds literacy standards?" it was found that a total of 106 (60.57%) Strongly Agree, demonstrating a willingness to replace a current SEL program. A review of this data informs the researchers that the creation of a structured SEL curriculum is highly likely to be supported by education professionals as identified as the target group of this study.
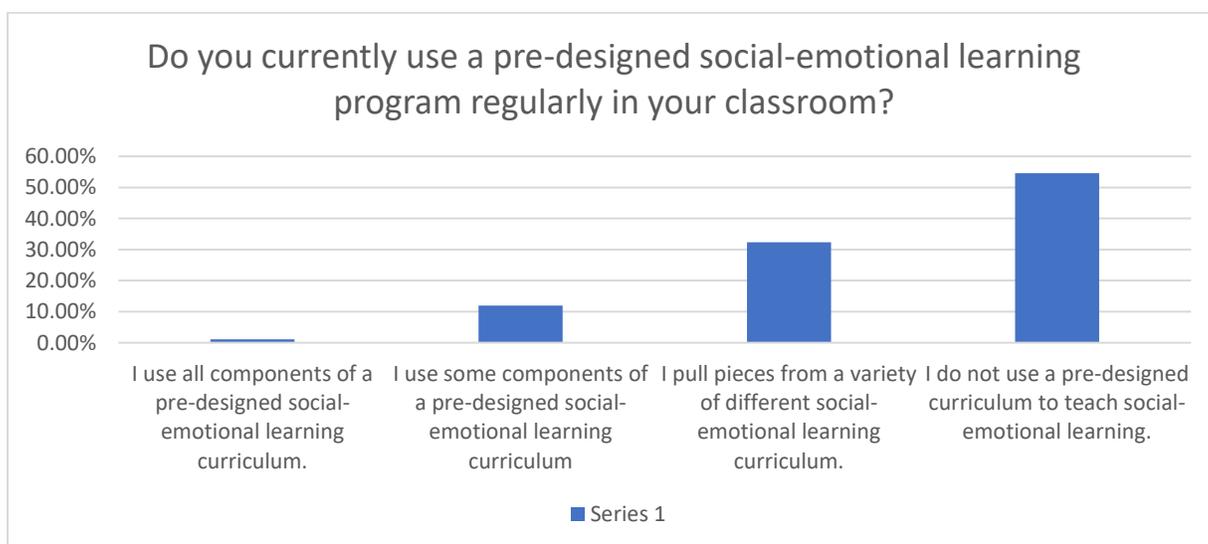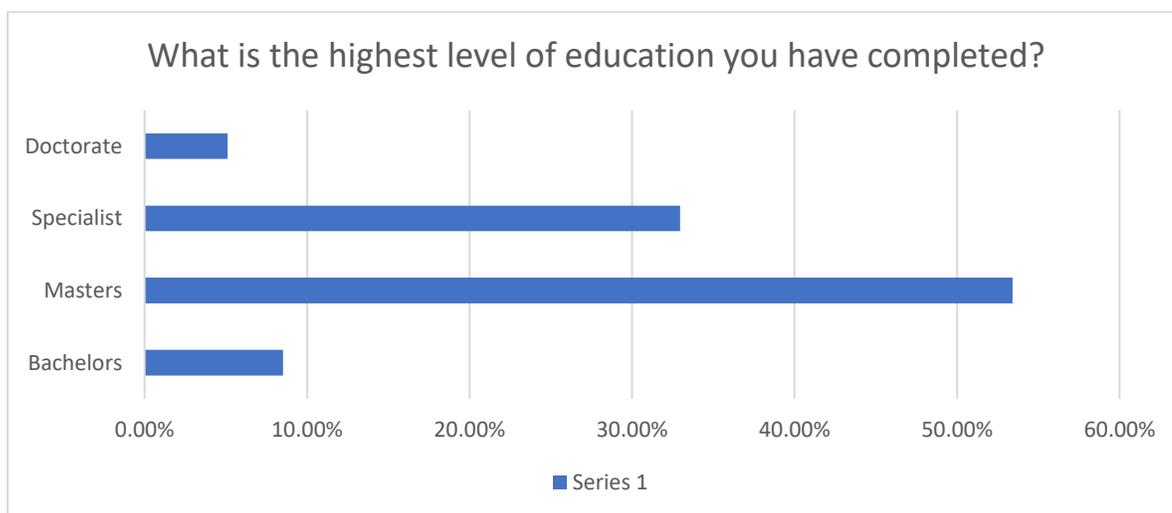

Figure 3. Results of survey item 31: Do you currently use a pre-designed social-emotional learning program regularly in your classroom. Retrieved from SurveyMonkey.com/Standards Based Social Emotional Learning Program for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

The results of the survey also revealed beliefs of a shared sense of responsibility among school staff to foster students' SEL skill development. This survey item reported that 34 (19.43%) participants Strongly Agree and 67 (38.29%) participants Agree that SEL skill development is a shared responsibility among school personnel.

