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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO  
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN MARCOS

Social and Emotional Learning & Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Teaching  
& the Impact on Student Experiences

A dissertation proposal submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership

by

Shawntanet Jara

Committee in charge:

University of California San Diego

Professor Alison Wishard-Guerra, Chair  
Professor Shana Cohen

California State University San Marcos

Professor Patricia Stall,  
Professor Christiane Wood

2020

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The Dissertation of Shawntanet Jara is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

University of California San Diego  
California State University, San Marcos

2020

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my family.

To my husband, Felipe, for holding down many forts and providing me with unlimited space, time, and encouragement to reach the doctoral finish line.

To my daughters, Zoe and Lena for cheering me on with hugs, kisses, and sweet love notes to keeping me going.

Without you all, this doctoral journey could not have been traveled.

Thank you.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With an abundance of appreciation and respect, I would like to thank Dr. Alison Wishard-Guerra, my chair, for her support, dedication and unwavering belief in me. As an educator and one who is an inspiration, she has always generously given me her time, shared her expertise, and provided me with the ongoing encouragement to keep going. Her kindly wit, grace, and courtesy are exceeded only by her abiding commitment to education and the intellectual development of her students. “Thank you” is not enough.

I’d like to thank the entire faculty of the Joint Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership, as everyone from faculty to support staff were kind supportive, and helped to make this a wonderful experience. I would like to acknowledge my committee, Dr. Shana Cohen, Dr. Pat Stall, and Dr. Christiane Woods for sharing their expertise and knowledge with me. It is through their guidance that I have grown as researcher, leader, and educator. I would also like to recognize Dr. Theresa Meyerott for spending many, many hours providing critical feedback throughout my dissertation journey. Her time was precious and she gave it to me.

I would also like to acknowledge Cohort 13 for the humor, engaging discussions, sharing of experiences and the food that allowed us to connect and learn from each other . From this cohort I developed many close friendships which I will treasure always.

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- 1997–2002 Classroom Teacher, East Whittier City School District

## **ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION**

Social and Emotional Learning & Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Teaching  
& the Impact on Student Experiences

by

Shawntanet Jara

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

University of California San Diego, 2020  
California State University, San Marcos, 2020

Professor Alison Wishard-Guerra, Chair

Social emotional learning (SEL) has emerged as a major thematic and programmatic emphasis in American education today (Hoffman, 2009). SEL is increasingly influencing the day-to-day practice of schools and communities (Elias, 1997). At the same time, increasing proportions of the student population in the United States comes from homes that are culturally

and linguistically diverse (Orosco & Aceves, 2009). A contributing factor to the success of SEL is Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Teaching (CRST) because culture is at the heart of all we do in the name of education. The impact of educator and parent perceptions at the intersection of SEL and CRST may hinder efforts of supporting students to thrive academically and socially. Furthermore, CRST has commonly been examined from the lens of low income and academically struggling schools, with limited research from the lens of affluence and academic prosperity.

The purpose of this study explored and described how three affluent, resource-rich, and academically thriving Kindergarten-3<sup>rd</sup> grade schools support and/or inhibit SEL and CRST its impact on how student experience school. Affluent districts with high test scores may perceive themselves to be protected from the need to address culture head on. The majority of research regarding CRST is in low-income, urban communities, isolating upper middle income communities and perpetuating the assumption that CRST does not apply to them. I challenge this dominant discourse as culture belongs to everyone and should be accessible in discourse in our schools. Our students are growing up in a diverse world and their successful navigation through it depends on the decisions our educators make in normalizing culture and emotions, take in and explore perspectives, and engage in daily reality checks.

In affluent districts (and districts in general) where the majority of educators are white and female there is privilege that comes with that status and even more privilege when that status is placed within an affluent setting. Unless educators make a concerted effort to challenge their assumptions about what it means to be white, what it means to be a person of color and the impacts of being either on learning, working, relationships, behavior, etc. we will not properly equip students with the SEL competencies needed to make academic strides.

Among this exploration was to understand what factors shape beliefs and practices of educators and parents regarding SEL and to what degree CRST practices contributed to these factors. SEL is comprised of five competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Exploring how educators enact these competencies in an effort to know students and develop sustained authentic relationships is critical to social and academic success of every student.

Drawing on parent and educator surveys, semi-structured interviews with teachers, classroom observations, student focus groups and student surveys, I attended to the beliefs, practices, knowledge, and attitudes that contributed to or withheld ways in which SEL and CRST work in tandem. I aimed to illuminate beliefs and practices in order to further understand how SEL and CRST practices correlate, interact and if not, why the lack of integration.

*Key words:* Social Emotional Learning; Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Teaching; SEL Beliefs; SEL Practices; CRST Beliefs; CRST Practices

*In a very real sense we have two minds, one that thinks and one that feels.  
-Daniel Goleman (Emotional Intelligence)*



## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

In 2016, I had 19 years of teaching under my belt as an elementary classroom teacher and I had just left the classroom for a leadership position as a TOSA (Teacher on Special Assignment). As a classroom teacher of early childhood, I understood the importance of not only teaching to the whole child but really knowing the whole child. Many of my colleagues and peers appeared to bypass the “getting to know” the child and went straight for the “teaching to the child”, this resulted in what I saw and felt as a disconnect between child and teacher but also between teacher and home. Those of us who invested in knowing the child and their families appeared to have less behavior problems and our students grew not only academically but emotionally seemed regulated and connected. Plain and simple, our classrooms seemed happier places to be. I often thought of those students who found themselves in other classrooms where this groundwork was not laid, they were fine, but it was a case of “you don’t know what you’re missing, if you haven’t had it”. I then found myself consumed with the thought of how to offer this “connect” to all students.

