

**IT'S ALWAYS PERSONAL:  
SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN THE ELEMENTARY MUSIC CLASSROOM  
WITH STUDENT POPULATION OF VARIED NEEDS**

**By**

**Becky O'Brien**

**A Thesis  
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree  
MASTER OF MUSIC  
IN  
MUSIC EDUCATION  
College of Fine Arts  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN  
Stevens Point, Wisconsin**

**April, 2022**

**APPROVED BY THE GRADUATE COMMITTEE OF:**



---

**Rachel Brashier, PhD (advisor)**



---

**Patrick Lawrence, DMA**



---

**Sydney Bueno, PhD**

**Abstract**

How do elementary music teachers meet the Social Emotional Learning needs of students from a variety of backgrounds in the general music classroom? I studied this topic because I wondered if some practices of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) might be more beneficial for elementary music students with varied backgrounds. Utilizing qualitative research and phenomenological and narrative data analysis methods, I wanted to gain understanding to help readers and other elementary music educators, who want to embed Social Emotional Learning practices in their classrooms develop specific Social Emotional Learning (SEL) strategies which may serve to better empower their students.

## Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Chapter I: Introduction.....   | 6  |
| Purpose Statement.....   | 6  |
| Importance of the Study.....   | 7  |
| Definition of Terms.....   | 7  |
| Chapter II: Review of Related Literature.....  | 9  |
| Elementary Music Education with Student Population of Varied Needs .....   | 9  |
| Social Emotional Learning in Elementary School and Music Class .....   | 13 |
| Social Emotional Learning in the Elementary General Music Classroom with A<br>Student Population of Varied Needs ..... | 19 |
| Chapter III: Design and Methodology .....  | 27 |
| Process .....  | 27 |
| Participants.....  | 28 |
| Qualitative Research .....   | 29 |
| Data Collection .....  | 30 |
| Approach Analysis.....   | 31 |
| Chapter IV: Findings.....  | 33 |
| First Set of Data Analysis .....   | 33 |
| Second Set of Data Analysis.....   | 37 |
| Third Set of Data Analysis.....  | 39 |
| First Finding: Music Class is Unique and Needs to be a Safe Space for All<br>Students .....                            | 40 |
| Second Finding: Teacher Student Relationships are Important and They Must  |    |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| be Caring .....  | 42 |
| Third Finding: Healthy Social Emotional Learning Helps Build Student Growth.....       | 44 |
| Chapter V: Discussion and Implications.....  | 48 |
| Music is Well Suited for SEL as a Safe Space with Collaborative Music Making.....      | 49 |
| Caring Teacher-Student Relationships are Important to Foster SEL.....                  | 53 |
| Healthy SEL in Music Helps Build Student Growth for Real-World Skill and Success ..... | 57 |
| Implications.....  | 60 |
| Implications for Others .....  | 60 |
| Implications for the Educational Setting.....  | 61 |
| Implications for the Field of Music Education .....                                    | 64 |
| Resources .....  | 70 |
| Appendices.....  | 75 |
| Appendix A - Informed Consent Form.....  | 75 |
| Appendix B - Interview Questions .....   | 77 |
| Appendix C - Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4 .....   | 78 |

## **Chapter I: Introduction**

I studied the topic of Social Emotional Learning in the elementary music classroom. Although Social Emotional Learning has recently, in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, received more attention, the role of Social Emotional Learning in the music classroom with a student population with a wide variety of needs has not been widely reported.

How do elementary music teachers meet the Social Emotional Learning needs of students from a variety of backgrounds in the general music classroom? I wanted to study this topic because I wondered if some practices of Social Emotional Learning might be more beneficial for elementary music students with varied backgrounds. In my own classroom, I was teaching an array of students with diverse learning needs and backgrounds. Over the years, my desire to gain understanding to help not only myself, but also other elementary music educators, who want to embed Social Emotional Learning practices in their classrooms grew. I wanted to help define Social Emotional Learning beliefs and practices which educators might utilize to serve and to better empower students.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to determine what basic tenants, knowledge, and skills elementary music teachers use to meet the Social Emotional Learning needs of students from a variety of backgrounds in the general music classroom. Ultimately, I hope readers develop Social Emotional Learning understanding and techniques to broaden learning of all kinds, but specifically in the areas of community with equity and inclusion in the music classroom. This could, however, be applied in any classroom, not just in a musical setting, and would thus improve the value of education everywhere.

The question that this research specifically addressed was: How do elementary music teachers meet the social emotional learning needs of students from a variety of backgrounds in the general music classroom?

### **Importance of the Study**

This study is important because this research helps bring understanding which can assist elementary music educators in embedding successful Social Emotional Learning practices into their instruction, and also to better serve all students, who come from a wide variety of backgrounds and bring a vast array of challenges into the music classroom. These Social Emotional Learning practices, which may better serve to meet the needs of all students, including students with varied learning needs, to learn Social Emotional Learning skills and to assimilate information more efficiently and effectively. Moreover, the knowledge gained may help educators of all fields to develop Social Emotional Learning techniques which more efficiently enables students with a variety of needs to be successful in their learning goals. In essence, I hope to improve the value of musical (and all types of) learning.

### **Definition of Terms**

Within this study, most terms should straightforwardly be understood. Two points need to be clarified. First, the term ensemble will be used to define people who function together as a whole. This paper specifically addresses the elementary music classroom; not an orchestra, band, or choral group. However, as music making occurs in the elementary general music classroom, students learn to function as an ensemble. Second, there are a few acronyms which may be beneficial to define. Social Emotional Learning will be noted as SEL. Restorative Practices will sometimes be abbreviated RP. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning will most often be referred to as CASEL. The National Association for Music Education will be

referred to as NafME, the Department of Public Instruction will be shown as DPI. Finally, J. Heywort's study with an Australian learning community of Non-English Speaking Backgrounds will be referenced as NESB.

In Chapter I, I gave information on the purpose of this study, my research question, the importance of the study, and a definition of key terms. In Chapter II, I will provide my review of literature related to this study.



## **Chapter II: Review of Related Literature**

In the previous chapter, Chapter I, I introduced this study about Social Emotional Learning in the elementary music classroom with a student population of varied needs and gave information regarding the type of research conducted. In this chapter, Chapter II, I will review the literature that informed the basis of my study.

It is understood, especially in the present Covid-19 educationally altered environment, that the social emotional wellbeing of students is critical to their overall health and ability to engage in learning. It is crucial educators meet all student needs. I have organized this review of the literature into the following subsections moving from broad to very specific topics: First, elementary music education with a student population of varied needs. Here I present information from scholars who study modern music education and some of the prevailing tenants in common practices for populations with varied needs. In the second, literature concerning the most common tenants of SEL in the elementary school setting will be discussed. In the third and final section, literature will cover information which is specifically about SEL in the elementary music class with student populations of varied needs ranging from socio-economic diversity, cultural diversity, to cognitive and physical disabilities.

### **Elementary Music Education with Student Population of Varied Needs**

Elementary music is rather complex in all that it encompasses. With varied challenges presented to society, communities, families and students, it is important to understand ways in which the current pedagogy is considered and shaped. In this section, I will present information from several sources in an attempt to lay the foundation for some of the challenges which elementary music education addresses. Many address diversity and inclusion with social justice (Hall, 2021; Hourigan and Hammel, 2019; Howard, 2008; Thumlert et al, 2020). Bates focuses

on these topics as well but adds to the significance of relationships and culture in order to better support social justice (Bates, 2012). Bruner (1975) and Freire (1968) discuss the importance of the role of the oppressed. The significance of choices made by teachers in their instruction is further discussed (Howard, 2008).

Many of these scholars call for diversity, equity, and inclusion within the classroom. Diversity and inclusion are related within education and teacher preparation. Banks, et al. (2005) stated: “The goal must be to design programs that make attention to diversity, equity, and social justice centrally important so that all courses and field experiences for prospective teachers are conducted with these important goals in mind” (Hourigan and Hammel, 2019, p. 274). Teachers need to intentionally plan for inclusion and equity when they are developing learning activities for all people groups.

Under the call for social justice and equity, information has recently been published by the National Association for Music Education (NAfME). This work demonstrates an awareness of the forms of oppression and systemic barriers that students may face, as well as a need for critical, intersectional perspectives that are attuned to respond to the gendered, racist, and ableist realities of many students’ musical education (Thumlert et al., 2020, p. 1).

Some scholars likewise state that diversity and inclusion occur best when teachers understand both the communities and cultures that they service. Educators need to understand and respect each student’s cultural background. This includes understanding that social class is a form of cultural diversity, and it should not necessarily be our mission to “save” students from their own cultural heritage, nor attempt to replace it with something “better” (Bates, 2012, p. 36).

Bates goes on to state that equity and inclusion is so important that the teacher must spend their priority on relationship building with their students, so students feel valued and

included in every aspect of their classroom. This lays an interesting thought for the foundation for SEL. At times, the educator must prioritize understanding and meeting student needs, rather than teaching the curricular content intended.

*Sometimes the subject matter (i.e., music) can be secondary to the teaching and learning relationship. For example, behavioral intervention in a self-contained special education classroom looks very similar in music class and in English class. In fact, the more consistent these behavioral constructs are among collaborators, the more effective the strategies are for the student. Teaching consistency and collaboration in regard to behavior to preservice teachers (no matter what the area of concentration) provides necessary and successful strategies (Bates, 2012, p. 10).*

Bates further explains, “The main thing is to work toward social justice by reducing the negative impacts of financial, cultural, and social hierarchies. This includes recognizing societal forces within the music education profession that maintain social stratification” (Bates, 2012, pg. 36).

In contrast, Bruner (1975) and Freire (1968) believe that social stratification found in our society and reflected in our educational system must be broken down. Both give a significant role of responsibility for this breakdown to the oppressed. Neither of the authors believe that the sole responsibility for the breakdown belongs to the educator nor the educational system alone. Freire begins, “Dehumanization, which marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it, is a distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human” (Freire, 1968, p. 44). Bruner (1975) shared, “Persistent poverty over generations creates a culture of survival. Goals are short range and restricted. The outsider and the outside are suspect. One stays inside and gets what one can. Beating the system takes the place of using the system.” He also further discusses how community change must occur and to assign a role for change to the oppressed.

*“Rather the issue is to make it possible for the poor to gain a sense of their own power-through jobs, through community activation, through creating a sense of project in the future. Jobs, community action under community control, a decent revision of preschool and early school opportunities - all of these are crucial. But just as crucial is a sense of the change in the times - the insistence of the powerless that their plight is not a visitation of fate, but a remediable condition” (Bruner, 1975, p. 47).*

Next to Bruner’s call for community activation, Freire (1968) places the drive and the catalyst for moving forward into the oppressed people’s mindset and will. “In order to regain their humanity, they must cease to be things and fight as men and women. This is a radical requirement. They cannot enter the struggle as objects in order later to become human beings” (Freire, 1968, p.68). Both authors call for change within the community itself on both the individual and on the system.

With similar goals in mind, but with a different approach is M. Howard (2008) in *Joy and Inclusivity*. This more pointedly addresses the educator and writes: “The things we say, our actions, the songs we choose, and the joyousness (or joylessness) with which we approach our work are key ingredients to the cultural understanding and significance of music in a child’s life.” In placing the responsibility in the planning and delivery of the instruction, he is helping teachers to deliberately shape their practices differently. He goes on, “Do we encourage and recognize the music of other cultures, women composers, marginalized peoples, and actively portray music as something other than the Western Gregorian Aesthetic?” (Howard, 2008, p. 47). This simple question bears the essence of how we can begin simply with a check of our teaching techniques and methods against traditional instruction and bias.

Lastly, Howard states, “Do we encourage music making as vital to, which is distinct from, the ‘work’ of school, (or can we work harder to redefine or synthesize “play” with “work”) and finally, do we encourage music making as an inclusive, spontaneous, and life-affirming act

of community - or do we make sure the room door is closed and go about our business until every note and gesture is ready for performance?" (Howard, 2008, p. 48).

Music educators are working to develop more equity and inclusion in the music classroom. Hall shares, "Educators from all subject areas are striving to create classroom environments where students feel valued for their authentic selves....A joint facet among these (diverse) practices is the necessity in developing a curriculum that reflects students' cultural and racial identities" (Hall, 2021, p. 1). Music educators are recognizing inequity and are implementing changes to better include and merit all students and by extension, all of society.

### **Social Emotional Learning in Elementary School and Music Class**

This section discusses literature concerning SEL in the elementary setting, often in the music classroom. Authors in this segment present literature defining emotional intelligence (Elksnin & Elksnin, 2003; Kupana, 2015), in developing skills and values (Haymovitz et al, 2018), in observing social emotional development (Link, 2018), in teacher preparation, (Burton, 2019; McClelland et al, 2017; Watts, 2020) with Restorative Practices (Hulvershorn & Mulholland, 2018) in SEL Framework, (CASEL, 2021), embedding SEL curriculum into the classroom (Cefai & Cavioni, 2014), and in the school-wide approach (Oberle et al, 2020).

The idea of emotional intelligence is a rather new concept. The term emotional intelligence was first used in 1990 by Salovey and Mayer. It involves the ability to perceive accurately, measure and understand, and express emotion. It also encompasses being able to access and/or generate feelings to facilitate thought, the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge, and the ability to regulate emotions to foster emotional and intellectual development (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Elksnin & Elksnin, 2003).

Kupana (2015) discusses how emotional intelligence was defined in 2003 as a social and emotional system that turns cognitive activities into action and success. Kupana discusses the field of emotional and social learning in the school environment and believes it should include the following skills:

*“Effective communication skills; willing, efficient and cooperative participation to group activities; control of emotions and impulses and transmitting them via appropriate ways; resolution of interpersonal conflicts and disagreements in non-violent, constructive, peaceful and mindful ways; living life with sound and correct personality traits; learning how to learn in every field of life and having the approach of reflective learning” (Kupana, 2015, p. 79).*

Once defined, the hope and the charge of nurturing and developing these skills and values became a more cognizant thought. SEL became more of a focus point for progress in education (Haymovitz et al., 2018).