Participants were asked, "When you think about a standards-based curriculum for social-emotional learning for students with Autism, do you think of it as something you need or don't need?" Responses reveal that 127 (72.57 %) participants Strongly Agree, 42 (24.00%) Agree, 4 (2.29%) were Neutral and 2 (1.14%) selected Strongly Disagree. This informs the researchers that a total of 169 (96.57%) of the study participants support the need for a standards-based social-emotional learning curriculum for students with autism.

Survey results revealed that 88 (50%) participants taught in both a self-contained classroom and inclusive classrooms containing students with Autism. Additionally, the participants they were surveyed about their levels of education. (See Figure 4)

Figure 4. Results of survey item 29: What is the highest level of education you have completed? Retrieved from SurveyMonkey.com/Standards Based Social Emotional Learning Program for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Discussion

Social Emotional Learning is essential to the academic and social development of children with Autism (Pratt & Bellini, 2012). It is equally important that teachers have appropriate resources and professional development in order to provide highly quality instruction in the area of social emotional skills (Pratt & Bellini, 2012). If social emotional learning instruction is not delivered with fidelity and confidence, then the instruction loses its effectiveness. If teachers are provided with training in the curriculum or materials used to deliver this instruction, they will be more likely to understand the importance of effective delivery of instruction and will be more confident in providing students with the instruction they need (The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorder, 2018).

Although students with autism benefit from SEL instruction, it is rarely used consistently in the general education classroom. Teachers commonly have very tight schedules and pressures to drill tested subject areas leaving little, if any, time available in the daily schedule for SEL instruction (Vernaza, 2012). If a curriculum existed that tied SEL instruction in with literacy standards and instruction, then teachers would have a greater opportunity to present SEL content to their students daily. This would lead to an increase in exposure to crucial SEL concepts for all students, especially those with autism.

The significance of this study is to inform the need of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculums with embedded literacy standards that are intended for use for students with ASD.

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This study is essential in providing a resource to address the instruction for students with ASD as

well as provide a framework and guide for a professional development that can support the

implementation of SEL curriculums that embed literacy standards. This will improve teacher

practices and impact student academic achievement of students with autism.

This study's goal was to demonstrate the need for a Social-Emotional Learning

Curriculum that is embedded with Grade 3 Florida Literacy Standards and Access Point literacy

standards and geared toward students with ASD. Based on participant responses, this goal was

accomplished by surveying participants and analyzing those responses which revealed

participant feedback that supports the need for a social-emotional learning curriculum that

embeds literacy standards.

Also, this study aimed to inform the need for a professional development guide that will

aid teachers in the use of an SEL Curriculum that is embedded with Grade 3 literacy standards

and geared toward students with ASD. Based on an analysis of survey item responses, it was

found that there is a need for a SEL curriculum to be used for students with Autism, evidenced

by the results of survey that asked participants, "How relevant is a user's guide to your

implementation of a new curriculum or program?" as well as survey item 30 which posed the

statement, "I think professional development is relevant to my implementation of a new

curriculum or program." Results demonstrated that 117 participants (66.4%) Strongly Agree on

both items.

Limitations and Recommendations

Limiting factors to this study include sample size, instrument design, and the distribution

model. Although the sample size was acceptable for the study. More participants would have

produced a greater decrease in margin of error which would increase the validity and reliability

of data collected from the survey responses. As it relates to the instrument design, the survey

consisted of approximately 30 Likert-scale questions and provided no opportunity for open-

ended responses. This flaw in the design may have forced participants to select a response choice

when they may have wanted to provide additional input. Finally, the survey delivery was 100%

electronic and required internet access. This distribution method may have prevented participants

from completing the survey if there were experiencing difficulties related to internet connection

or device malfunctions.

Conclusion

The responses of survey participants indicate the necessity for additional instructional

resources that cater to the needs of students with autism within a general education setting.