Having been an early childhood educator for the past 20 years, I came to the conclusion that there was a gap between what I understood education to offer children and what was actually happening in classrooms. There were two things that I noticed, (1) understanding children’s social emotional wellbeing took a backseat to the attainment of academic skills and knowledge and (2) culture and teaching existed in the same room but was rarely a part of any regular classroom/school discourse or teacher practice.

Schools grew out of a desire to provide skills for children to help them become successful in life, with a strong emphasis on academic skills (Crawford, Clifford, Early, & Reszka, 2009a). Programs for children prior to kindergarten have traditionally had a more social-development

and family support flavor. Driven by federal mandates, the primary focus of teacher education and K–12 schools is on linguistic and mathematical literacy (Cohen, 2006). The result is that many children have been forced to leap a pedagogical gulf at a critical period in their development where seamless transitions between environments can be the key to early school success.

Building a solid foundation to which the social-emotional learning (SEL) of our children stands as a priority is critical. Research indicates that children who develop warm and supportive relationships with their teachers and who have positive social interactions with peers have better academic and social-emotional outcomes in both PreK and in future years (Raver, 2002). Prior to kindergarten, preschools and home daycares have begun forming SEL building blocks. The SEL foundation begins to weaken as students start formal schooling in kindergarten, where the focus is now more academic and less SEL. Consistently positive teacher-child relationships in PreK and kindergarten have been found to be related to positive child outcomes, both academic and social (Pianta, LaParo, Payne, Cox, & Bradley, 2002; Vandell & Corasaniti, 1990).

Positive, high-quality relationships lead children to feel more confident in exploring their environment, resulting in greater opportunities for learning and social interaction (Piaget, 1964; Ainsworth, Blehar, & Waters, 1978). Social skills are related to educational outcomes in the elementary school years and should be an integrated part of educational programming (Peisner-Feinberg, et al., 2001; Raver & Zigler, 1997). Spira et al. (2005) found that behavioral and social attributes of children in kindergarten helped to predict later literacy achievement.

Just as children must learn to read before they can read to learn, they must be able to effectively read social cues in order to make sound judgments about how to react to challenging social situations. Even more than in math and reading, SEL skills develop in ongoing relational

contexts (Jones et al., 2008). This is why efforts to build SEL should span age ranges; while early childhood interventions are clearly essential for establishing the foundation for social and academic skills, they must be followed with ongoing supports in order to be most effective (Heckman, 2008; Reynolds, Ou, & Topitzes, 2004; Zhai, Raver, & Jones, 2012; Zigler, Gilliam, & Jones, 2006). Interventions should be vertically aligned: early childhood and elementary strategies should intentionally lay the groundwork for later interventions, and middle and high school efforts should intentionally build on earlier strategies and skills (Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

Since the early 1990s, social emotional learning (SEL) has emerged as a major thematic and programmatic emphasis in American education (Hoffman, 2009). Social, emotional, and behavioral are real factors that federal policy has begun to incorporate into education accountability metrics school climate initiatives, antibullying work, positive behavior supports (e.g., PBIS), and discipline reform (Cohen, 2012). SEL is increasingly influencing the day-to-day practice of schools and communities (Elias, 1997). Intentional SEL impacts academics dramatically with a 23% increase in skills, 9% improvement in attitude about self, others and school, 9% improvement in prosocial behavior, 9% reduction in problem behaviors, 10% reduction in emotional distress and 11% increase in standardized achievement test scores (Durlak, et. al, 2011). This is where we can begin fostering the collaborative spirit of education and create alignment starting with social emotional skills and practices.

The most current and widely accepted definition of social and emotional competence was developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, established in 1994, and involves five major emotional, cognitive, and behavioral competencies: self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, self-management, and relationship management (Zins, et al., 2004). However, the critical importance of the social aspect of

education is an ancient topic. Greek philosopher Plato proposed a holistic curriculum in regards to education, "by maintaining a sound system of education and upbringing, you produce citizens of good character," (Goldstein, 2002). Thomas Jefferson's belief that schooling had a political purpose to socialize children to become good citizens. More presently, in the 1960's, a researcher out of Yale, James Comer developed a program to support two of the lowest academically-performing elementary schools in Connecticut. With social supports in place, the schools began to improve, prompting Comer (1988) to speculate that the contrast between a child's experiences at home and those in school deeply affects the child's psychosocial development, and that this in turn shapes academic achievement.

This improvement suggested that academic achievement is linked to the social development in students, which encourages the positive connections to the school experience. Following Comer, in *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman (1995) provides much evidence for social and emotional intelligence as the complex and multifaceted ability to be effective in all the critical domains of life, including school. Roger P. Weissberg, a professor of psychology at Yale, and Timothy Shriver, a Yale graduate and educator in the New Haven Public Schools worked closely together in the late 80's early 90's to establish the K-12 SEL programming.

These intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies can be taught and measured, and research shows that students with these skills do better in school and in life (National Research Council, 2009, 2012; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Goleman, 2005; Greenberg et al., 2003). The notion of preparing children to be responsible, productive, caring, and engaged has been a goal long sought after. The more recent challenge is how best to do this in our modern school system, as this is an evolving area of study and practice. And to

take it a step further how does this evolution intersect with the evolution of culturally responsive and sustaining teaching.

The benefits of social emotional skills lead to conclusive evidence on its positive effect on academic, interpersonal and mental health results. Research shows that classrooms function more effectively and student learning increases when children have the skills to focus their attention, manage negative emotions, navigate relationships with peers and adults, and persist in the face of difficulty (Ladd, Birch & Buhs, 1999; Raver, 2002). Children who are able to effectively manage their thinking, attention, and behavior are also more likely to have better grades and higher standardized test scores (Blair & Razza, 2007; Bull et al., 2008; Epsy et al., 2004; Howse, Lange et al., 2003; McClelland et al., 2007; Ponitz et al., 2008), while those with strong social skills are more likely to make and sustain friendships, initiate positive relationships with teachers, participate in classroom activities, and be positively engaged in learning (Denham, 2006).

In addition to the need to support social emotional learning, a large and increasing proportion of the student population in the United States comes from homes that are culturally and linguistically diverse (Orosco & Aceves, 2009). Research supports that a student's race, ethnicity, and cultural background, matters and can significantly influence the student's achievement (Harry & Klingner, 2006). Addressing the unique needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students is one of the major challenges facing public education today because many teachers are inadequately prepared with relevant content knowledge, experience and training to address CLD students' learning needs (Orosco & Aceves, 2009).

The demographic makeup of public schools has changed, and in 2014 minority students made up most of the student body in states including California, Texas, New York, and Florida

(Aydin, Ozfidan, & Carothers, 2017) though the teaching force continued to be overwhelmingly White (Lynskey, 2015). Further, minority students have few racially/ethnically/culturally relevant role models teaching in their classrooms. According to Boser (2014), while students of color comprise nearly 50% of our public school population, 82% of teachers are white. This figure has hardly changed in more than 15 years. In addition, the adopted curriculum and instructional practices in the vast majority K-12 schools in the U.S. are tailored to White students.

In the October of 2019, I attended The Fall 2019 Conference of the California Council on Teacher Education, where the theme was “Integrating Social Emotional Learning & Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Teaching (CRST) Practices into Teacher Education”. This was the first time I had heard the term “CRST”, most commonly referred to as CRT (culturally responsive teaching). At this conference I learned that teaching practices that are responsive to and assist with sustaining cultural and linguistic heritage are essential to creating an environment where all students can learn and the effectiveness of these practices is predicated on social emotional learning, and in particular positive relationships between teachers, students, and the learning community. The Aspen Institute (2018) recommends, “Rather than being pursued as two separate bodies of work, the field needs to identify ways in which equity and social, emotional, and academic development can be mutually reinforcing” (p. 1).

CRST has a long history, evolving from different names such as culturally relevant or culturally responsive. Starting as early as Ramírez and Castañeda (1974) are often cited as providing the earliest introduction to the concept of CRT. However, today many educators associate culturally relevant teaching (CRT) with Ladson-Billings’s classic definition of CRT as “A pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by

using cultural and historical referents to convey knowledge, to impart skills, and to change attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 13). I have chosen to adhere to the evolution and refer to it in it’s current version of CRST.

The first premise is that culture is at the heart of all we do in the name of education, whether that is curriculum, instruction, administration, or performance assessment (Gay, 2010). Even without our being consciously aware of it, culture determines how we think, believe, and behave, and these in turn, affect how we teach and learn (Gay, 2010). Teaching is an act of social interaction and the resultant classroom climate is related directly to the interpersonal relationship between student and teacher (Irvine & York, 1995). Education is a sociocultural process, hence a critical examination of the role of culture in human life is indispensable to the understanding and control of the educational process (Pai, et.al., 2006).

Improving teacher diversity helps all students in several ways (Carothers, et. al., 2019). Teachers of color are positive role models for all students and reduce negative stereotypes, better preparing students to live and work in a multiracial society (Faltis, 2014; James, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). A more diverse teacher workforce can also supplement training in the culturally sensitive teaching practices most effective with today’s student populations (The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce, 2016). In addition, Partelow, Brown, and Johnson (2014) emphasized that teachers of color tend to have more positive perceptions of students of color—both academically and behaviorally—than other teachers and a recent study found that African American teachers are less likely than white teachers to perceive African American students’ behavior as disruptive (Startz, 2016).

This inadequate preparation can create a cultural gap between teachers and students and can limit educators’ abilities to choose effective instructional practices or materials because way

too often, teachers and instructional contexts are developed to benefit students from White middle and high socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds, voiding the cultural and linguistic characteristics of diverse learners (Orosco & Aceves, 2009). Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) and SEL can powerfully address this disparity.

### **Statement of the Problem**

At the intersection of social emotional learning and culturally responsive and sustaining teaching are educator beliefs and practices. The exploration of these ideas is needed. The Aspen Institute’s Pursuing Social and Emotional Development Through a Racial Equity Lens: Call to Action (2018) states, “In an equitable education system, every student has access to the resources and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education, irrespective of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, disability, family

background, family income, citizenship, or tribal status”. Simply ensuring more equitable resource allocations won’t ensure that schools are affirming of students’ background and cultural and linguistic heritage (p. 1).