In 2018, Link discusses keys to social emotional development. He believes social emotional development is central to how well children attach to their caregivers, how well they adapt in various situations, and how well they integrate into society. He also states that disruptions in this development often leads to many challenging behaviors that frequently emerge and are experienced in the classroom. He shares that having an understanding of social emotional attributes is crucial in determining how students will adapt in schools, how they will form peer relationships, develop self-confidence, self-management, and emotional competencies for successful participation in group learning (Link, 2018).

With many valuable skills relating to SEL, schools, teachers, and staff need training for understanding and for implementing pedagogical practice. Specifically wanting this to begin at

the earliest ages possible within the music classroom, in a 2019 study, Burton discusses teacher training.

*“A holistic, or comprehensive, perspective on how young children grow and develop should be emphasized when preparing preservice music teachers to teach early childhood music. With an awareness of how young children mature, students will have knowledge of the complex nature of child development as they create music curriculum and structure music classes that take into consideration young children’s physical, cognitive, and social-emotional domains. Each domain builds on previously acquired skills and knowledge while being integrally related to one another” (Burton, 2019, p. 626).*

As young children interact with others, they learn how to be independent and share. They learn how to take turns and work with others. Students' interactions help them to think before they act, and to resolve conflict (Burton, 2019). These SEL skills require deliberate planning and implementation of cooperative activities for student learning and development.

In 2020, Watts, S., Eldreth, J., Grant, T., & Renne, J. wrote *Caring and Connectivity: A Framework for Active Caring in the Music Classroom*. In this article, the authors remind the reader of the importance of active caring in the classroom and beyond. They take some concepts from Nel Noddings, an educational scholar in the forefront of caring research, and discuss her four dimensions for bringing this into the music classroom. The four dimensions are: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation. These are stable beginning points for reflection on how teachers can cultivate caring in their instruction and classrooms. In addition, how these are utilized to develop kindhearted relationships with their students. They point out the advantage the music educator has with students above many other educators; quite often, music educators work with the same students for many years, affording them the opportunity for long-term growth and development with the same population and community (Watts et al., 2020).

These scholars agree that SEL and development is critical for students and their successful emergence into society. Cefai and Cavioni call for a social emotional curriculum

framework. For over one hundred years, schools have mainly focused on accomplishment. Schools have paved the way into adult work life. The concept is to hope that schools could, without compromising the accomplishment, also teach the skills of well-being (Cefai & Cavioni, 2014). The authors go on to share four key dimensions of the social emotional education curriculum framework in visual form:

**Figure 1**  
Cefai & Cavioni: Social Emotional Curriculum Framework

|            | SELF   | SOCIAL                                |
|------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| AWARENESS  | I am...<br>Knowledgeable<br>SELF<br>CONFIDENCE           | I care...<br>Caring<br>EMPATHY        |
| MANAGEMENT | I can...<br>Capable<br>SELF CONTROL &<br>SELF MOTIVATION | I will...<br>Responsible<br>INFLUENCE |

(Cefai & Cavioni, 2014, p 44).

Cefai and Cavioni describe it in this way: The four areas developed from the two dimensions of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social management bring together the five SEL areas. The five areas are positive emotions, optimism, persistence, confidence and self-efficacy, autonomy or agency, and sense of leadership. These are some of the skills from both positive psychology and resilience literature (Cefai & Cavioni, 2014, p. 44).

This framework lays out clear and basic scaffolding of these concepts as well as simple beginning implementation focuses for educators. The defined, understood, and provided



framework for SEL is key to pedagogical reflection for best use and implementation for embedding into each classroom and community. As the world changes, the ability to relate to one another and to collaborate with others will be key to successful social and emotional interaction and efficiency in many settings. Cefai & Cavioni (2014) believe that there are so many changes happening at this very moment, particularly in advances in technology, that we can only guess what the future will be like and what competencies young people will need to be successful. The guess is that SEL skills will be, without a doubt, the ones that remain on the list.

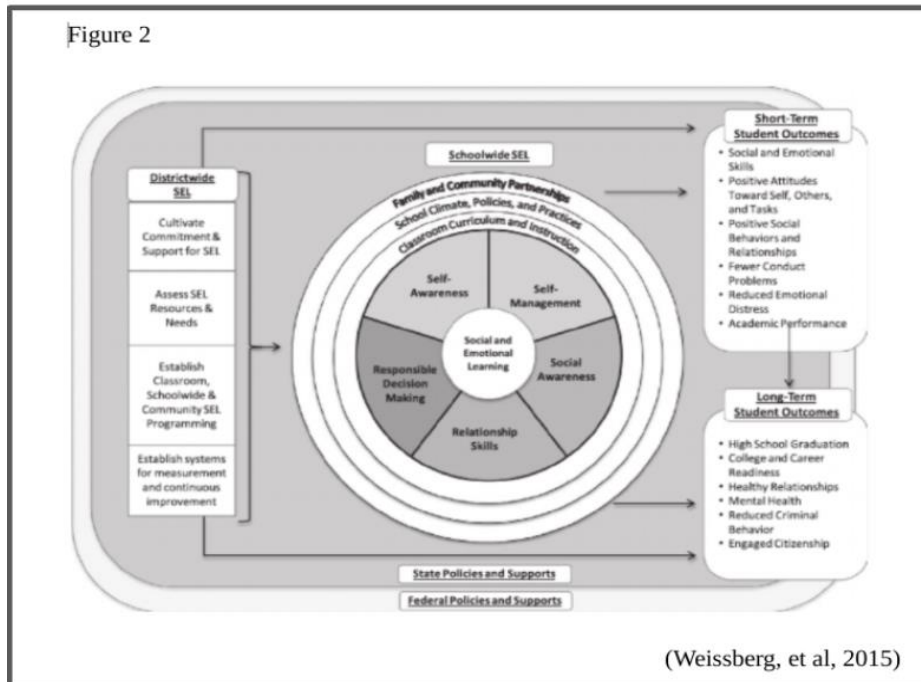
As assuredly as SEL skills will be needed, Restorative Practices (RP) could serve as an important tool for development with SEL. Literature findings suggest that SEL and Restorative Practices (RP) help cultivate developing skills and values, fostering relationships, and supporting behaviors that seem to show improved academic performance. RP aims to restore relationships which have been damaged through conflict resolution. This encourages offenders to take responsibility for their actions or to engage in activities which are designed to help build relationships in the school. (Haymovitz et al., 2018). Described in common terms, RP is used primarily when harm occurs to rebuild a broken relationship or establish a sense of community. A main goal of RP is to prevent harm through proactive planning and activities. SEL programming supports RP by providing a collaborative approach to helping children become aware of and manage their emotions, appreciate other people's perspectives, creating positive goals, make responsible decisions and handle interpersonal circumstances positively (Hulvershorn & Mulholland, 2018).

In 1994, Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was formed. CASEL has grown and continues globally today. The framework established by CASEL is a base blueprint for implementing systemic SEL in schools. The history of the SEL movement

is the story of a simple, but powerful idea: what if education fully supported the social, emotional, and academic development of all children? The five competencies defined are: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2021).

Each CASEL-defined competency is interrelated and reflects cognitive, affective and behavioral domains of SEL. Self-awareness involves the ability to identify and recognize one's own emotion, thoughts, and their influences on behavior. Self-management is the ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively. Social awareness entails the ability to take the perspective of others, including those from differing backgrounds and cultures. Relationship skills provide children with tools to build and maintain healthy relationships. Lastly, responsible decision-making skills equip children with the ability to make constructive and respectful choices about behavior and social interactions. People who are proficient in core SEL competencies are able to integrate feeling, thinking, and behaving to successfully traverse tasks in school and life (Oberle et al, 2020). As students move to skill building in relationships with others, CASEL competencies parallel RP in building and in repair of those relationships.

The conceptual model below, Figure 2, originally published in 2015 by Weissberg et al, illustrates the five competencies at its center. However, it also illustrates a system-wide SEL support scaffold. This was published just one year after Cefai & Cavioni.



The school-wide approach, also known as the ‘whole-school approach’ supports the entire school community for change and aims to integrate SEL into daily interactions and practices involving all staff, parents, and students at various levels. This systemic approach helps introduce and maintain effective SEL programming for all. It is comprehensive and coordinated in both planning and in implementation (Oberle et al, 2020).

### **Social Emotional Learning in the Elementary General Music Classroom with A Student Population of Varied Needs**

This section discusses literature concerning SEL in the elementary general music classroom with a student population of varied needs. This is important and extremely timely. Every elementary school is faced with numerous challenges. Presently, every elementary school in the world is navigating through the Covid-19 pandemic in addition to innumerable other concerns. Specifically, my research is being conducted in the state of Wisconsin. Wisconsin has a population of varied backgrounds and needs. Wisconsin SEL Competencies add value to this discussion.

Helping students to cope with the vast array of issues as they grow and develop is paramount to their health and well-being. As these are explored, the literature will describe SEL in the elementary music class with varied needs (Varner 2020). Trauma and other factors can impact a child's competence in SEL (Link, 2018; Elksnin & Elksnin 2003). In addition, it will describe how SEL can be utilized with at-risk populations (Jacobi, 2012).

Raschdorf (2021) explains how the integration of Social Emotional Learning can become the common standard by helping students to feel safe and then motivating them through experiences which are 'greater than themselves. Once students are motivated and inspired with SEL, both authors Edgar (2021) and Varner (2021) suggest giving students "voice and choice" which relates to helping students connect and reflect on their experiences, thus making learning personal and equitable for every student. Perhaps most importantly, Hellman (2020) discusses the need to turn SEL practice into policy and use it for Arts Advocacy.

J. Heywort (2013) communicates a successful narrative of his study with an Australian learning community, Non-English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB), of great challenges with SEL in their music classroom. A general music classroom aligned with SEL can, if implemented with fidelity and purpose, help promote the development of self and social awareness with equity (Varner, 2021).

In *General Music Learning is also Social and Emotional Learning* (2020), Varner shares that music learning and Social Emotional Learning both do similar things: 1. Both help develop student awareness. 2. Both help develop student social awareness. 3. Both help promote responsible decision-making skills. 4. Both help foster self-management skills. 5. Both encourage positive relationship skills. He believes that music can be used as an emotional stimulus for various emotional experiences, as a form of self-expression and as a group

experience. Activities common to music, ensemble playing, group singing, and defining emotions within music listening examples are easy connections and natural links between general music learning and SEL.

Varner believes that students' sense of self or identity, guides their belief in their ability to influence the world around them. He shares that the competency of self-awareness is a general understanding of how well students know themselves. It is consistent in that he maintains having a focus on SEL in the elementary general music class can help develop the mindset that students are learners who strive and persevere through challenges. General music activities provide students with learning activities to promote understanding of various roles and tasks. It often also provides habits of self-reflection and habits of mind in a safe and supportive learning environment. Looking beyond the individual, Varner accepts that social awareness encompasses social skills that improve student ability to understand what it means to be a classmate, friend, and citizen. It includes how well we know and understand those around us and helps to develop empathy and overall respect (Varner, 2020).

While Varner describes self and social competencies, Link (2018) and Elksnin & Elksnin (2003) flip the perspective to discuss disruptions to building these skill-sets. First, Link shares that a child's social emotional competence can be affected by trauma from early childhood, domestic unrest or volatility, and/or from being in the child welfare system, neighborhood disturbance or inadequate means. With the multiple risk factors experienced in today's urban environments, particularly, daily trauma is a risk factor that cannot be avoided. Note that Link's writing was created prior to the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. As assuredly as these factors occurred in the past, they are now added to and more severe during this unprecedented time. Likewise, Elksnin & Elksnins' (2003) findings were written pre-Covid 19 and merely

compound the situation. Students at risk for school failure are particularly vulnerable to social emotional problems. A high percentage of students with learning disabilities demonstrated deficits in social skills, and The United States Department of Education (1996) reported that 29 percent of adolescents with disabilities required social skills instruction beyond high school. It is worth noting both Link and Elksnin & Elksnins' writings were published in pre-pandemic times.

With these compounding challenges, SEL skill acquisition is more important than ever. Jacobi (2012) builds on the concept and discusses how music classrooms are also using SEL to help reduce at-risk behaviors through identifying behaviors, modeling behaviors we want students to learn, and devising positive reinforcements. Raschdorf discusses how SEL initiatives are being adopted presently in many states, and that many teachers have experienced success integrating it into their elementary general music curriculum by practicing mindfulness, building relationships with students, fostering relationships between students, encouraging family music engagement, and engaging in inclusive music activities (Raschdorf 2020).

Many educators feel it is essential to prioritize physiological safety and relational needs of their students before expecting them to learn educational content (Doucet, 2020; Handelman, 2020). This brings the idea of "environment over method" since students need learning environments where they feel safe and supported (Raschdorf, 2021). Raschdorf reports that when students feel secure, they are more likely to engage. If students engage, they are much more likely to achieve academically and socially: As students engage in music-making activities, working in tandem with their peers, they have the opportunity to participate in something larger than themselves. Music-making activities that foster SEL skill development include playing singing games, performing and learning about music from other cultures, studying musicians and

their music, engaging in folk dancing and creative movement, and participating in various music ensembles.

Students can be drawn to and can experience such satisfaction from participating in something which is ‘larger than themselves.’ Edgar (2021) conveys, “Music is inherently emotional: it makes us feel. Music is social: It has been a rallying call for humans, always. Music teachers must capitalize on the connections between SEL and music because our students need it and music education now more than ever.” In addition to helping students feel satisfaction, many educators are realizing that building relationships with and between students is a larger priority now than ever before. Music educators need to honor student voices and give them choices. We need to relinquish some control and allow students to take an active role, if not ownership, in their own learning and processes.