Specifically, 98 % (176) of respondents indicated that they were interested in this curriculum and

96% (170) participants Strongly Agree or Agree that they need a standards-based curriculum for

social, emotional learning for students with autism. Overall, throughout the survey participants

were more likely to choose Strongly Agree and Agree to items that highlighted the importance of

instruction of social-emotional learning skills to students as well as the necessity for professional

development and resources to support students with disabilities, especially those with autism.

Based on this finding, it is recommended that the researchers continue the development

of *The Kase-Roberts Curriculum for Social Emotional Learning for Students with Autism.* It is

further recommended that schools and school districts should prioritize SEL instruction for all

students and allow for a time within the school day for planning and implementation of such

programs that address social-emotional learning for students with autism. This recommendation

is based on the finding of the researchers that 90% (159) of participants believe it is part of the

teacher's job to teach children how to manage distress and other upsetting feelings, while 66.8% (117) of participants Disagree or Strongly Disagree that their school allots regular prep time for SEL program planning.

It is also recommended that more professionals in the field of education need to be made aware of the benefits related to teaching social-emotional skills, supported by the finding that 76% (134) of participants either Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed to have received an adequate amount of training about SEL. Additionally, efforts should also be made to seek out the opportunities available to merge SEL instruction with academic standards. This practice will allow for additional supports with SEL skill instruction while students are also able to receive instruction on academic standards.

The researchers endorse that future research should be conducted to examine the effectiveness of *The Kase-Roberts Curriculum* once it has been published and educators have had the opportunity to implement the curriculum and engage in the professional development practices. It is also recommended that this study should be extended to include other disabilities such as Intellectual Disabled, Attention Deficit Disorder, Learning Disabled, and Developmental Delays.

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Kase-Roberts Curriculum for Social Emotional Learning for Students with Autism

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Curriculum Could Revolutionize Social Emotional Learning Instruction for Third Graders with Autism

 [Boca Raton, FL., May 1, 2019] – Mr. Cortney Roberts and Ms. Marissa Kase, doctoral students at Lynn University, complete their dissertation and plan to release research-based social emotional learning curriculum for third grade students with autism upon completion of graduation.

The Kase-Roberts Curriculum for Social Emotional Learning for Students with Autism will be a research based social emotional learning curriculum created for third grade students with autism. The curriculum comes complete with a professional development manual for teachers as well as teacher access to an online professional learning community which allows them to connect with teachers across the state of Florida who are using the curriculum as well as the authors. Research conducted during the dissertation process shows that an overwhelming majority of teachers would like to teach social emotional learning daily, but have to choose between social skills and academic instruction, leaving students not socially prepared for school and life activities. In fact, research conducted by Ashdown and Bernard in 2012 shows that 60 percent of students are cognitively prepared for kindergarten, but only 40 percent are socially ready. Teachers are provided little to no resources or time to teach social emotional learning and the goal is to help fulfill teachers' desire to do what they know is best for the students by allowing them resources to provide necessary instruction.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics in 2011, on average 95 percent of students with a disability receive some or all their education in a general education setting. The purpose of this leveled curriculum is so that it can be implemented during the reading block of any classroom whether it is a general education, resource, or self-contained classroom and still meet the unique social emotional needs of students with autism.

"This curriculum and the corresponding professional development guide were designed to help teachers deliver daily social emotional learning instruction to all students, especially those with autism in order to bridge social gaps as well as to improve student reading performance" said Marissa Kase, co-author of the curriculum.

Release Date: January 25, 2020

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Appendix A

Dear Sir or Madam,

We are Cortney Roberts and Marissa Kase, we are researchers pursuing our Doctor of Education at Lynn University in Boca Raton, Florida

This email is intended to solicit your assistance in the data collection of a Dissertation in Practice (DiP). This DiP is to examine how useful do experts in the field perceive the "Kase-Roberts Curriculum for Social-Emotional Learning for Students with Autism" for providing social-emotional learning instruction. The Kase-Roberts is a curriculum designed to address Social Emotional Learning and Academic Literacy standards for students with Autism.

We are asking for your assistance in sending survey to the members of your organization to seek their participation in the research study. Your assistance is needed in the form of providing us with a list of emails of current members of your division.

Participants will receive a notice of informed consent that will outline their rights if the chose to participate in the survey. Emails provided will only be used for the purpose of soliciting participants. The email list will be kept secure on a password protected laptop and deleted after the survey window period.

If additional information is needed regarding this request, please call Cortney Roberts at ▆▆▆▆▆▆ or Marissa Kase at ▆▆▆▆▆▆ . We look forward to your response within 5 days of receiving this email.