Teaching practices that are responsive to and assist with sustaining cultural and linguistic heritage are essential to creating an environment where all students can learn (Weinstein, et. al, 2004). The effectiveness of these practices is predicated on social emotional learning, and in particular positive relationships between teachers, students, and the learning community (Durlak, et. al., 2011). Thus the Aspen Institute (2018) recommends, “Rather than being pursued as two separate bodies of work, the field needs to identify ways in which equity and social, emotional, and academic development can be mutually reinforcing” (p. 1).

SEL as the process through which children enhance their ability to integrate thinking, feeling, and behaving to achieve important life tasks (Zins et., al. 2007). Those competent in SEL



are able to recognize and manage their emotions, establish healthy relationships, set positive goals, meet personal and social needs, and make responsible and ethical decisions (Elias et al., 1997; Payton et al., 2000). A meta-analysis of over 270, 000 students (Durlack, et al., 2011) indicates that SEL not only increases prosocial behaviors, improves student attitudes toward school, and reduces depression and stress among students, but also increases academic achievement by an average of 11 percentile points.

Knowing the importance of acknowledging students' social, emotional and academic needs as well as sustaining their cultural and linguistic heritage the state of California has integrated these concepts into the 2016 Teacher Performance Expectations (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2016). How much do educators already know about these concepts and how do educators receive the training and support they need to integrate them into their practice? The nexus of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Teaching (CRST) is an area that needs attention.

As the country's racial and ethnic demographics change there is an increasing mismatch between the experiences of teachers and the students they teach. These different experiential backgrounds result in numerous problems including teachers misunderstanding students and students misunderstanding teachers (Carothers, et. al., 2019). Research shows that diversity in schools, including racial diversity among teachers, can provide significant benefits to students (Johnson & Hinton, 2019; Martinez & Tadeu, 2018; Wu & Ida, 2018). While students of color are expected to make up 56 percent of the student population by 2024, the elementary and secondary educator workforce remains overwhelmingly white.

This study focuses on four affluent, resource-rich, K-3 elementary schools and the need to have practices in place that continue to support student social emotional learning. The purpose

of this study is to determine how elementary schools, as social organizations, support or inhibit student relationships and to understand how this impacts student social emotional wellbeing and culturally responsive and sustaining teaching (CRST). Specifically, examining the relationships that make up the student experience. Mounting evidence from the field's research points to social and emotional skills as playing a central role in shaping student achievement, workplace readiness, and adult wellbeing (Guzman, Caal et al. 2014). Exploring the role SEL plays in the lives of students now will give insight on how schools are supporting the lives of our students in the future.

A key component to SEL is culturally responsive and sustaining teaching. CRST is explored as it is naturally a part of the social and emotional lens. I will explore how suburban, majority white, upper middle class schools approach CRST. Affluent districts with high test scores may perceive themselves to be protected from the need to address culture head on. The majority of research regarding CRST is in low-income, urban communities, isolating upper middle income communities and perpetuating the assumption that CRST does not apply to them. Culturally responsive and sustaining teaching, a powerful tool, is an educator's ability to recognize students' cultural displays of learning and meaning making and respond positively and constructively with teaching moves that use cultural knowledge as a scaffold to connect what the student knows to new concepts and content in order to promote effective information processing, and at the same time, the educator understands the importance of being in relationship and having a social emotional connection to the student in order to create a safe space for learning (Hammond, 2015). This study investigates the degree to which SEL and CRST constructs, traits and attributes give voice to the perceived experiences of students regarding the people and practices that impact them.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study to determine how elementary schools, as social organizations, support or inhibit student relationships and to understand how this impacts student social emotional wellbeing. Specifically, examining the relationships that make up the student experience. Mounting evidence from the field's research points to social and emotional skills as playing a central role in shaping student achievement, workplace readiness, and adult wellbeing (Guzman, Caal et al. 2014). A key component to SEL is culturally responsive and sustaining teaching, how educators recognize students' cultural displays of learning and meaning making and respond in ways the support a social emotional connection to the student.

Over the past decade, multiple surveys indicate that educators, parents, and the public recognize the need for a broad educational agenda to not only improve academic performance but also to enhance students' social-emotional competence, character, health, and civic engagement (Jennings & Greenburg, 2009). Principals and teachers are seeking ways to effectively integrate SEL into their classrooms and schools. But as of yet, the development of consistent standards, measures, and tools to support schools and organizations in measuring and monitoring these skills remains a need in the field.

## **Research Questions**

This study examines the role of social emotional learning and culturally responsive and sustaining teaching in an affluent elementary school district, the following research questions were developed:

1. In what ways do educators and parents conceptualize social emotional learning and culturally responsive and sustaining teaching?