*This (SEL) is the culmination of connection, repertoire, and reflection in a musical experience that allows students to explore, create, contribute, choose and encounter music with other students. To maximize the effect these experiences can have on students, exploring music that interests students must be melded with the music we see value in teaching (Edgar, 2021, p 3).*

Connection, Repertoire, Experiences, and Reflection are major pillars of Edgar’s plan to lead students to SEL. These four guiding concepts can help music educators funnel curriculum, planning, and implementation of SEL. How do we make everything we plan and do personal for our students? How can we best have students reflect on choices, activities, and performances? Edgar suggests that this reflective planning is the essence of SEL pedagogy (Edgar, 2021).

Once implemented, how can we continue SEL over time? “The sustainability of SEL in music education will require that music educators view emotional growth, social awareness, critical thinking and problem solving in combination with musical development as important and essential goals for music teaching” (Hellman, 2020, p. 94). Music Education advocates believe

that the widespread adoption of SEL can increase the legitimacy of music and arts education. Hellman proposes using the Advocacy Coalition Framework to examine Social Emotional Learning for professional development and endorsement. He notes the importance of aligning policy and practice (Hellman, 2020). “An advocacy coalition framework has potential for explaining the potential adoption, growth and use of SEL in music education. Perhaps, SEL will lead to more authentic opportunities for students to exercise choice and independence decision-making in music education classes” (Hellman, 2020, p. 93).

The widespread adoption of SEL practices in the elementary music classroom has the potential to empower many students and communities of learning. Developmental deficiencies among low socio-economic student populations have often been associated with a reduced sense of self-esteem, responsibility, and ability to form relationships or engage in successful communication. SEL has the potential to include increases in self-esteem, sense of belonging, cooperation, active engagement in learning, development of social skills, well-being, resilience, and inclusivity among students from all social, cultural, and economic backgrounds (Heywort, 2013). With the right approach, music can be a powerful medium to build self-esteem and a sense of belonging. However, the musical experience needs to be positive and enjoyable. In the words of Hallam (2010), “Engagement with music can enhance self-perceptions, but only if it provides positive learning experiences which are rewarding.” This means that overall, he believes the individual needs to experience success. Heywort conducted a study in 2012 titled, *Developing Social Skills through Music: The Impact of General Classroom Music in an Australian Lower Socio Economic Primary School*. The story was one of success for the Australian Non-English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB) School.

In this study, the children were from diverse backgrounds, showed a wide range of



behaviors such as being withdrawn, with poor socialization skills or displaying poor attitudes about learning. These were resulting from a vast array of influences such as trauma, poverty, family functionality, and conflict or language challenges. “The school was coping on a daily basis with these issues from an understanding of its fragile and diverse population. Phrases like ‘Persistence, Organization, Getting Along’ or ‘Showing Confidence’ were examples of such positive language” (Heywort, 2013, p. 5). Positive phrasing helped to guide the positive mindset. All adults, teachers, staff, and volunteers, present played an important part in promoting this positive environment and mindset. The adults were united in the approach and so students knew and depended on the belief they would experience consistency with a welcoming atmosphere. Likewise in the classroom, this mindset permeated and was prioritized for all. When necessary, school and classroom values became the focus of their lessons, rather than the music content. (Heywort, 2013, p. 11).

*“It was notable that on all occasions when the class was achieving positive music outcomes, the teacher rarely missed an opportunity to make the children aware of their own positive feelings of well-being. This resulted in positive discussions and encouraged positive reflections made by the children themselves, providing us with evidence of engagement and belonging as well as an acceptance of value beliefs” (Heywort, 2013, p. 12).*

Heywort notes that these reflections were significant in fostering good social learning outcomes. Music was a subject that students could all relate to and participate in. They were able to succeed and feel membership in the community. This music-making is a key tool for developing social values in any learning setting.

As it is considered how to best help students achieve, we must work to ensure educator practices are equitable. That is, students must be equipped with the skills and opportunities to be successful in school and in life. The study above validated each individual. A general music classroom aligned with SEL can, if implemented with fidelity and purpose, help promote the

development of self and social awareness with equity (Varner, 2021).

In conclusion, Chapter II includes knowledge concerning the studies of elementary music education with a student population of varied needs, SEL in the elementary schools and music, and finally, SEL in the elementary music class with a student population of varied needs. To better understand SEL in the elementary music class with a student population of varied needs, it is important to research elementary learning, SEL, and the music classroom in order to understand more about what SEL practices are more beneficial for music students with varied needs. The literature included here forms the foundation of this research because it helps to better examine the research question of: How can elementary music teachers meet the SEL needs of students from a variety of backgrounds in the general music classroom?

In this chapter, Chapter II, I reviewed the literature related to this study focused on SEL in the elementary music class with a student population of varied needs. Next, in Chapter III, I will describe the methodology I used to address my research question and the design of the study as well as the procedures used for analysis.

### **Chapter III: Design and Methodology**

In the last chapter, Chapter II, I reviewed several sources on literature first about elementary music education with a student population of varied needs, and second, SEL in the elementary schools and music. Finally, I reviewed SEL in the elementary music class with a student population of varied needs. In Chapter III, I will explain how I designed this research project and methods of analysis. The following subsections are provided for the ease and understanding of the reader: Process, Participants, Qualitative Research, Data Collection and Analysis. As I noted in Chapter I, the research question driving this study is: How can elementary music teachers meet the SEL needs of students from a variety of backgrounds in the general music classroom?

#### **Process**

My process for conducting this research began with trying to understand how elementary music teachers use SEL in the classroom to meet the wide variety of needs that their students bring to the classroom. Are there certain circumstances or instances which work more efficiently when developing SEL? What makes the experience successful? I knew I wanted to interview seasoned music teachers who have experienced success with SEL in music with students who have varied needs. I wanted to study this topic because I wondered if some tenants of SEL might more effectively benefit elementary music students with varied backgrounds. Further, I wondered if some circumstances in the educational setting seemed to bring on more effective SEL. I wanted to gain understanding to help not only my own practices, but also other elementary music educators who want to embed SEL practices successfully in their classrooms. I wanted to learn about SEL practices which bred success to better benefit my own students.

I reached out via email to school districts that have student populations with diverse and varied needs. These districts helped to put me in touch with recommended music teachers who are seasoned and experience success with their varied populations using SEL in their classrooms with their varied needs populations. Four teachers accepted my proposal and signed the Informed Consent form (Appendix A). I interviewed each participant twice, with one exception noted below, recorded the interviews, and transcribed each of these recordings for analysis. Finally, these participants reviewed this written work which included their information before the final copies of this study were shared publicly.

### **Participants**

My participants were selected using both Judgement sampling and Snowball sampling. Judgement sampling is used when the researcher chooses who to ask to participate based upon prior knowledge or acquaintance. Judgement sampling is often utilized in qualitative research. Snowball sampling is commonly used in social sciences when investigating hard-to-reach groups (Frey, 2018). It is a recruitment tool where existing subjects, or in this case school districts, were asked to nominate further subjects known to them. Because I was trying to understand the successful and efficient use of SEL in the elementary music classroom with varied needs, I used these types of sampling to ensure that participants would be both knowledgeable and experienced in these specific areas.

In order to answer questions about how elementary music teachers meet the needs of varied populations in their classes using SEL, I needed seasoned elementary music teachers who had experienced success using SEL in their classrooms as they served a population that had varied needs. In addition, these teachers needed to not just teach music skills, but teach SEL

skills to best support their students while they simultaneously helped them to acquire a musical background and musical abilities.

Once these details were confirmed, my pool of possible participants seemed small and I selected four highly regarded teachers from a variety of school districts. I reached out to these teachers via email. I received three of the four email addresses from the various districts' Fine Arts Coordinators who recommended them to this research proposal. The last email address was received from a professor of music who had a thorough knowledge of the practices of a music teacher at a school district that did not have a Fine Arts Coordinator. These experienced music teachers received and returned an Informed Consent form (Appendix A), and they consented to being interviewed. (Appendix B) It should be noted that all four participants teach in the state of Wisconsin and are female. While there are male teachers that I am sure fit the criterion, all of the participants happened to be female.

### **Qualitative Research**

This study uses qualitative research. Qualitative research focuses on understanding a research question as a humanistic or idealistic approach. It is used to understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behavior, and interactions. Qualitative research produces non-numerical data. In addition, qualitative research describes qualities and characteristics and produces depth of understanding.

By utilizing qualitative research, I was able to collect data regarding SEL in the elementary music classroom with a population of varied needs. Qualitative research allows for the sharing of experiences, beliefs, and situations in which the teacher and students experienced success in SEL. My Qualitative Research study was informed by phenomenology, which simply means that my research came from studying the nature of everyday things (Willig, 2016).

Because Phenomenology is focused on people's perceptions of a phenomenon, it is often studied using questionnaires, interviews, or observation, and frequently appears in narrative form. The research question was: How do elementary music teachers meet the SEL needs of students from a variety of backgrounds in the general music classroom? This type of data collection best answered this question. "As a research methodology, phenomenology is uniquely positioned to help health professions education scholars learn from the experiences of others. Phenomenology is a form of qualitative research that focuses on the study of an individual's lived experiences within the world" (Neubauer, 2019, p. 1). In basic terms, phenomenology can be defined as an approach to research that seeks to describe the essence of a phenomenon by exploring it from the perspective of those who have experienced it. The goal of phenomenology is to describe the meaning of an experience, both in terms of what was experienced and how it was experienced (Neubauer, 2019, p. 4). This information was useful in determining what SEL practices worked well in the elementary music classroom with a student population of varied needs.

Conducting a qualitative research study allowed me to focus on the specific traits that were present in successful SEL occurrences within the elementary music classroom with a student population of varied needs. I was able to collect data by interviewing each of the four successful and experienced music teachers. Each teacher was interviewed twice with the exception of one interviewee who, due to unforeseen experiences, was limited by their health, and was only interviewed once. Their data has been included because it was pertinent to the discussions.

### **Data Collection**

My research process required participants to be seasoned elementary music teachers who taught a population of students with varied needs and who experienced success with these

populations using SEL practices. These participants have gleaned experiences which made them credible sources in the area of SEL in the elementary music classroom with a population of wide needs. The teachers each signed the Informed Consent Form, (Appendix A) met with me individually twice for thirty-minute recorded interviews, (minus the one exception who met once) and then answered further clarifying questions via email to help gather the most accurate data on their experiences and beliefs. Because they are experts in their fields, their answers gave an abundance of saturated information from several instances and environments in which SEL grew and flourished. Of importance is that one participant was in an accident affecting their health. This participant was able to contribute to the first interview. The data passed has been included as it is central to this study.

These interviews and emails were transcribed word for word so each answer's details could be studied, considered, and thoroughly contemplated.

### **Approach Analysis**

My data analysis included recording each of the seven thirty-minute interviews. Each participant gave two interviews, except for the one participant noted who gave one, for a total of seven, thirty-minute interviews. These interview recordings were then transcribed word for word. "Because data collection and analysis processes tend to be concurrent with new analytic steps informing the process of additional data collection and new data informing the analytic processes, it is important to recognize that qualitative data analysis processes are not entirely distinguishable from the actual data" (Thorne, 2000, p. 1).

Transcriptions were useful in identifying what might be relevant or important in answering the research question. This explicit step allowed elements of successful experiences, repetitions, trends and samples to emerge. After data was thoroughly reflected on and patterns of

similarity for success experiences were indicated, follow-up clarifying questions became evident, which were then answered. These answers were gathered through email. These helped to solidify successful experiences and to confirm common ingredients showing successful SEL practices with learners of varied backgrounds in the elementary music classroom.

Through transcription immersion, analysis, and reflection, underlying structures or the essence of successful SEL experiences were found. This data explained and produced a description of the basis of the experiences which reflect the nature of successful experiences through reflective study of data. Again, the data from the study was lastly vetted through the sharing of the final draft with participants for their approval before the data was shared.

In this chapter, Chapter III, I described how I designed research on SEL in the elementary classroom with varied populations. I explained each step of my process and shared my method of analysis. In Chapter IV, I will report my findings of beliefs, learning ideas, and shared experiences from the teacher interviewees.



## Chapter IV: Findings

In the previous chapters, I introduced this study about SEL in the Elementary Classroom with Student Population of Varied Needs. Chapter II provided a review of literature related to the study, and a description of the methodology of phenomenological research, and my approach using transcription immersion in response to the data. Analysis came from word-for-word transcriptions of the seven interviews studied through intense evaluation of words and conceptual repetition, analysis, reflection, and contexts. Here in Chapter IV, I will report the findings from the data, based on the responses of four successful music educators after three rounds or sets of data analysis. Each round or set of data analysis, much like cooking, distilled the information down from the broad to specific core ideas.

### First Set of Data Analysis

The four participants shared thoughts and experiences from many years of working with SEL in the music classroom with students who have a wide variety of needs. Their ideas presented many notions, here organized into like-thoughts for a total of eleven repeated concepts.

Three of four participants referenced SEL as a focus in their school or district. This was referred to sixteen times total. It was shared that SEL is not an instantaneous implementation, but a learning process. While none of them participate in a formal 'Whole School SEL Plan,' the teachers noted that SEL: focuses schoolwide on consistent interactions and vocabulary across disciplines, requires flexible planning and teaching, is better when professionals collaborate together to meet student needs, and is successful with routine and structure. Our participants communicated that SEL works when professionals connect themselves as social emotional learners, and that creative assessment through classroom experiences can often lead to a more authentic student assessment. All four participants are presently teaching. As might be expected,

they are in altered educational settings as impacted by Covid-19. All four referenced the effects, noting lost instructional time, lost learning of varied kinds for students, the stress of the pandemic prevalent in the minds of students and educators, spatial distancing requirements still in place, and the loss of classroom space reconfiguration of some learning environments. These totaled nine different citations.