Thanks in advance for your attention.

Educationally,

Cortney Roberts & Marissa Kase

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Appendix B

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH IN

Social Emotional Learning and Students with Autism

We are looking for volunteers to take part in a study of

Social Emotional Learning Curriculum that embeds Florida Literacy Standards for students with Autism

As a participant in this study, you would be asked to complete ***computer-based survey***

Your participation is **entirely voluntary** and would take up **approximately 10 minutes** of your time in a single

setting.

By participating in this study, you will help us to identify the perceptions of a Social Emotional Learning

curriculum for students with Autism from experts in the field.

To learn more about this study, or to participate in this study,

please contact:

Principal Investigators:

Cortney Roberts or Marissa Kase

██████████ *or* ██████████

This study is supervised by: Dr. Jennie Trocchio email: ██████████████

*This study has been reviewed by the Lynn University Research Ethics Board.

To access the survey, scan the QR Code or enter the link below on your computer or mobile device

https://www.surveymonkey.com/create/?sm=FUKkt89DYWh5Im6KwqOB0uHi8uHHqxI9Y0Eql_2FsoO9w_3D&tab_clicked=1

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Appendix C

INFORMED CONSENT

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to investigate how useful do experts in the field perceive

the "Kase Roberts Curriculum for Social-Emotional Learning for Students with Autism" for

providing social-emotional learning instruction.

Specific Procedures

Your participation in this study will assist in learning more about the knowledge of

educators learning styles and how they teach their students. You will be asked to answer 30

questions about your opinions on you perceive the "Kase Roberts Curriculum for Social-

Emotional Learning for Students with Autism" for providing social-emotional learning

instruction.

Duration of Participation and Compensation

The total duration of your participation should be no longer than 10 minutes. There will

be no compensation for participation.

Risks

This online survey is strictly voluntary, and no penalty will be imposed for non-

participation. There are minimal risks in participating in the survey. However, if you feel

uncomfortable or anxious at any time, you may press the "X" button in the upper right-hand

corner of the survey exit out of the survey.

Benefits

There are no benefits for answering the survey questions, however educators may enjoy sharing their knowledge, expertise, and assisting in increasing the knowledge base in the area of educator learning styles

Confidentiality

This survey is strictly anonymous and there is no identifying information. No IP addresses will be kept or known to the researchers. Your answers to questions will be stored for two years on a password protected computer and after that time will be deleted. This project's research records may be reviewed by the departments at Lynn University responsible for regulatory and research oversight.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about the research project you may contact Cortney Roberts ███████████████████████████████████████) or Marissa Kase (████████████████████████████████████ any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may call Dr. Robert Reich, Chair of the Lynn University Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Subjects, at ███████████████████████████████████████

Documentation of Informed Consent   I have had an opportunity to read the consent form and have the research study explained. I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the research project and my questions have been answered. I am prepared to participate in the research study described above. By clicking "OK" I am consenting to participate in the study.

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Appendix D

1. After reading the above description, how interested are you in this curriculum?

    a. Strongly Agree

    b. Agree

    c. Neutral

    d. Disagree

    e. Strongly Disagree

2. What is your gender?

    a. Male

    b. Female

3. What is your race/ethnicity?

    a. White

    b. Black or African American

    c. Asian

    d. Hispanic

    e. Latino/Hispanic

    f. Native Hawaiian of Other Pacific Islander

    g. Other (Please Specify) _____

4. Do you currently have, or have you ever held a professional teaching certification?

   a. Yes

   b. No

5. How long have you been in your current position?

   _____ Years _____ Months

6. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

   a. Bachelors

   b. Masters

   c. Masters with Specialist Degree

   d. Doctorate

7. How relevant is Social-Emotional Learning to your instruction of students with Autism?

   a. Strongly Agree

   b. Agree

   c. Neutral

   d. Disagree

   e. Strongly Disagree

8. How relevant is professional development to your implementation of a new curriculum or program?

    a. Strongly Agree

    b. Agree

    c. Neutral

    d. Disagree

    e. Strongly Disagree

9. How relevant is a user's guide to your implementation of a new program or curriculum?

    a. Strongly Agree

    b. Agree

    c. Neutral

    d. Disagree

    e. Strongly Disagree

10. When you think about standards-based curriculum for Social Emotional Learning for students with Autism, do you think that it is something you need?