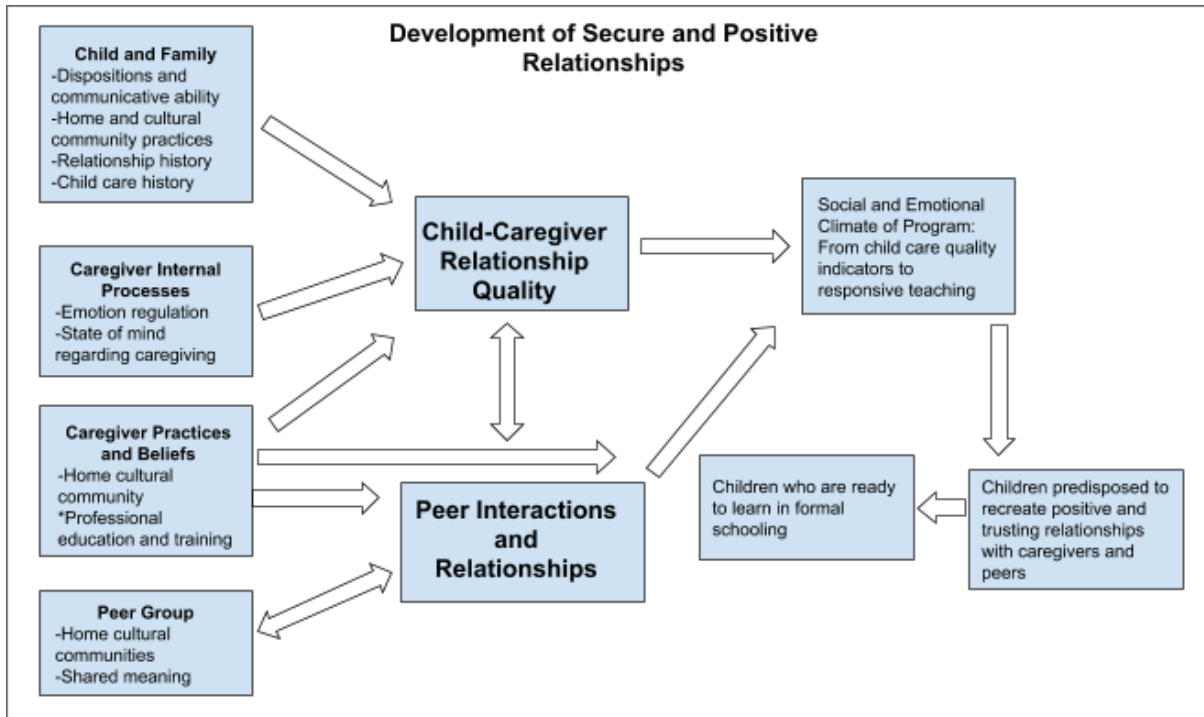
2. What SEL and CRST beliefs and practices do educators endorse and enact in their classrooms?
3. Are there different patterns of practice or divergent belief systems by educators and parents?
4. To what extent are SEL beliefs and practices and CRST associated with student experiences?

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study examined the social and emotional climate of students' experiences in school. The student experience is comprised of interactions that the student has with the adults and peers that make up the school setting. Relationships are critical for everyone, and they are built upon those around us whom we care about and trust. Children's relationships start to build at birth, from skin to skin contact as a baby all the way through to connecting with new people at school. Secure and trusting relationships can help to promote all aspects of a child's development (Ainsworth, 1997). They help children develop a source of comfort, security, trust, and enables them to learn social & emotional skills in turn having a positive effect on other areas of their development such as academic learning (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

**Development of Secure and Positive Relationships.** Howe's (2016) Development of Secure and Positive Relationships is a framework that focuses on individuals, dyads, classrooms, and cultural communities. The purpose is to guide not only how children develop within the classroom but also how those classrooms respond to students. The theoretical framework, illustrated in Figure 1, explains the pathways between children's experiences within the classroom, their interactions with teachers and peers, and the social emotional climate of the

classroom and can predict their predispositions for social and emotional development (Sanders & Wishard Guerra, 2016).



**Figure 1. Development of Secure and Positive Relationships** (Howes, 2016)

Children build relationships with family members, primary caregivers, peers, and teachers. The lasting impact of these relationships are far reaching and will determine how they build relationships in the future, how they approach the unknown, and how they perceive themselves in the world, social and emotional skills and enable them to thrive, take risks and explore (Goleman, 1995).

**Social-Emotional Learning Skills and Culturally Responsive & Sustaining Teaching.**

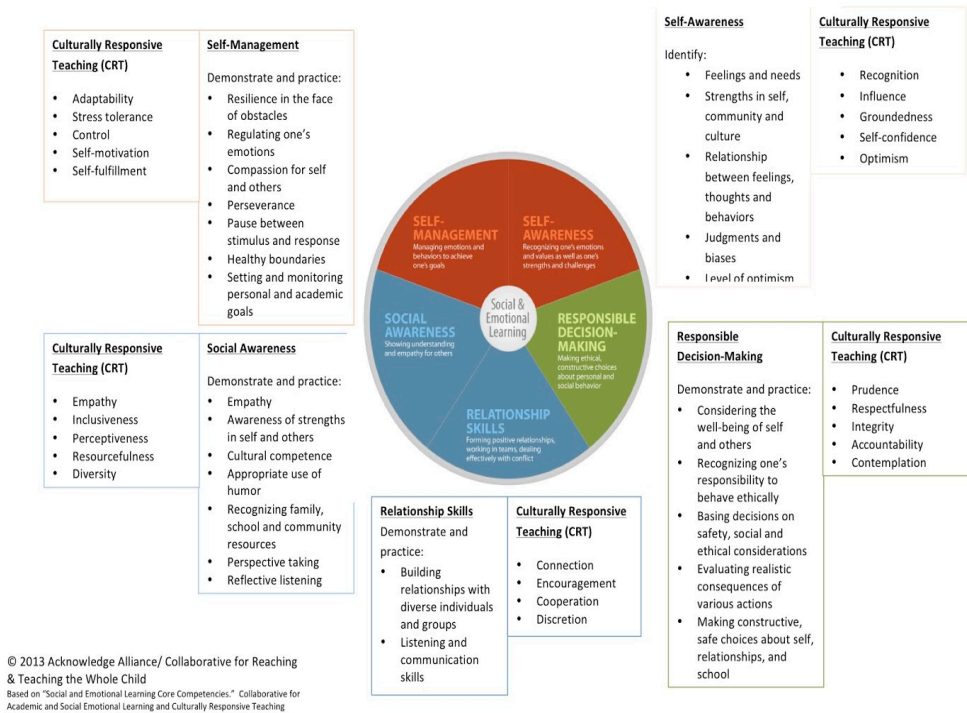
As the merging of social emotional learning and culturally responsive and sustaining teaching come together, Figure 2, illustrates how social emotional competencies align with culturally