Three out of four interviewees drew attention to the lack of professional training in SEL for teachers. This was referenced eleven times. Teachers have had some district or school training, but most of what they have learned has been gleaned from experience. The teachers cite single item techniques of SEL, i.e.: breathing for de-escalation, check-in, teacher questioning techniques, reflection, safe spaces, etc. but not all have been taught to them in a formal SEL training. The teacher participants referenced trial and error learning, beliefs based on experiences, and planning and reflection as ways SEL pedagogical pillars were embedded into their classrooms. All four participants referenced teacher growth. This was referenced six times. The teachers noted spiral learning, belief through experiences, building on past experiences, and continuing with what they have learned from past teaching and reflection were helpful in their growth processes. There were eight references to mindfulness. Three out of four participants referenced mindfulness in their teaching. Mindfulness is defined as being fully present in the moment with the students. The teacher should not be focused on what is coming or what was accomplished in the past, but on what is occurring in the group and space at the moment.

Differentiation for students had forty-one references total. All four participants discussed this topic in some detail. Differentiation is critical so all students view themselves first as valued human beings, then as musicians. This is true for students diagnosed with special needs (cognitive, emotional, physical), students who have English as a second language or with

language barriers, those who might come from low income households, and those who have been influenced by trauma. The subtheme of ‘understanding students’ had twenty-eight references. Music teachers mentioned student needs, student comfort levels, and the fact that each student needs to be understood as an individual and to feel valued. It was noted that teachers read students’ posture and non-verbal communication, note student choices and understand what equates to a positive motivator for students. The importance of relationships with students was cited by all four participants. There were a total of thirty-nine references to having real, meaningful relationships with students. They offered words like trust, risk, vulnerability, uncomfortable, care, honesty, building experiences through success, sharing, power of connection.

As expected, all four teachers interviewed discussed student growth and development in SEL. There were thirty-five specific references in all. These included: student self-awareness, self-understanding, self-regulation, being aware of others, understanding others, responding to others, and responding for the good of the group. Teachers cited student ownership of learning, student behavior choices, student empathy, peer-modeling, student empowerment, student representation and self-esteem, student response to other cultures, and building global respect. One participant relates SEL to Restorative Practices in her music classroom. This was referenced eight times by including ideas of classroom circles, inclusivity, representation, respect, responsibility, and repair.

Also, as expected, all four music teachers discussed music being a unique environment for SEL. There were fifty-three references of this type in total. Music class offers unique opportunities, unique obligations for both students and teachers, music can be a safe-space or a trusted space for students, music can provide connection and community, music class offers



## **Second Set of Data Analysis**

Upon a second thorough review from the data collected, six sub-themes were evident. Each idea was classified with related concepts.

The first prevalent sub-theme is that music is unique. Music classes differ from other academic classes. We, as music educators, work to make it a unique experience. Because of the nature of music, with performance skills, collaborative creation, and the sense of community, it is a unique experience. All four participants cite creating a safe environment as well as a safe climate is one of their top priorities. Music class is a collective place to take risks, create as a group, or to perform as an ensemble. Music is larger than the individual. Also, participants shared that music is a unique experience as music educators often see students over long term consecutive year instruction and therefore, have time to develop strong connections and community with students.

The ideas shared surrounding inadequate professional SEL training for teachers and teaching in an altered Covid-19 educational setting were both factors which presently impact SEL efficiency in the classroom. This is the second sub-theme. In addition to shared concerns over lost instructional time, lost learning time, lost performance time, and the stress the pandemic has placed on both students and teachers alike, participants shared that formal teacher training in SEL has been inconsistent and inadequate. Some participants have had some professional formal training, but all cited learning to embed SEL by planning, reflection, and teacher questioning within their teaching experiences as their main venues for developing skill-sets in successful SEL.

Restorative Practices shares some interchangeable ideas with SEL in the concept of teacher and student relationships. Serving as the third sub-theme, relationships are key and

Restorative Practices in basic terms teach and uphold relationship, respect, responsibility, repair and re-integration as major pillars. The importance of the relationship between teacher and student in this SEL dialogue was sincere as shared by all teacher participants. They cited teacher-student relationships should be meaningful, respectful, trustworthy, and involve honest exchange and sharing. It should be noted that these qualities helped students and teachers to experience vulnerability, and that experiencing mistakes, although uncomfortable, was encouraged as part of having real learning relationships and experiences.

As a fourth sub-theme, all of the interviewee's comments agree that understanding students is key to effective planning and success with SEL. This idea of planning for the student fits well with planning and implementing differentiation for their student populations, both individually and as various communities. Teachers said that student needs must be calculated into instruction. If a teacher can adequately meet student needs, students may become comfortable enough to engage in and invest in their own learning. The teachers interviewed believe that the needs of every student must be met. All students are musicians, and all students require some type of differentiation. No two individuals learn in exactly the same manner. Special populations, special circumstances, special needs, and special instances require the teacher to use discernment in planning and in facilitating learning. To have the proper discernment, the teacher must have understanding of their student populations, both collaboratively and individually. In all interviews, it was shared that the participants believe that students' needs sometimes surpass the curriculum implementation. It was cited that if student needs are not met, students will not engage well in the learning process.

With understanding students and differentiation, we are led to being mindful in the classroom at all times. It sounds simple enough, but with the thousands of split-second decisions

teachers make each day, the ability to remain mindful and ‘in the moment’ is of crucial importance as it serves the SEL focus in the schools. The teacher participants shared that their jobs require consistent mindfulness and SEL focus. Mindfulness was organized, then, alongside having a SEL focus. This is the fifth sub-theme. Being mindful is important in any situation; however, interviewees shared that being mindful while having an SEL learning focus demands mental flexibility and balance. Implementing SEL, as described by the teacher participants, is not an instantaneous process. It requires plasticity in planning while demanding some routine and structure. As classrooms, schools, school communities, and districts focus more on SEL to meet student needs, mindfulness is a key ingredient to add to teacher planning and in the moment application.

The sixth and final sub-theme is student growth. Interviewees are passionate that all students experience success in SEL student growth. Again, differentiation and inclusivity are paramount. Participants shared that as students learn about their own emotions, students are more capable of self-regulation. Student growth is important both individually as well as in relationship to others. Interviewees cite that as students take a larger role in their learning, they take ownership of choices which benefit not only themselves, but often choose to make the choice that will, in their estimation, be beneficial for the greater good of the group. A student’s ability to collaborate and work successfully in a group is also a life-skill goal that was mentioned by every participant.

### **Third Set of Data Analysis**

The third set of data analysis brought into sharp relief how intertwined the sub-theme ideas and concepts fit together. These combined into three main findings are: Music class is unique and needs to be a safe space for all students to take risks. This is very much related to the

second main finding that the teacher-student relationship must be authentically built upon caring. And the third main finding is that healthy SEL helps to build student growth. A main tenant of SEL is very plainly student growth, but SEL, if done positively and in a way that his healthy for students, does enable student growth. First as an individual with self-awareness and self-regulation, but then building skills into awareness of and empathy for others. Ultimately, the goal of this process leads to empathy for others, making positive responses to others, and eventually responding to others with responsible decision making that involves influence and the greater good.

### **First Finding: Music Class is Unique and Needs to be a Safe Space for All Students**

Music class is unique from all other academic disciplines and teachers must make it a safe space for all students to take risks, to make mistakes, and to learn. This is probably the largest data point of any one concept in the interviews. In discussing music as a unique class, one interviewee said, “There's something wonderful that happens when you get there that’s unlike any other thing that happens at school. I think what makes music so powerful and special is because when we can be part of that thinking sound and feeling, that joy, that is priceless... And you can get to the heart of what you are doing and what you are connecting with yourself, then you achieve something bigger than you or me. It only happens all together and it’s deep. It’s powerful. I think those kids are always going to remember that song or experience.” Another participant said, “I think that in some cases it is like the kids are coming home from school and being in that safe place. The music classroom becomes their safe place.”

Another experienced teacher describes it this way, “I think that students have to feel that the environment, the music room in your classroom, is one in which it is safe. That they’re going to be safe emotionally and they’re going to be safe physically, and they’re going to be safe



intellectually. And that not only are you never going to make fun of their attempts, but neither is anybody else in the classroom, because the only way to learn is to screw up and fix it.” This idea permeates the other areas of data collection as most points springboard from this base element. One participant explained, “In a music classroom we need to have the ability to have everybody feel part of the creative process. We’re all in it together. You’ve got to find a way for every kid to feel like it’s okay to make mistakes.” It is clear this belief is valued by all participants. They each cite differentiation and inclusivity as important elements. Differentiation saturates the music classroom through mindful teacher planning and implementation. One participant shared, “Just the way that I set up my room shows that I don’t expect the same performance level from every student every day... and then the interaction I’m going to have with them, the expectation I’m going to have over the course of the day is certainly different. And all I hope for them is that they can leave my classroom feeling cared for and safe.” The differentiation itself makes all students understand they are valued, accepted, and included. Another interviewee shared: “I just modify for every learner and their needs. You need everybody. You have different abilities and different comfort levels and limitations. And I just modify everything we do to fit each student.” All participants believe each student is part of ‘the team’ and finding a way for all to contribute is key. And finally, another participant commented, “Together we can fail here and that is ok. How you learn is by making mistakes. No one is perfect. But when you make a mistake, no one’s going to laugh at you. It’s human. It’s natural and it’s OK.”

In most subjects, work is done independently or in small groups. In music, this is often not the environment for learning that students experience. As one interviewee explained, “In our music classroom everything is done as a community for the majority of the time.” Therefore, the

music teacher must be concerned with developing SEL skills far greater than independent work would require.

**Second finding: Teacher Student Relationships are Important and They Must be Caring**

The teacher student relationship which is established must be authentic, caring, trust-filled, honest, and involve sharing. All of the teacher participants report having a good relationship with their students is powerful in establishing trust. Trust enables students to be willing to engage in and to take risks in their learning. In the most basic terms, students want to know that their teachers would say, “I care about these kids as human beings, not just as music students.” Another participant shared, “I think it is so important to see and treat them as human beings before they’re musicians...sometimes, that has to come first, and your curriculum has to take a side step.” At times, teachers must prioritize the care of students and that relationship over curricular efficiency.

Another participant explained, “Kids just need to know that they’re cared about, they’re valued, and they’re loved. You need to create a community where that’s true for every student, and where they’re feeling that way towards each other as well. If you don’t create an environment where kids feel valued or feel safe or feel respected, you’re not going to be able to have those powerful music experiences. I think it has to be a top priority.”

One interviewee conveyed this concept using the following story: *We had a new student that was struggling everywhere at school. I was determined that I was going to have a good relationship with her. And I’ve been working on it and just talking to her when I can or when they’re coming into class. I like to really listen to her and give her a chance to express herself. Just over the past few weeks, she has begun to come around. Again, we’re building that community. I have a relationship with her. She is building respect now and is more caring about*

*her impact on others. She's seeing the impact behavior is having, and she's trying to work on it. It is really neat to see. I have just taken that extra time to build that connection with her and it has helped the feel of that whole class. It doesn't always work, but a lot of the time it does. When you have a relationship and they know that you care about them and they know that you have their best interests at heart and that you're doing everything you can for them, they have a harder time acting out. We're already kind of hitting this turning point that I didn't know would happen this year. Her world is in turmoil right now. I was not sure if it was just going to be a year where we just try to get through, but there is that glimmer of hope in that room. They are showing and she is showing that they are starting to believe in that potential and it is exciting to see. So much of their self-esteem impacts their attention to others and their attention to their world."*

Again, the teachers interviewed are so seasoned, that despite teaching in different communities, they align in their beliefs. All participants expressed that people and building relationships are more important than the curriculum. One participant shared, "Students are not all at the same level nor do they have the same needs at the same time. And some days I spend more time looking after my kids. And this conversation has helped me to know that I'm okay with it. I'm not going to have to feel I need to apologize for looking after small humans before I look after small musicians." People and their well-being within the learning community are more indispensable than being able to implement a curriculum perfectly. All the interviewed teachers agreed here that they will not compromise students' well-being for scheduled curriculum implementation. It is clear that although they have not met one another, their individual experiences have helped them shape this common belief. If we compromise on relationships, we

set our students up for less than positive SEL which also adversely can affect their academic achievement.

### **Third Finding: Social Emotional Learning Helps Build Student Growth**

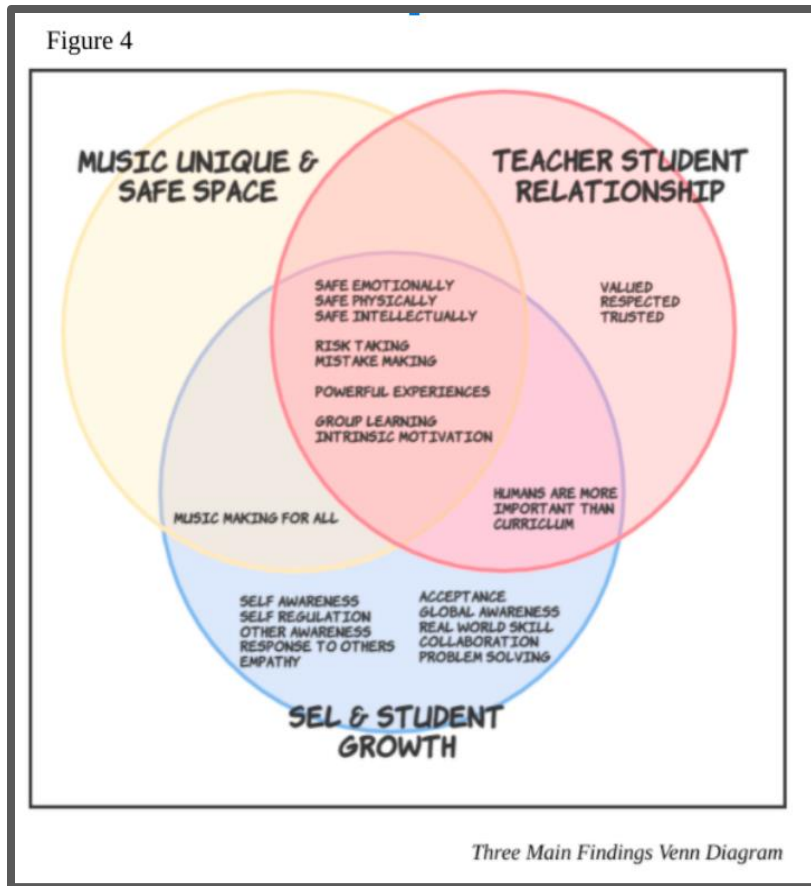
Within the interview data, participants expressed that, with intentional teacher intent and guidance, teachers can begin to meet students' SEL needs. Once accomplished, students learn about their emotions, their behavior, and they learn self-regulation. Students can then learn to focus on others. They can be aware of others, they can respond to others, they can feel empathy for, model, and differentiate for others. This empowers them to accept others and to promote choices which serve oneself as well as others for the greater good. One teacher interviewee supplied, "If we can meet their SEL needs, then the academics come more efficiently. But if we don't meet their SEL needs, you might as well skip the academics. I absolutely think that's true."