    a. Strongly Agree

    b. Agree

    c. Neutral

    d. Disagree

    e. Strongly Disagree

11. How likely are you to replace your current social emotional skills program/curriculum with a social-emotional skills program/curriculum that imbeds literacy standards?

    a. Strongly Agree

    b. Agree

    c. Neutral

    d. Disagree

    e. Strongly Disagree

12. Do you now or have you ever taught in…

    a. A self-contained classroom for students with autism spectrum disorder

    b. An inclusion class containing 1 or more students with autism spectrum disorder

    c. Both a self-contained classroom and an inclusion classroom containing individuals with autism spectrum disorder

    d. I have not taught a class containing students with autism spectrum disorder

13. Do you currently use a pre-designed social-emotional learning program regularly in your classroom?

    a. I use all components of a pre-designed social-emotional learning curriculum.

    b. I use some components of a pre-designed social-emotional learning curriculum,

    c. I pull pieces from a variety of different social-emotional learning curriculum.

    d. I do not use a pre-designed curriculum to teach social-emotional learning.

14. How often do you teach social-emotional learning?

    a. Daily

    b. 3-4 Days a Week

    c. 1-2 Days a Week

    d. Once Every Couple of Weeks

    e. I do not regularly teach social-emotional learning.

15. What kind professional experience have you had to implement SEL programs (choose all that apply)?

    a. None

    b. ½ Day School In-Service

    c. Full day School In-Service

    d. Workshop

    e. Read Relevant Books

    f.   Watched a Video/TV Program

    g.   Prior Work Experience

    h.   Graduate Training

    i.   On-Site Coaching

    j.   Online Training

    k.   Other _____

16. What is the primary setting you believe social-emotional learning skills should be taught?

    a.   Classroom

    b.   Small Group

    c.   One-to-One

    d.   Don't Know

    e.   Other _____

17. It is important for teachers to help children learn how to identify their emotions.

    a.   Strongly Agree

    b.   Agree

    c.   Neutral

    d.   Somewhat Disagree

18. I believe it is part of the teacher's job to teach children to understand the emotions of
others.

    a. Strongly Agree

    b. Agree

    c. Neutral

    d. Disagree

    e. Strongly Disagree

19. It is important for teachers to help children manage their own emotions.

    a. Strongly Agree

    b. Agree

    c. Neutral

    d. Disagree

    e. Strongly Disagree

20. I believe it is part of the teacher's job to teach children how to manage distress and other
upsetting feelings (i.e. anger, anxiety, sadness, and shame).

    a. Strongly Agree

    b. Agree

    c. Neutral

    d. Disagree

e. Strongly Disagree

21. My School allots regular prep time for SEL program planning.

    a. Strongly Agree

    b. Agree

    c. Neutral

    d. Somewhat Disagree

    e. Disagree

22. My school allots time on a regular basis to implement SEL lessons.

    a. Strongly Agree

    b. Agree

    c. Neutral

    d. Disagree

    e. Strongly Disagree

23. My school allots enough time to implement SEL lessons.

    a. Strongly Agree

    b. Agree

    c. Neutral

    d. Disagree

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　　　　e.　Strongly Disagree

24. I would prefer to use my own resources (no curriculum) to teach emotional awareness.

　　　　a.　Strongly Agree

　　　　b.　Agree

　　　　c.　Neutral

　　　　d.　Disagree

　　　　e.　Strongly Disagree

25. I would prefer helping children to learn how to manage emotions with the aid of a

　　structured SEL curriculum.

　　　　a.　Strongly Agree

　　　　b.　Agree

　　　　c.　Neutral

　　　　d.　Disagree

　　　　e.　Strongly Disagree

26. Among staff at my school, there is a shared sense of responsibility to foster students' SEL

　　skill development.

　　　　a.　Strongly Agree

　　　　b.　Agree

　　　　c.　Neutral

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    d. Disagree

    e. Strongly Disagree

27. I have received an adequate among of training about SEL.

    a. Strongly Agree

    b. Agree

    c. Neutral

    d. Disagree

    e. Strongly Disagree

28. My school is open to change regarding new programming.

    a. Strongly Agree

    b. Agree

    c. Neutral

    d. Disagree

    e. Strongly Disagree

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29. My school encourages risk-taking in regard to new programming.

    a. Strongly Agree

    b. Agree

    c. Neutral

    d. Disagree

    e. Strongly Disagree

30. New programs are integrated into existing practices and routines. Strongly Agree

    a. Agree

    b. Somewhat Agree

    c. Neutral

    d. Disagree

    e. Strongly Disagree