responsive competencies. The two approaches intersect, merge, and are aligned naturally as the characteristics of the five SEL competencies are directly applicable to characteristics of CRST.

Recognizing the reflection of culture in any implementation of standards or initiatives requires being thoughtful and responsive to the many diverse cultures of the students, families, educators, and staff that make up school communities. Culturally responsive and sustaining teaching recognizes that every person, including teachers, principals, and school leaders, brings a cultural perspective in the way they interact with others. By working to understand, respect, and integrate diverse student identities and backgrounds into curricula, educators can create optimal learning opportunities for all students. Delivering a culturally responsive education requires ongoing attention to attitudes, environments, curricula, teaching strategies, and family/community involvement efforts. Applying the SEL Framework in a culturally responsive manner is a requirement for success.

Socially, emotionally, and culturally competent teachers are better equipped to reach and teach students and families from a broad range of cultural, racial and/or socioeconomic backgrounds. The following chart depicts the importance of teachers' social-emotional competencies in culturally proficient classrooms.

## Social-Emotional Learning Skills & Culturally Responsive Teaching



**Figure 2. Social Emotional Learning Skills and Culturally Responsive Teaching (2013)**

### Methodology

This study examined the beliefs and practices of social-emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching of students, parents, and educators by employing a convergent mixed-methods design in four phases. First, in phase one, a survey was administered to educators and parents. Next, in phase two, the study interviewed only educators who gave consent during phase one. Then, in phase three, classroom observations were conducted. And finally, phase four concluded with student focus groups and an integrated student survey. The quantitative and qualitative data was analyzed to ascertain the nature of the triangulation among students, parents, and educator belief systems and patterns of practice.

**Participants, Data Collection, and Procedures.** In the study of SEL and CRST beliefs and practices, the participants in phase one were 37 educators and 49 parents. Phase two, the interview, included 14 educators, representing K-3, administrative staff, and paraprofessionals. Phase three, the classroom observations included 8 classrooms. The final phase four, comprised of 8 focus groups of which included a total of 33 students.

### **Significance of the Study**

This significance of this study is that it may be one of the first quantitative analysis' where social-emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching is examined through the lens of an affluent district. In particular, low-income students and students of color, who are frequently underserved by the schools they attend, tend to be the focus of much of the research, policy and practice circles in the legacy of accountability-driven mandates. But what of the affluent, majority white school districts. What part do they play in the narrative of social emotional learning and culturally responsive and sustaining teaching when resources are abundant and accessibility to resources is generous?

Much of the existing research in the field has focused on urban school districts and primarily students of color, where fostering social and emotional skills is often seen as part of the educational mission and psychological, social, and emotional needs intervention to fuel gaps in opportunity and achievement. As a result, little is known about what effective social emotional learning practice and culturally responsive teaching looks like in an affluent school district—a gap that this study sought to fill.

Schools are an important context for children's social and emotional development. In classrooms and other school settings, children and adolescents need to have skills such as managing negative emotions, being calm and focused, following directions, and navigating



relationships with peers and adults. The Aspen Institute (2018) calls for identifying “...ways in which equity and social, emotional, and academic development can be mutually reinforcing” (p.1). Given our current sociopolitical climate and what potentially looms for our current divide racially and politically, the time for integrating culturally responsive and sustaining teaching with social-emotional learning has never been more urgent. Now is the time to ensure that schools are having a positive and significant impact on the teaching and learning going on inside the classrooms from a dual lens.

## Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

*In order to develop normally, a child requires progressively more complex joint activity with one or more adults who have an irrational emotional relationship with the child. Somebody's got to be crazy about that kid. That's number one. First, last, and always. -Urie Brofenbrenner*

### Overview

The goal of social-emotional learning (SEL) is to help children (and adults) “enhance their ability to integrate thinking, feeling, and behaving to achieve important life tasks” (Zins et al., 2004, p. 6). Education throughout the world faces remarkable economic, technological, social, and personal challenges. Policy-makers everywhere emphasize the urgent need to develop ‘human resources’, and in particular to promote creativity, adaptability and better powers of communication (Robinson, 1999). For the past 30 years, policy makers, taxpayers, parents, and community members have harshly criticized America’s schools with regard to accountability and critique of how they have used money and materials (McCuin, D., 2012). Students seem to do more poorly on standardized tests with each successive year. In some states, threats and new laws link teachers’ job security with student-tested outcomes (Olson, 2011). Yet, many would debate the definition of educators as simply distributors of knowledge. Proponents of the social emotional education movement would argue that training teachers in the concepts of SEL, and using its framework as an application for schooling will impact not only students’ emotional development, relationship skills, and responsible decision making, but also their academic achievement and adult success (Waters, 2011).