Another added, "It's fun to teach them to be respectful of yourself. Students will often learn to respect the teacher, but it is fun to move them from there to the next step of 'I also respect my classmates,' to 'I respect our group as a whole.' It is when you can help the student say 'You know, I'm working and giving my best effort not just because I want a good grade on my report card, but because that makes our whole class better. Because we sound better when we're doing activities and we're more together.' We're working as a team." In addressing this with special needs populations, one participant gave the following, "In other classes, students with special needs are working on skills more independently. But in music, they finally get to feel like they can do things right alongside all the other kids. They can keep that steady beat. They can play that rhythm. They come to us as the equalizer, and they get to be with their peers. And they are a team and they're part of that community." It is that group mentality of the greater good, the inclusivity, that 'we're all in this together' and it's not just about me. It's about 'us'."

“If you look at the real-world, these kids are going to walk into a workplace and need to collaborate with other people. If future students don’t know how to read other people, if they don’t have empathy and compassion, if they don’t see the circumstances, they might not be successful in that work environment. The more we can do to get them to see each other’s viewpoints, the more they’re going to be problem-solving. And the more that they’re going to be able to work in a group... I think music prepares them so well for working in a group because we’re always taking a problem and trying to fix it.... Because I don’t care whether you’re a garbage disposal person, or a chef, or a teacher, or a doctor or a lawyer. You’re still going to be working in groups, with people. You’re still going to need to manage all of these things.”

How do teachers facilitate these experiences? Another participant explains, “We work together and we ask a lot of questions like, ‘how did we do as a group?’ We’re building group awareness. In music you’re working on discussions together, making music together, and it is community-based. So it’s really important that we have that connection, in that respect, in that trust and in that bond within our community.”

See below for Figure 4, (Appendix C) the illustration of ‘The Three Main Findings Venn Diagram.’ This visual depicts the main concepts found from the collected data in Chapter IV. Each is intertwined with the other concepts in more ways than it is separate from each other.



In Chapter IV, the findings of the collected data from the knowledgeable teacher participants were shared. Each participant gave richly-detailed thoughts and experiences based on their successful embedded use of SEL tools in their music classrooms with students of varied needs. In the first set of data analysis, we referenced eleven important concepts which permeated the participants' dialogue. In the second set of data analysis, these eleven important concepts were organized into six sub-themes. Each idea was classified with related concepts. Finally, in the third set of data analysis, the sub-theme concepts fit together into three main findings. First, music class is unique and needs to be a 'safe space' for all students to take risks. "In a music classroom we need to have the ability to have everybody feel part of the creative process. We're all in it together. You've got to find a way for every kid to feel like it's okay to make mistakes." It was clearly communicated that this belief is valued by all of the teacher participants. This is

related to the second main finding that the teacher-student relationship must be authentically built upon caring. The teacher student relationship, which is established, must be authentic, caring, trust-filled, honest, and involve sharing. The third main finding is that healthy SEL helps to build student growth. SEL helps students to be self-aware and then to self-regulate. Students learn to observe and view others, and then begin to respond to others. Finally, students can reach their understanding of others both in their community and extending globally. The three main findings reflect a broader understanding of and connection to the eleven main concepts shared by the participants.

The depth of knowledge and experience we glean from the teacher participants is extremely helpful for the present educational environment. As we carry these ideas forward, in Chapter V, I will present a discussion of the three main sets of findings and implications for music educators, students, and future researchers.

## Chapter V: Discussion and Implications

In Chapter I, I introduced this study about Social Emotional Learning in the Elementary Classroom with Student Population of Varied Needs. The research question driving this study is: How can elementary music teachers meet the SEL needs of students from a variety of backgrounds in the general music classroom? Chapter II provided review of several sources on literature about elementary music education with a student population of varied needs, SEL in the elementary schools and music and finally, SEL in the elementary music class with a student population of varied needs. In Chapter III, I explained how the research project was designed and shared methods of analysis. The following subsections were created for the ease and understanding of the reader: Process, Participants, Qualitative Research, Data Collection and Analysis. The analysis came from word-for-word transcriptions of the seven interviews studied through intense study of word and conceptual repetition, analysis, reflection, and contexts. Finally, it was stated that all data findings were approved by participants prior to the release of this study.

In Chapter IV, the findings of the collected data from the knowledgeable teacher participants were shared. Each participant gave rich thoughts and experiences based on their successful embedded use of SEL tools in their music classrooms with students of varied needs. There were three sets of data analysis. In the first set of data analysis, we referenced eleven important concepts which permeated the teacher participants' dialogue. In the second set of data analysis, eleven important concepts were organized into six sub-themes. Each idea was classified with related concepts. Finally, in the third set of data analysis, the sub-theme concepts fit together into three main findings. First, music class is unique and needs to be a 'safe space' for all students to take risks. This was related to the second main finding that the teacher-student



relationship must be authentically built upon caring. The teacher student relationship which is established must be authentic, caring, trust-filled, honest, and involve sharing. The third main finding completely intertwined in both of the above findings was that healthy SEL, implemented well, helps to build student growth.

In Chapter V, I will present a discussion of the three main sets of findings and implications for music educators, students, and community members moving forward. First, music is well suited for SEL as a safe-space with collaborative music making. In essence, this allows all students to experience something ‘greater than themselves’ and provides foundational understanding for SEL to take place. Second, caring teacher-student relationships are important to foster SEL. A sincere relationship between teachers and students must be established and maintained for optimum SEL climate. Both research and interview findings suggest that SEL and Restorative Practices help cultivate developing skills and values and supporting behaviors that seem to show improved academic performance. SEL in music helps build student growth for real-world skill and success. Relationships and understanding of others allow successful ensemble music-making, and model empathy and caring for others which will transfer into other areas of life. A large goal of SEL is enabling students to be motivated through ownership of their own learning experience. Again, the literary and interpersonal research loudly resound together.

### **Music is Well Suited for SEL as a Safe Space with Collaborative Music Making**

We have seen in both published research and in the collection of interviews from the experienced teachers, evidence that music class is special in relationship with SEL. First, for SEL to take place, music must be a safe space with a caring environment for students to take risks. Very succinctly shared by one participant, “And that room, that space has to be a place where you experiment, you fail and succeed, and you hear new things and understand and share.”

The integration of SEL can become the common standard by helping students to feel safe and then motivating them through experiences which are ‘greater than themselves’ (Raschdorf, 2021). One teacher shared, “I think that they have to feel that the environment, the music room in your classroom, is one in which it is safe. That they’re going to be safe emotionally and they’re going to be safe physically, and they’re going to be safe intellectually. And that not only are you never going to make fun of their attempts, but neither is anybody else in the classroom, because the only way to learn is to screw up and fix it.” Another participant suggests, “Make space for them to be. Make guidelines to keep people safe and secure; but safe room to grow. They need room to play and not be completely dictated to. Tell them to go ahead and solve it!”

In *General Music Learning is also Social and Emotional Learning*, Varner shares that music learning and SEL both help develop student awareness, develop student social awareness, promote responsible decision-making skills, foster self-management skills and encourage positive relationship skills. “Activities such as improvisation, ensemble playing, group singing, and defining emotions within music listening examples are easy connections and natural links between general music learning and SEL” (Varner, 2020, p. 76).

*As students engage in music-making activities, working in tandem with their peers, they have the opportunity to participate in something larger than themselves. Music-making activities that foster SEL skill development include playing singing games, performing and learning about music from other cultures, studying musicians and their music, engaging in folk dancing and creative movement, and participating in various music ensembles (Raschdorf, 2021).*

In general music classes, students experience many, if not all, of the activities included above in Raschdorf’s quote. Learning about other people groups, studying artists and their creations, community singing, instrumental playing, and movement (along with other learning activities) are helpful in encouraging students to work together to build care towards the greater good. In synchronized music-making with beat, rhythms, articulations, dynamics as well as tone

qualities, students have practical contact with these learning activities and can, over time, develop skills both as an individual musician and as a contributing community member through these practical experiences. In addition to Raschdorf's writings, Edgar writes that music is a sensory stimulator. Music can be an aesthetic experience. Music can be used for relaxing and imaging and music making can be, and often is, a group experience. (Edgar 2013). The activities listed above encourage students to be aware of themselves and their contributions, but also goes farther. Once students become self-aware, they can begin to regulate themselves. This leads to the ability to become aware of others, to relate to others and make thoughtful decisions towards others. This leads to constructive and confident responses to others, both musically and socially. Students can demonstrate their responsiveness through singing, movement, playing instruments, sharing thoughtful comments and more. Students are able to navigate through individual and group or ensemble music-making, learning, and reflecting activities.

SEL can help develop the mindset that students are learners who strive and persevere through challenges. It provides habits of self-reflection and of mind in a safe and supportive learning environment. Activities such as improvisation, ensemble playing, group singing, and defining emotions within music listening examples are easy connection and natural links between general music learning and SEL (Varner, 2020) As students build this secure scaffold of skills, they will be able to make decisions which contribute to the greater good. Again, group-making music can symbolize successful SEL in this manner.

Students can be drawn to and can experience such satisfaction from participating in something which is 'larger than themselves.' "Music is inherently emotional: it makes us feel. Music is social: It has been a rallying call for humans, always. Music teachers must capitalize on the connections between SEL and music because our students need it and music education now

more than ever” (Edgar, 2021, p.2). One participant observed, “The kids get more excited when they’re feeling that they worked together to create musical experiences, and they’re more eager to come back when they’re getting those. They’re looking for that connection.” Another music teacher agrees that connection in music class can be key. “If you can find a way to make every kid feel like they are contributing. That’s the trick about music class. It is that we are not working individually, we’re often working collaboratively and then your part is an important part. Your part matters. It doesn’t sound the same when you’re (one person is) not here. It doesn’t sound the same. It isn’t the same.” Connections create trusted relationships which enable students to experience real-world connections. “And so I feel very strongly that they need to trust me. Because in a music classroom, and probably in all classrooms, we’re asking them to take risks, to be successful. And maybe more real-world in a music classroom because the risk is not on a paper with a pencil. The risk is out there for the kids to hear, to see. I want them to know that I am a safe person and that it’s okay to take those risks.”

“All I hope for them is that they can leave my classroom feeling cared for and safe that they were in a trusted space. That they’re in a space where they know my expectations and they know that they can relax and be a human. And with time you hope that allows them to experience music and the lessons, but that’s after their social emotional needs are met.”

One advantage in establishing and building this positive environment that music has over other academic areas, is that the music educator quite often works with the same students for many years, affording them the opportunity for long-term growth and development with the same population and community (Watts et al., 2020). So as music teachers establish relationships with their students, the trust and familiarity of both the relationship and the setting are often cumulative as years progress.

### **Caring Teacher-Student Relationships are Important to Foster SEL**

Here in this second finding, we again revisit evidence in both published research and from the professional music educators. Authentic relationships between teachers and students must be established and maintained for optimum SEL climate. Directly stated by one interviewee, “SEL is top priority for my classroom. I think sometimes it is even more important than the curriculum. And kids just need to know that they’re cared about; that they’re valued, and they’re loved. That needs to be true for every student.”

In order to build caring relationships, teachers need to know their communities and the schools in which they teach. One teacher shared, “I am at a Title 1 School. We have lots of low-income families and we’re becoming more diverse every year.... We also have a lot of kids that come from the Crisis Center and Salvation Army...” Teachers must show respect, listen to, and communicate empathy for others to establish relationships with their students. Bates believes that educators need to understand and respect each student’s cultural background (Bates, 2012). He goes on to state that equity and inclusion are so important that the teacher must spend their priority on relationship-building with their students so students feel valued and included in every aspect of their classroom. This then lays an interesting thought for the foundation of SEL that all of the participants agreed with. At times, the educator must prioritize teaching the skill or understanding that the student needs, rather than teaching the curricular content intended. “Sometimes the subject matter (i.e., music) can be secondary to the teaching and learning relationship” (Bates, 2012, p. 10).

Being cognizant of their relational intentions, one teacher shares, “I think when we pay attention to social emotional elements in our classroom, it helps our students. It helps us gain their trust. They understand that we see them as individuals and not just a generic classroom of

students. And making that connection with them as a human being is critical.” Recently, SEL has become more of a focus point for progress in education. Literature findings suggest that Social Emotional and Restorative Practices help cultivate developing skills and values, in fostering relationships, and supporting behaviors that seem to show improved academic performance (Haymovitz et al., 2018).

Watts, S., Eldreth, J., Grant, T., & Renne, J. in 2020 write, *Caring and Connectivity: A Framework for Active Caring in the Music Classroom*. In this article, the authors remind us of the importance of active caring in the classroom and beyond. They discuss four dimensions for caring education practices: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation. The findings suggest that if teachers successfully develop caring learning environments through strong relationships with students, their students are more likely to grow in their SEL maturity and be more able to assist others. One of the teacher participants had established strong relationships with her students. Because the music class was invested in caring and in being a safe-space, some students were ready and willing to be pushed forward to an ‘others’ focus, rather than a ‘self’ focus. She had been working hard on helping students experience that it is alright to take risks and to make mistakes in music class. She wanted them to be open to trying new things and to be focused on the class, and not only on themselves as individuals. There was a student who was strong in heart. He was a musician who had shown care for others. This rare opportunity afforded itself, and she took it. Here is what happened when both teacher and student were willing to take risk:

*One day we were learning a xylophone part. And a student volunteered to come up. And he made a big mistake. And I said, “Congratulations! That was really wrong! You made a mistake and I am so proud of you!” The whole class was stunned and they looked at me, and I*

*said, "I'm glad you made a mistake, because now we know, and now we can fix it. But you tried something new!" He was strong enough and sure enough of himself that he understood what I was doing. He understood that he had made a spectacular mistake. And I applauded him and told him I really appreciated it. So we tried again. I told him, "Listen again and see if you can figure out where and what you need to fix." And we did it. He fixed his errors and he did it! Then we all applauded him for trying again and doing it right! And it was wonderful. It was fun to truly celebrate a mistake and to get the point across. I thanked him afterwards. I said, "You know, you handled that so well. I knew I could do that with you because you know that you are a good musician. I couldn't have done that with every student." During class it did work. And then other people quickly felt more willing to try new things. He was a real leader. We had a good relationship. It makes it safe to try and to fail and to make mistakes. We, meaning both students and teachers, have to listen and we have to respond. It frees us up to create. Once students get a taste with experience, then you can introduce things in a new way. It builds transfer of experiences and builds upon successful learning activities.*

In this example, this student clearly trusted his teacher. He trusted her guidance at a time and experience when many others would have been too afraid or too self-conscious to proceed in a positive manner. The teacher trusted her established relationship, her student, and her own teaching. If she had not trusted the groundwork she had already laid with this individual and with his class, she would not have proceeded into the situation. If her foundations had not been secure, she would have guided and led the class elsewhere. But, because both teacher and student willingly invested in the relationship, took a risk, the entire class benefitted. How many other students, following this story, were willing to try, fail and try again? Certainly with the demonstrated occurrence, students were given the scaffold for bravery. It certainly benefitted

many that he was a model for his peers in both failure and in success. This teacher knew not the outcome, but she knew she could lead him to success and he trusted her motives and intentions. How wonderful to live and learn in such a warm and caring climate.

If elementary music teachers want to guide students to have higher levels of academic learning experiences as well as higher SEL development, then teachers need to focus on fostering and maintaining caring relationships. In the example above, the student took risks in front of his class. He chose to take both the risk of initially volunteering as well as responding favorably to both his mistakes and to re-trying the activity, again in front of his classmates. A different way of thinking about it is described by another of the teacher interviewees, “If I have a climate in my classroom of not seeing them as human beings, or without strong relationships, then they’re going to be less likely to take those risks. And then they’re not going to have that life experience when it is time for their job interview.” Having real relationships helps to enable students to grow socially and emotionally, but it also provides more success on which to build real-life experiences and skills.

One more obvious observation, but one not yet specifically discussed, is that in addition to allowing students to develop real-life skills, strong relationships and SEL growth have the potential to assist in behavioral decisions and management. In regulating behavior, more academics can be introduced and time can be utilized more efficiently and pleasantly. Each participant agreed that SEL develops self-regulation and self-management. For example, one teacher shared, “I think the more you can build those individual connections, that goes really far. When that kid is having a tough day, you can pull them aside and share that you care about them. Because you have had them in class since kindergarten (implying a relationship over a number of years that is long-established), you can ask them what is bothering them. Often, the student may



expound upon what is causing them stress. You, (the teacher) can then share that this (behavior they are showing) isn't the person they are. Often, if you just take that moment with them, it helps them to calm down or make better choices. It doesn't always work, but most of the time from what I have found, it does. And it makes a big difference in a positive way."

As previously stated, each teacher participant interviewed shared that they felt that SEL was, at times, more important than the curriculum. One shared, "I feel that if we can meet their SEL needs then the academic comes more efficiently. But if we don't meet their SEL needs, then you might as well skip the academics. Yes. I absolutely think that is true." Success with SEL breeds more success with academics. The pool of participants believed this and the inverse to be also true. If they do not pay attention to meet student needs, they will not help students succeed with academic learning.

### **Healthy SEL in Music Helps Build Student Growth for Real-World Skill and Success**

SEL has the potential to include increases in self-esteem, sense of belonging, cooperation, active engagement in learning, development of social skills, well-being, resilience, and inclusivity among students from all social, cultural, and economic backgrounds (Heywort, 2013). With the right approach, music can be a powerful medium to build self-esteem and a sense of belonging. "I cannot say SEL is the most necessary life-skill, but I can say it is of major importance. And you have to have one base social emotional skill set in order to be able to move forward. To work to have students understand the idea of community is really important. First, it is to be respectful of yourself, then of the teacher, then to respect their classmates, then to respect our group as a whole. We want students to understand it is not about their good grade on their report card, it is because it makes our whole class better. We want them to be motivated for the greater good."

Relationship skills provide children with tools to build and maintain healthy relationships. Responsible decision-making skills equip children with the ability to make constructive and respectful choices about behavior and social interactions. People who are proficient in core SEL competencies are able to integrate feeling, thinking, and behaving to successfully traverse tasks in school and life (Oberle et al, 2020). One participant shared, “If you can, make a way for every kid to work collaboratively. We are all in it together. For every kid to know they have an important part, because your part matters. And we can allow others to be good because it is not a competition. Music experiences are so special and so powerful. That joy is priceless.” Relationships and understanding of others allow successful ensemble music-making, and model empathy and caring for others which will transfer into other areas of life. Another participant suggests, “But once they get a taste for that (for successful collaborative work), then you can say, ‘Remember when we were doing drums? This is the same thing, we’re just doing it on a different platform and in a different way.’ This will eventually translate into other areas.”

One large, cumulative goal of SEL is enabling students to be positively motivated through ownership of their own learning experience. One teacher expounds, “You start with something small and then you start adding incrementally. Pretty soon they are moving on. I try to remember to reflect with them and say, ‘Think about how you felt at the beginning. What do you notice now?’ Get them to understand/reflect on how much they have learned and changed. Then remind them of the success so they feel like, ‘I can do that. I can even do it in a different way. I can.’”

Once strong relationships are established and students' social emotional needs are met, teachers can then challenge students forward. One experienced teacher shares, “*What are we*

*working for here? What do we need to do to fix the problem in our music?” That is what we do in music making. It’s an analysis. It is constant evaluation, analysis, and discussion. I might ask one student, ‘Oh, can you model that? The way you are timing that, that is what we all need to be doing.’ Now one student is leading and bringing everybody up to that level... Music prepares students so well because we’re always taking a problem and trying to fix it. And we’re always fixing that problem as a team... They’re all at different levels and they’re all different humans with all these different backgrounds and needs. The more that we can do to get them to see each other’s viewpoints, the more they’re going to be problem-solving, not just for themselves. And the more that they’re going to be able to work in a group.... And how much more real-world can we get than preparing them for that type of a work environment?”*

Again, the data and research imply that SEL skills, once established, help students to focus on academic learning more efficiently. Once those strong relationships and basic skill sets are established and students' social emotional needs are met, teachers can then challenge students forward. The same participant from the paragraph above shares, “And so we are doing a disservice to our children and to our students if we don’t push them through that discomfort of ‘hard’ because that’s part of what we’re teaching. And it is also one of the things that will stay with them even if they leave music behind... job interviews, ACT/SAT testing, that feeling of stress, etc. Those are more real-life job interview skills than anything you’re going to find in other classrooms. But that’s why I work to look after the social emotional needs of my students, so that they can feel safe to take that risk in my classroom, so that experience specifically will then serve them as they continue to go on.”

The teacher participant pool is of the highest standard. The experiences they share resonate soundly with positive SEL and the quality literary research selected. In the words of

Hallam (2010), “Engagement with music can enhance self-perceptions, but only if it provides positive learning experiences which are rewarding.” This means that overall, he believes the individual needs to experience success. Clearly, the pool of interviewees have experienced success with their many fortunate students and now serve as a model for the audience.

## **Implications**

### **Implications for Others**

As we traverse the ever-changing needs of students, it is important to note that education everywhere is presently in a Covid-19 altered state. The educational world is suffering from a vast array of issues which have developed as a result of the inexperienced navigation of the pandemic. Whether studying remotely or in the classroom, the impacts of the world-wide pandemic have thrown the need for SEL into sharp relief. Students and children are affected at the very core with these developments. They must be cared for, nurtured, and supported to rise above and beyond not only the Covid-19 experience, but challenges discussed below, to meet the new concerns that will evolve tomorrow.

SEL addresses each child. Whether greatly impacted by Covid-19, by low-income, by ethnic or cultural background, by physical or cognitive challenges, etc. a child’s social emotional competence can be affected by “Early childhood trauma; Family discord and volatility; Participation in the child welfare system; and Neighborhood peril and inadequate means” (Barbarin, 2000). Today’s students bring a brand new set of SEL challenges to their educational setting.

In 2018, prior to Covid-19, Link discusses the keys to social emotional development. He believes disruptions in SEL development often lead to many challenging behaviors that frequently emerge and are experienced in the classroom. This has probably not been more true

than today. Link and Thompson share that having an understanding of social emotional attributes is crucial in determining how students will adapt in schools, how they will form peer relationships, develop self-confidence, self-management, and emotional competencies for successful participation in group learning (Thompson, 2002; Link, 2018).

With all these challenges, social emotional skill acquisition is more important than ever for every child, everywhere. All parents, families, teachers, educational professionals and greater communities would benefit from understanding the tenants of SEL and embedding them into their homes, businesses and daily interactions. Together, we have an opportunity to help children (and adults) grow and be prepared to meet the unknown challenges of the future.

### **Implications for the Educational Setting**

How can principals, teachers of future educators, administrators, school boards, special education teachers and various stakeholders in the educational realm best move forward to help children develop SEL for a successful future? The school-wide approach, also known as the ‘whole-school approach’ supports the entire school community for change and aims to integrate SEL into daily interactions and practices involving all staff, parents, and students at various levels. This systemic approach helps introduce and maintain effective SEL programming for all. It is comprehensive and coordinated in both planning and in implementation (Oberle et al, 2020). The research suggests that this approach could benefit with the synergy of many working pieces for students’ learning and benefit.

One of the participants furnished the following, “We’re building that awareness that the community, not just in our own classroom, but across a school. It is important for the kids to see and know when they see me talking to their homeroom teacher, etc. that we are the community.

We care about each other. It is in our building. It is in our district. It is in our city. There are different communities within and we can help strengthen all of them in different ways.”

Heywort’s study in Australia showed a school with a diverse population working together. The school was coping on a daily basis with these issues from an understanding of its fragile and diverse population. Positive phrasing helped to guide the positive mindset. All adults, teachers, staff, and volunteers, present played an important part in promoting this positive environment and mindset. They were united in the approach and so students knew and depended on the belief they would experience consistency with a welcoming atmosphere. When necessary, school and classroom values became the focus of their lessons, rather than the subject content (Heywort, 2013).

To build upon this idea, coaches, teachers, conductors, and leaders of all types could utilize the above approach with their ensemble, teams, or any group of people who work as a unit or function towards a common concept or goal, to build SEL skills in their cohorts. All adults, staff, or personnel could be united and consistent in their language, expectations, and implementation of such a plan. Group learning activities encourage all members to be aware of themselves and their contribution to the betterment of all. This happens as once participants are mindful of themselves, they can relate to others and make cognizant commitments towards others. This leads to productive and confident responses to others in their working endeavors. As participating members build a strong structure of skills, they will be able to make decisions contributing to the advancement of the whole. Productive team, group, ensemble work can reflect successful SEL.

As previously discussed, Restorative Practices partners well with SEL. A main goal of RP is to prevent harm through proactive planning and activities. SEL programming supports RP

by providing a collaborative approach to helping children become aware of and manage their emotions, appreciate other people's perspectives, creating positive goals, making responsible decisions and handling interpersonal circumstances positively (Hulvershorn & Mulholland,2018). RP is a natural addition to teachers using SEL in their classrooms as well as with a unified, school-wide SEL approach.

In implementing a single classroom of SEL or with a school-wide approach, a very high priority which resounded with our interviewees was to prioritize relationships. The prioritization of relationships allows teachers to have a deep knowledge and understanding of their students and their specific learning needs. Once a strong understanding is established, teachers are more likely to be able to discern and implement differentiation and inclusivity for all students. The teachers interviewed believe that the needs of every student must be met. All students are musicians, and all students require some type of differentiation. No two individuals learn in exactly the same manner. Special populations, special circumstances, special needs, and special instances require the teacher to use discernment in planning and in facilitating learning. Again, reflective planning is integral to the successful process of success with inclusivity and differentiation. To have the proper discernment, the teacher must have understanding of their student populations, both collaboratively and individually. In all interviews, it was shared that the participants believe that students' needs sometimes surpass the curriculum implementation. "I just modify for every learner and their needs. You need everybody. You have different abilities and different comfort levels and limitations. And I just modify everything we do to fit each student." All participants believe each student is part of 'the team' and finding a way for all to contribute is key. Reflection in planning allows for more opportunity to find ways for all students to successfully add to the music learning.

For future planning of all involved in education, it seems logical that a school-wide SEL combined effort implemented with strong relationships and RP might produce more efficient and effective results with an entire learning community. If we could combine community with community, and state with state, we could revolutionize the SEL health of children's future.

### **Implications for the Field of Music Education**

SEL is critical to students' well-being and education possibly more than ever before. Music class, including general music, instrumental music, vocal music, or combined music ensemble, is unique from other academic disciplines. Music teachers must make it a safe space for all students to take risks, to make mistakes, and to learn. It must be a trusted space by all. This is probably the largest data point of any one concept collected in the interviews. Therefore, teachers must know their students well by fostering positive relationships with them. This will help to build strong connections and skills to allow for more academic learning in a more pleasant environment. Music-making which promotes life-skills, as group-music, demands engagement and contribution from all. It is across grades and ages. Music offers many opportunities for mistakes as a learning platform. Having strong relationships allows music teachers and students to help reduce at-risk behaviors through identifying behaviors, modeling behaviors for students to learn through all experiences, including the mistakes, and devising positive reinforcements (Jacobi 2012).