Supporters of SEL would contest that schools take a holistic view of children and address not only the head through academic skills and knowledge but also the heart and teach students how to learn, to apply skills for problem solving and critical thinking to new situations that will

arise in the course of their work and personal lives (CASEL, 2013). Schools, because of the social nature of their organization, are a natural setting for social training. In the past two decades, a new educational approach now known as SEL has evolved that applies just such a socially constructed framework. The goal of SEL is to train and support teachers and students in social constructs based on emotional intelligence and its application to social, emotional, and academic work in the classroom (Jennings, 2009).

Educators are in a position to positively impact the social and emotional development of the whole child as they address the academic standards of their curriculum and student age group (Elias, et.al., 1997). The literature review that follows seeks to investigate the connections between social and emotional learning, culturally responsive teaching and the impacts on student experiences in school.

### **Building Trust**

The adult is the key ingredient to successfully implementing social, emotional, and academic development in schools (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). In order to feel a sense of trust, safety, and support at school, adults must create settings that are physically and emotionally safe and foster strong bonds among children (Aspen Institute, 2018). Trust is the byproduct of rapport, that sense of connection and goodwill one feels when you're getting along with classmates or colleagues and trust is the culturally responsive teacher's secret weapon (Hammond, 2016). Making the teacher-student relationship the priority is the only way to begin building a strong, authentic bond.

In Erikson's psycho-social stages of development, the first stage is the most fundamental in which the focus is on trust (Erikson, 1950). The basic attitude to be learned is the trust between a child and a caregiver. During this stage, young children learn to either trust or mistrust

the world around them. If a child develops trust, he or she is likely to feel safe and secure in their world. Caregivers who are inconsistent, emotionally unavailable, or rejecting contribute to feelings of mistrust in the children they care for (Schipper, et.al., 2006). Failure to develop trust will result in fear and a belief that the world is inconsistent and unpredictable (Batra, 2013). Social, emotional, and academic skills are all essential to success in school, careers, and in life, and they can be effectively learned in the context of trusted ties to caring and competent adults (Aspen Institute, 2018).

### **The Whole Child: SEL Learning**

A growing body of research suggests there is much to be gained from understanding the ways in which SEL skills emerge and change over the first 10 years of life (Cohen, 2006). Although more research is required in this area, two things are clear. First, some skills act as building blocks: they serve as a foundation for more complex skills that emerge later in life (Hemmeter, et. al., 2006). This suggests that children must develop certain basic SEL competencies before they can master others (Elias, et. al., 1997). Second, some skills are stage-salient: they enable children and youth to meet the demands of a particular developmental stage and/or setting (Aber & Allen, 1987). In other words, as the environments in which children learn, grow, and play change, so do the demands placed on children in order to be successful, and some SEL skills are more or less important at these different times of development (Durlak, et. al., 2011). There is thus reason to believe that certain SEL skills should be taught before others, and within specific grades or age-ranges (Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

Children need environments that are more than just safe from physical harm, emotional development is just as important as and is interrelated with cognitive development (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007). Young children experience their world as an

environment of relationships, and these relationships affect virtually all aspects of their development-intellectual, social, emotional, physical, behavioral, and moral (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004).

Basic cognitive regulation skills begin to emerge when children are 3-4 years old (Kopp, 1982) and go through dramatic transformation during early childhood and early school years (ages 4-6), coinciding with the expansion of the pre-frontal cortex of the brain (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). These skills (often called “executive function”) lay a foundation for more complex skills later in life such as long-term planning, decision-making, and coping skills, among others, and are therefore important skills to emphasize during early childhood and the transition to kindergarten (Drever et. al., 2015). As children move through the elementary grades, there is an increased need for a focus on planning, organizing, and goal-setting, as well as attention to the development of empathy, social awareness, and perspective-taking as children develop an increased capacity for understanding the needs and feelings of others (Denham, 2006). In late elementary and middle school, many children are able to shift toward an emphasis on more specific interpersonal skills, such as the capacity to develop sophisticated friendships, engage in prosocial and ethical behavior, and solve conflicts (Osher et al., in press; Jones & Bailey, 2015).

Developmental science is as much about understanding distinct domains of development as it is about “reassembling the ‘whole child’ from the network of allied developmental changes that tend to be otherwise studied distinctly” (Thompson, 1993, p. 397), and educational and developmental sciences are key pieces in the puzzle of how best to educate the whole child (Diamond, 2010). Developmental scientists have both the opportunity and the responsibility to

inform curriculum development processes through research and dialogue with stakeholders on what it takes to nurture complete learners (Liew, 2011).