As stated, group music-making spans across grades and ages. It offers cumulative learning between the student, the group or class, and the instructor. Music education often has the edge above other curricular areas in that students take music courses year after year. Music educators; quite often, work with the same students for many years, affording them the opportunity for long-term growth and development with the same population and community



(Watts et al., 2020). Music teachers can gather insights and build relationships with students, their families, communities and the larger educational system over years of having a working relationship in the same district, school or setting. This advantage cannot be undervalued or left unmeasured. By the very essence of SEL, teaching is personal. Having in-depth knowledge and comprehension of a student, group, or situation, is a huge lead towards planning and embedding SEL appropriately and in a successful manner for all people and circumstances in the various learning settings and including all varied needs.

The teacher student relationship is powerful. If teachers can plan for successful learning opportunities and experiences based on their knowledge of and their relationships with their students, then having a successful embedding of SEL in the music class can help develop the mindset that students are learners who strive and persevere through challenges. General music activities provide students with learning activities to promote understanding of various roles and tasks. It often also provides habits of self-reflection and habits of mind in a safe and supportive learning environment. Once students understand roles and tasks, they can begin to understand social awareness. We have discussed that social awareness encompasses social skills that improve student ability to understand what it means to be a classmate, friend, and citizen. It includes how well we know and understand those around us and helps to develop empathy and overall respect (Varner, 2020). The teachers interviewed in this study understood this primarily through their own trial and error, but they also had gained understanding through some SEL training in their districts. As previously stated, all participants would appreciate having more training in SEL to support their own discoveries of practices.

Music educators would benefit from being professionally trained in SEL. Once music educators have an understanding of the tenants of SEL, they can then embed them into their

classrooms and professional interactions and learn to empower students. Together, we have an opportunity to help children grow and be prepared to meet the new challenges of tomorrow.

Music is well suited for complete permeation of SEL within its learning activities. “The sustainability of SEL in music education will require that music educators view emotional growth, social awareness, critical thinking and problem solving in combination with musical development as important and essential goals for music teaching” (Hellman, 2020, p. 94).

Raschdorf discusses how SEL initiatives are being adopted presently in many states and that many teachers have experienced success integrating SEL into their elementary general music curriculum by practicing mindfulness, building relationships with students and fostering relationships between students, encouraging family music engagement, and engaging in inclusive music activities (Raschdorf, 2020).

To take things one step further, once students are motivated and inspired with SEL, both authors Edgar and Varner suggest giving students ‘voice and choice’ which relates to helping students connect and reflect on their experiences, thus making learning personal and equitable for every student. In addition to helping students feel satisfaction, many educators are realizing that building relationships with and between students is a larger priority now than ever before. Music educators need to honor student voices and give them choices. We need to relinquish some control and allow students to take an active role, if not ownership, in their own learning and processes (Edgar, 2021; Varner 2021).

Music educators need to prioritize SEL. By implementing SEL practices, especially in demonstrating care and showing flexibility, they can help to empower their students. Here is one short example from the participant pool, “If what I am asking of someone makes them feel sick, I’m going to fix that. It’s okay as a student to share and say, ‘I just don’t feel comfortable doing

that.’ Then I would say, Okay. How about trying it this way? They need to feel that they can tell me and trust that I will help them to find a way to participate that they can be comfortable with. That is much healthier for everyone. I will tell them, ‘Let’s give you a job you are comfortable with.’ Or tell the student to find a way that they feel like they can contribute and allow them to create a way to be involved.” This level of trust, and mutual respect gives their students the ownership of their education and allows them to advocate for themselves in a respectful manner using their SEL skills.

SEL seems to be setting a new stage for arts advocacy. Once we have wide-spread implementation, how can we continue SEL over time? Music education advocates believe that the common adoption of SEL can increase the legitimacy of music and arts education. Hellman proposes using the Advocacy Coalition Framework to examine SEL for professional development and endorsement. He notes the importance of aligning policy and practice. “An advocacy coalition framework has potential for explaining the potential adoption, growth and use of SEL in music education. Perhaps, SEL will lead to more authentic opportunities for students to exercise choice and independence decision-making in music education classes” (Hellman, 2020, p. 93).

In addition to Hellman and the Advocacy Coalition Framework, CASEL is offering a new scholar program for SEL development. “To inspire the next generation of innovators who will strengthen the vision of Social Emotional Learning (SEL), CASEL introduces the CASEL Weissberg Scholars program. The program will provide educational and professional development and create a collaborative community of early career scholars who are eager to make a difference with SEL” (Weissberg, 2021, p. 1). Perhaps between state SEL implementation, arts advocacy, and more SEL professional development opportunities for

educators, SEL will take its place in the educational setting as one of the fundamental tools for student training and success in real-world living.

As we traverse and build upon these understandings and presently altered educational settings, who can guess what the future needs of both children and our society will be? As has been previously written, SEL will be a skill set that all students need. Logically, it will be a skill set that all people will need. As we realize the growing and diverse needs that trauma and obstacles create for, not only school-age children, but also as a society, the future of wide-spread SEL in the educational setting is foundationally necessary, but could also be profoundly impactful on adults as well. As these children we presently teach become adults, what will be the long-term extended SEL impact upon their self-management and perceptions and relationships with others? Future researchers may want to follow children into their adult lives and begin to understand the long lasting influence and permeation of SEL into their lives, families, communities, and hopefully society as a whole.

In summary, many educators feel it is essential to prioritize physiological safety and relational needs of their students before expecting them to learn educational content (Doucet, 2020; Handelman, 2020). This sentiment was strongly reinforced by all of the interviewed participants. When students feel secure, they are more likely to engage. If students engage, they are much more likely to achieve academically and socially. (Raschdorf, 2021). If we can help students engage more efficiently in SEL and then subsequently their academic learning, we can help them obtain and achieve more academically and socially.

One participant shared, “Students are not all at the same level nor do they have the same needs at the same time. And some days I spend more time looking after my kids. And this conversation has helped me to know that I’m okay with it. I’m not going to have to feel I need to

apologize for looking after small humans before I look after small musicians.” People and their well-being within the learning community are more indispensable than being able to implement a curriculum perfectly. All the interviewed teachers agreed here that they will not compromise students’ well-being for scheduled curriculum implementation.

A richly seasoned music educator believes, “And if you look at the real-world, SEL skills are important in everyday life. But these kids are going to walk into work environments where they work with other people. If they don’t know how to read people, if they don’t have empathy and compassion, they aren’t going to succeed. The more that they’re going to be able to work with others, the more they’re going to be problem solvers for the greater good.” If we can help students to work for the benefit of others, we can affirm community. Ultimately, if students can believe the examples musicians around the world have set, that musicians can build strong groups, symphonies, bands, and communities who work together and support one another, and they see themselves as musicians, then in a short generation, we should have stronger SEL skills with healthier and happy citizens. That is a generation I believe most of us would like to help build and live in.

### Resources

- Abrahams, F. (2005). The Application of Critical Pedagogy to Music Teaching and Learning: A Literature Review. *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education*, 23(2), 12-22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/87551233050230020103>
- Bates, Vincent. (2018). Equity in Music Education: Back to Class: Music Education and Poverty. *Music Educators Journal*. 105. 72-74. 10.1177/0027432118803046.
- Bates, Vincent C. "Social Class and School Music." *Music Educators Journal*, vol. 98, no. 4, 2012, pp. 33–37., doi:10.1177/0027432112442944.
- Bellanca, James A., and Ronald S. Brandt. *21st Century Skills: Rethinking How Students Learn*. Solution Tree Press, 2016.
- Benedict, C. (2009). Processes of Alienation: Marx, Orff and Kodaly. *British Journal of Music Education*, 26(2), 213-224. doi:10.1017/S0265051709008444
- Boucher, Helene, et al. "Musical Learning as a Contributing Factor in the Development of Socio-Emotional Competence in Children Aged 4 and 5: an Exploratory Study in a Naturalistic Context." *Early Child Development and Care*, 2021, pp. 1–17., doi:10.1080/03004430.2020.1862819.
- Bruner, Jerome S. "Poverty and Childhood." *Oxford Review of Education*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1975, pp. 31–50., doi:10.1080/0305498750010105.
- Burton, Suzanne L. "Preparing Music Teachers to Nurture the Musical Growth of Young Children." *The Oxford Handbook of Preservice Music Teacher Education in the United States*, 2019, pp. 623–641., doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190671402.013.30.
- Cefai, C., & Cavioni, V. (2014). *Social and Emotional Education in Primary School : Integrating Theory and Research into Practice / Carmel Cefai, Valeria Cavioni*. Springer.

CASEL (2021) <https://casel.org/about-us/our-history>

Edgar, S., Kelly-McHale, J., Rawlings, J., & Lautzenheiser, T. (2017). *Music Education and Social Emotional Learning: the Heart of Teaching Music* / Scott N. Edgar, Jacqueline Kelly-McHale, Jared Rawlings; foreword by Tim Lautzenheiser. Gia Publications, Inc.

Edgar, S. N. (2021). Social Emotional Learning and Music Education: Now More Than Ever. *Tennessee Musician*, 73(2), 28–33.

Elksnin, L. K., & Elksnin, N. (2003). Fostering Social-Emotional Learning in the Classroom. *Education*, 124(1), 63–48.

Emery, C. (2020). Social and Emotional Learning. In D. T. Cook (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of children and childhood studies*. Sage UK. Credo Reference:

[http://ezproxy.uwsp.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/sageukcacs/social\\_and\\_emotional\\_learning/0?institutionId=3995](http://ezproxy.uwsp.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/sageukcacs/social_and_emotional_learning/0?institutionId=3995)

Frey, B. (2018). The SAGE encyclopedia of educational research, measurement, and evaluation (Vols. 1-4). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781506326139

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (30th anniversary ed.). Chapter I- Continuum.

Gabrielle, Chapman, et al. “Music Instruction for Improving Cognitive and Social Emotional Development and Academic Achievement in School-Aged Children and Youth: A Systematic Review.” The Campbell Collaboration, 1 Sept. 2016, pp. 1–21.

Hall, S. (2021). Using Picture Books as a Tool for Creating a Culturally Inclusive Elementary Music Classroom. *General Music Today*, 34(2), 19–25.

Haymovitz, E., Houseal-Allport, P., Lee, R. S., & Svistova, J. (2018). Exploring the Perceived Benefits and Limitations of a School-Based Social-Emotional Learning Program: A Concept Map Evaluation. *Children & Schools*, 40(1), 45–54.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdx029>

Hellman, Daniel. 978-1-922303-00-4 (e Book), *Proceedings of the 20th International Seminar of the ISME Commission on Policy: Culture, Media, and Education*, vol. 780.7, 2020, pp. 89–98.

Heywort, J. (2013). Developing Social Skills Through Music. *Childhood Education*, 89(4), 234–242. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwsp.edu/10.1080/00094056.2013.815553>

Hochanadel, Aaron, and Dora Finamore. “Fixed And Growth Mindset In Education And How Grit Helps Students Persist In The Face Of Adversity.” *Journal of International Education Research (JIER)*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2015, pp. 47–50., doi:10.19030/jier.v11i1.9099.

Hourigan, Ryan M., and Alice M. Hammel. “Music Teacher Preparation for Teaching Children with Exceptionalities.” *The Oxford Handbook of Preservice Music Teacher Education in the United States*, 2019, pp. 543–557., doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190671402.013.25.

Howard, M. (2008). Practice: Joy and Inclusivity. *Canadian Music Educator / Musicien Educateur Au Canada*, 49(3), 46–48.

Hulvershorn, K. and Mulholland, S. (2018), "Restorative practices and the integration of social emotional learning as a path to positive school climates", *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching & Learning*, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 110-123.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIT-08-2017-0015>

Jacobi. (2012). Opportunities for Socioemotional Learning in Music Classrooms. *Music Supervisors' Journal.*, 99(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432112459082>

Jones, S., Bailey, R., & Jacob, R. (2014). Social-Emotional Learning is Essential to Classroom Management. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 96(2), 19–24.



<https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721714553405>

Kupana, Nevra. "Social Emotional Learning and Music Education." *SED Journal of Art Education*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2015, doi:10.7816/sed-03-01-05.

Link, S. (2018). Socio-Emotional Development. In B. Watnick (Ed.), *Education Today: Issues, Policies & Practices*. Salem Press.

McClelland, M., Tominey, S., Schmitt, S., & Duncan, R. (2017). SEL Interventions in Early Childhood. *The Future of Children*, 27(1), 33–47. <https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.2017.0002>

"Methods of Sampling from a Population." *Health Knowledge*, 20 Aug. 2018.

[www.healthknowledge.org.uk/public-health-textbook/research-methods/1a-epidemiology/methods-of-sampling-population](http://www.healthknowledge.org.uk/public-health-textbook/research-methods/1a-epidemiology/methods-of-sampling-population).

Neubauer, Brian E., et al. "How Phenomenology Can Help Us Learn from the Experiences of Others." *Perspectives on Medical Education*, Bohn Stafleu Van Loghum, 5 Apr. 2019, [link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40037-019-0509-2](http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40037-019-0509-2).

Oberle, Eva, et al. "Establishing Systemic Social and Emotional Learning Approaches in Schools: A Framework for Schoolwide Implementation." *Social and Emotional Learning*, 2020, pp. 6–26., <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429444692-2>.

Raschdorf, T., May, B. N., & Searcy, A. (2021). Integrating Social-Emotional Learning Into Our "New Normal" Teaching Elementary General Music. *General Music Today*, 34(2), 42–48. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwsp.edu/10.1177/1048371320961372>

Thorne. (2000). Data Analysis in Qualitative Research. *Evidence-Based Nursing*., 3(3). <https://doi.org/10.1136/ebn.3.3.68>

Thumlert, K., Harley, D., & Nolan, J. (2020). Sound Beginnings: Learning, Communicating, and Making Sense with Sound. *Music Educators Journal*, 107(2), 66–69.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432120952081>

Varner, E. (2021). General Music and SEL: A Matter of Equity. *General Music Today*, 1.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/10483713211018451>

Varner, E. (2020). General Music Learning Is Also Social and Emotional Learning. *General Music Today*, 33(2), 74–78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1048371319891421>

Watts, S., Eldreth, J., Grant, T., & Renne, J. (2020). Caring and Connectivity: A Framework for Active Caring in the Music Classroom. *Music Educators Journal*, 106(4), 50–56.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432120936329>

Weissberg, R. P., Durlak, J. A., Domitrovich, C. E., & Gullotta, T. P. (2015). Social and Emotional Learning: Past, Present, and Future. In J. A. Durlak, C. E. Domitrovich, R. P. Weissberg, & T. P. Gullotta (Eds), *Handbook for Social and Emotional Learning* (pp.3-19). New York, NY: Guilford.

Weissberg, Dr. Roger P. “CASEL Weissberg Scholars.” *CASEL*, 1 Dec. 2021,

<https://casel.org/about-us/our-mission-work/casel-weissberg-scholars/>.

Willig, C. “Constructivism and 'the Real World': Can They Co-Exist?” *Constructivism and 'The Real World': Can They Co-Exist?*, 1 May 2016, [openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/13576/](https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/13576/).

“Wisconsin Social and Emotional Learning Competencies.” *Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction*, 27 Jan. 2022, <https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health/social-emotional-learning/competencies>.

## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

##### Informed Consent to Participate in Human Subjects Research

Dr. Rachel Brashier, professor of Music Education at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, would appreciate your participation in a research study designed to investigate successful strategies for teaching elementary general music using Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) techniques to students who have a variety of backgrounds. You are being asked to participate in two short interviews that should take up no more than 60 minutes. You are also being asked to allow for up to five follow-up emails to further clarify interview information done by submitting your written response to five questions via email. All described actions will take place over a six-month period. Your participation is completely voluntary. The benefit of this study is a greater knowledge about successful SEL music teaching strategies for student populations with a wide variety of backgrounds.

We anticipate no risk to you as a result of your participation in this study other than the inconvenience of the time to complete the interviews and the email. You could, however, experience some mild sadness while recalling challenges students faced in school.

It is hoped that we may gain valuable information about successful SEL teaching strategies for student populations with a wide variety of backgrounds, and that will be of future value to both students and educators.

While this information could be obtained by several lengthy surveys, we feel that interviews and written communication are the simplest and most thorough methods for obtaining this information. You may also choose not to participate as an alternative.

The information that you give us in the interviews will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the office of Dr. Rachel Brashier and will not be available to anyone not directly involved in this study. I will obtain your written permission prior to using your name in publication of results.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you want to withdraw from the study, at any time, you may do so without penalty or loss of benefit entitled. After research is complete and results are reported, I will destroy all primary data.

Once the study is completed, you may receive the results of the study. If you would like these results, or if you have any questions in the meantime, please contact:

Dr. Rachel Brashier

School of Music Education

University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point

Stevens Point, WI 54481

(715) 346-2227

rbrashie@uwsp.edu

If you have any complaints about your treatment as a participant in this study or believe that you have been harmed in some way by your participation, please call or write:

David Barry, PhD

IRB Chair

Associate Professor, Sociology

2100 Main St.

Old Main 208

University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point and Extension

Stevens Point, WI 54481

715.346.3799

irb@uwsp.edu

Although Dr. Barry will ask your name, all complaints are kept in confidence.

.

I have read and understand the information provided to me; that my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_

Printed name of participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

## Appendix B

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### I. First Interview Questions

1. Are there specific experiences or stories you might want to share regarding SEL in your music classroom?
2. Do you have any distinct or personal beliefs about the use of SEL techniques with your students?
3. Do you feel that SEL is applicable to all students and populations? Please explain why or why not.
4. How do students respond when you utilize defined SEL characteristics or techniques in specific instances? Please expound on your thoughts.
5. Thank you for all of your valuable answers and information. Is there anything else you'd like to add before we end?

#### II. Second Interview Questions - Some of these questions may change based on the findings of data collected at the first interviews.

1. Do you structure your classes in specific ways that support best experiences with SEL learning? If so, how do you do that? If not, why do you feel it is not necessary.
2. What is it like when you experience successful growth with a class or individual using SEL techniques? Do you have information about why you might feel that?
3. Can you identify an aspect of SEL that you believe is most necessary for skill development in students? Please explain.
4. In your experience, do you believe in an order or sequence for SEL that might best benefit students'? If so, what do you think the sequence might be? Why do you think that?
5. Thank you for all of your valuable answers and information. Is there anything else you'd like to add before we end?

**Appendix C**

**FIGURES**

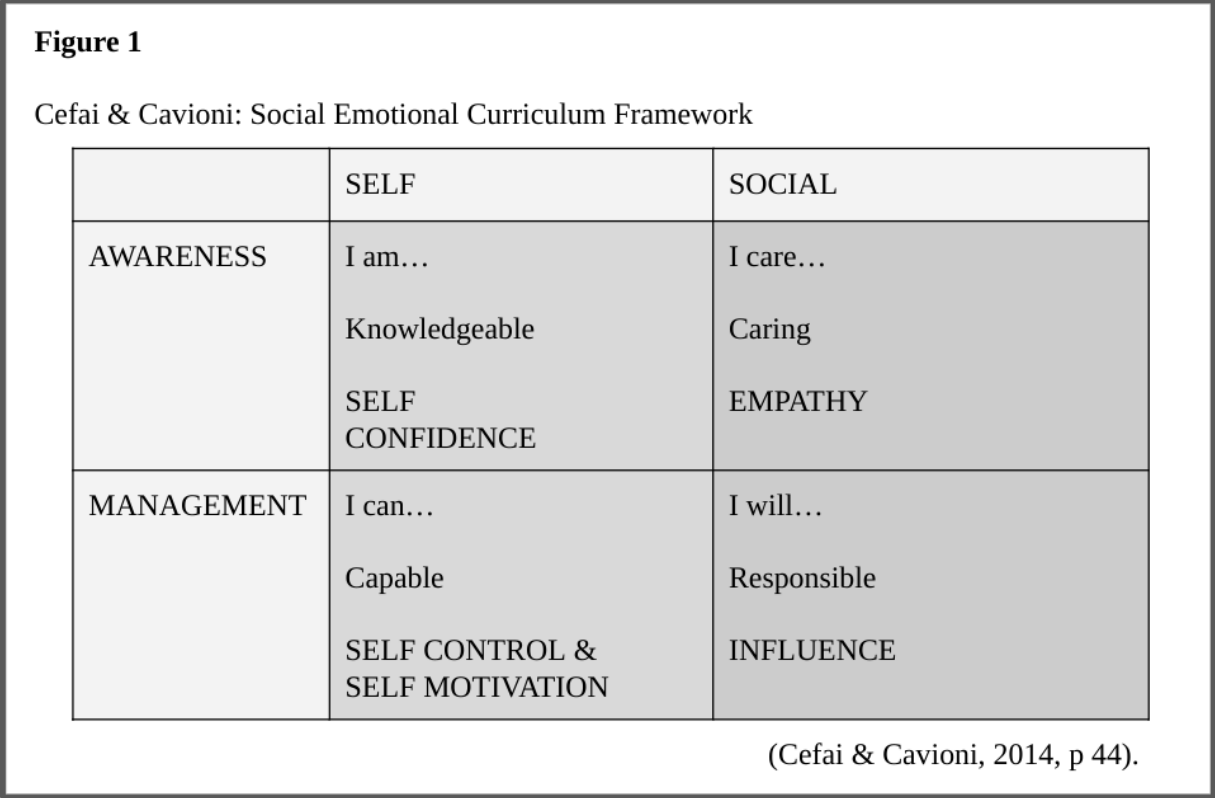
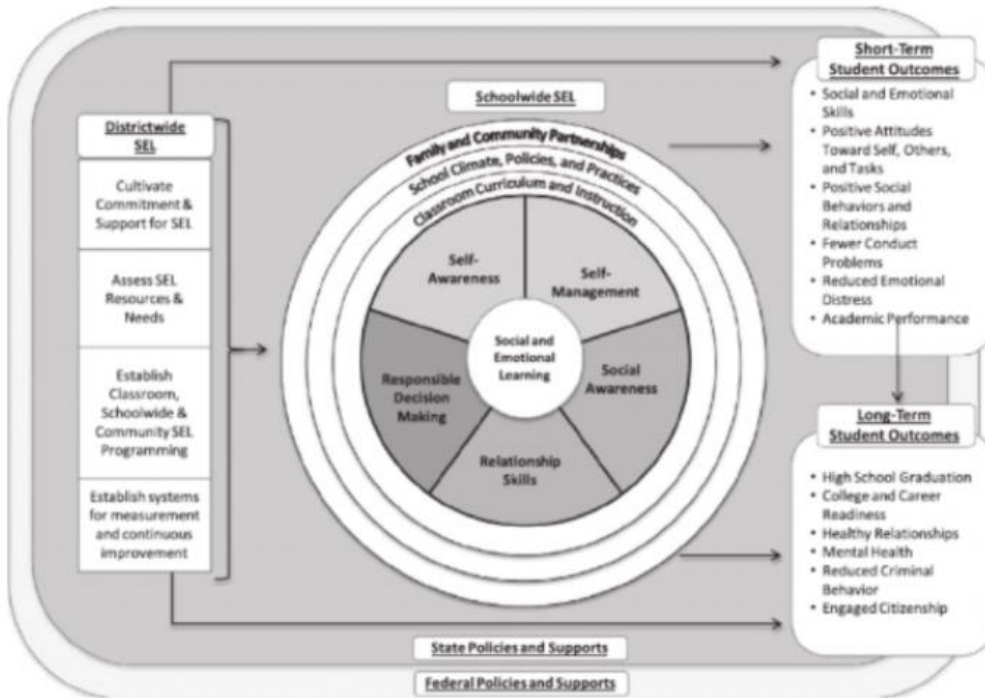


Figure 2

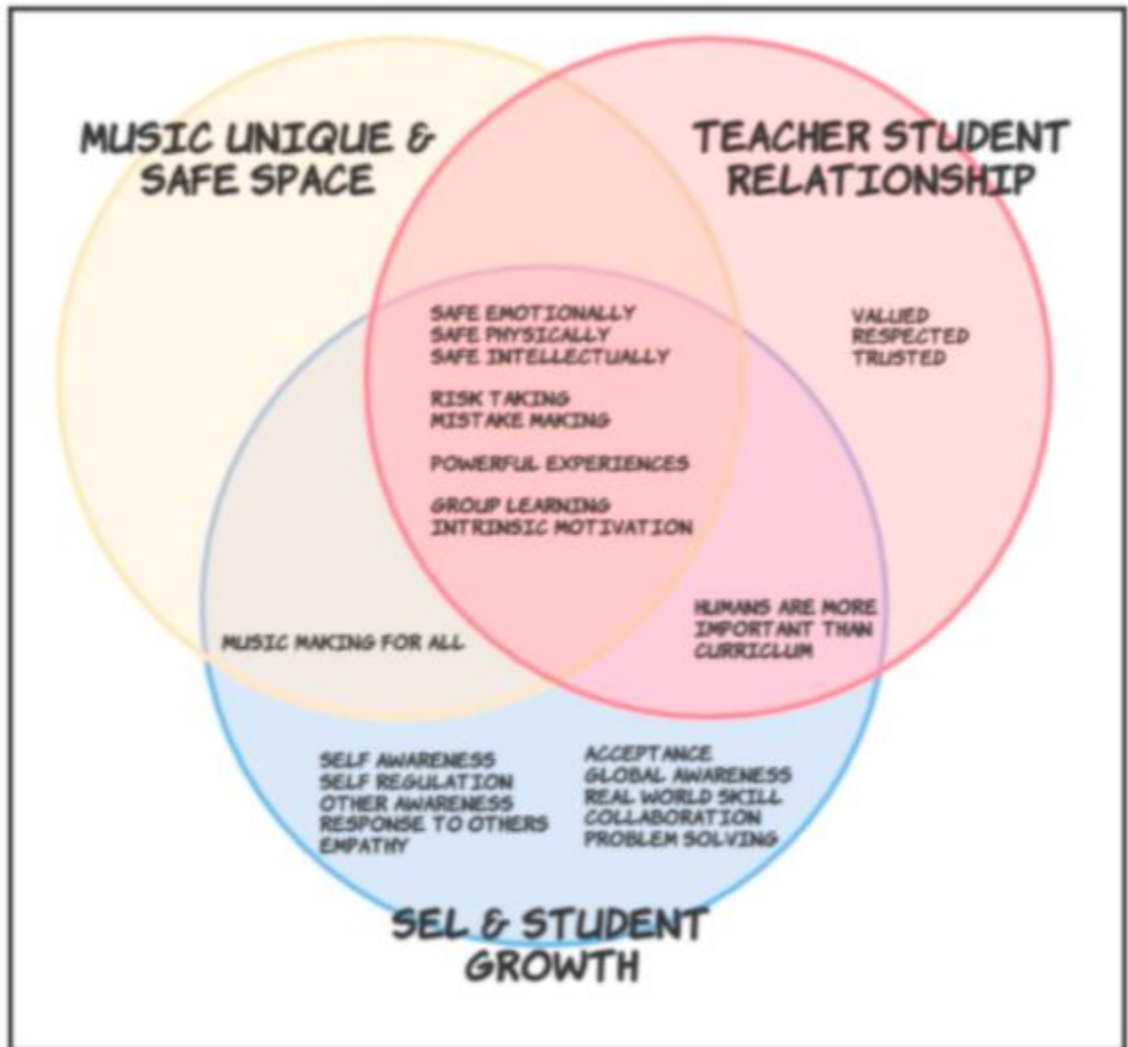


(Weissberg, et al, 2015)





Figure 4



Three Main Findings Venn Diagram