Developmental needs of the whole child, including academic achievement and social-emotional learning, must be considered and aligned throughout the educational process, ranging from curriculum development to teacher professional development and teaching practices (Kaufman et.al., 2009). Although some schools offer curriculum or interventions aimed at social-emotional and self-regulatory skills, programs are ineffective unless they are delivered with fidelity (Bierman et al., 2008). To achieve intervention integrity, teachers must receive the necessary training and institutional support (Birch & Ladd, 1997) to synchronize and integrate such interventions into their existing academic curriculum to seamlessly interweave social-emotional and academic learning. Self-regulatory and social-emotional competencies must be brought to the table so as to nurture children to become educated and personally responsible citizens-hallmarks of true success in education (Liew, 2011).

Children experience classrooms through their relationships with their teachers and with their peers, and together children and teachers contribute to a dynamic and enduring set of interactions characterized by regular and consistent patterns (Kontos & WilcoxHerzog, 1997; Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003; Meyer, Wardrop, Hastings, & Linn, 1993; Pianta, 1999; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004).

### **Student to Teacher Relationships and Academic Performance**

Social emotional learning begins with teachers building relationships with their students. Students who perceive teachers as creating a caring, well-structured learning environment in which expectations are high, clear, and fair are more likely to report engagement in school (Klem & Connell, 2004). Within developmental psychology, relationships with

teachers have been studied from an attachment perspective, in which teachers, especially in early childhood, are seen as "alternative caregivers" (Howes, 1999). Drawing from the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) and developmental systems theory (Lerner, 1998), Pianta (1999) proposed a conceptual model to advance our understanding of the nature of relationships between teachers and children, and their contribution to children's development.

According to this model, Pianta (1999) describes high-quality teacher-child relationships as equitable interactions where there is a high level of closeness and low levels of conflict and where warmth, positive affect and open communication are evident. High-quality teacher-child can allow children to feel confident, supported, and provides the emotional security to thrive within an academic environment.

However, if a teacher-student relationship is negative and conflictual in kindergarten, it is more likely that the student will have behavioral and academic problems in later grades (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Also, teachers' interactions with students can directly affect students' behavioral and emotional engagement in the classroom (E. Skinner & Belmont, 1993). When teachers support and interact positively with students, then students are more likely to be engaged and behave appropriately (E. Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Teachers' beliefs influence the type of learning environments they create, as well as their students' academic performance and beliefs about their own abilities (Fang, 1996; Kagan, 1992). Students perform better when their teachers believe they will succeed, in part because teachers treat students differently when they hold high expectations for them (Rosenthal, 1994).

As children traverse elementary school they interact with an ever-widening range of people, gain greater independence from parents and, especially, learn how to negotiate relationships with peers and teachers (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). Furthermore, the

development of new cognitive abilities such as flexible thinking, enhanced memory, and new strategies for recall (Huston & Ripke, 2006; Nelson, 1996) help children meet the more explicit academic goals that confront them soon after kindergarten. In addition to these developmental changes, there are key transformations in the role of teachers and classroom structure between preschool and the elementary years. Beginning in first grade, teachers become increasingly focused on their role as instructors and less focused on providing warmth and nurturance for children (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000).

Additionally, classrooms are structured differently, as children often change teachers for different subjects. Not to mention, students have fewer opportunities for one-to-one teacher child interaction (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 1999; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). As a consequence of these changes, some have suggested that relationships with teachers become more distant as children progress through school. Empirical evidence shows that there is a trend of decreasing average relationship quality over time (Jerome, Hamre, & Pianta, 2009; O'Connor & McCartney, 2007; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004). However, it is not clear whether changes in the nature of teacher-child relationships over time are associated with changes in the importance of these relationships for children's development.

It is possible that relationships with teachers may become less important after children have accomplished many of the important challenges of early childhood, such as learning to regulate their emotions, navigate relationships with teachers and peers, and work independently (Pajares, 1992). As children progress through elementary school and become more independent and less reliant on teachers, children's development of academic and behavioral competencies may depend less on the quality of relationships with teachers and more on their own motivation and abilities and their relationships with peers (Evans & Carr, 1985). This is consistent with an



attachment perspective, which would suggest that early teacher child relationships are most important because they provide a foundation for a mental representation that children form about themselves, others, and relationships that tend to be confirmed in subsequent experiences with others (Howes, Phillipsen, & Peisner-Feinberg, 2000).

On the other hand, however, close relationships with teachers may become more important as children progress through elementary school and approach early adolescence (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). During these years, children's need for relatedness increases and good quality relationships with teachers may reduce distress associated with the anticipation of the transition to middle school and enhance feelings of school belonging, which, in turn, may be associated with better psychological and academic functioning in school (Roeser, Midgley, & Urdan, 1996)

Maldonado-Carreno and Votruba-Drza (2011), found that teacher-child relationship quality was associated with teacher-reported academic skills. Between-child analyses indicated that children with whom teachers reported more positive relationships received modestly higher average scores from teachers in language and literacy, and mathematics during elementary school (Burchinal et. al., 2002). However, the average quality of the relationship reported across teachers was not associated with gains in academic skills rated by different teachers from kindergarten through fifth grade. On the other hand, within child improvements in relationship quality during elementary school were linked to modest improvements in academic skills in language and literacy, and mathematics rated by teachers (Maldonado-Carreno & Votruba-Drza, 2011). This suggests that relationships with teachers constitute an important context for children's development during the elementary school years (Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

The power of SEL programs resides in how the program produces changes in teachers' attitudes and behaviors that then translates to positive teacher-student relationships and affects children's everyday interactions and behaviors in the classroom (Brown, J.L. & Jones, S.M., 2010). As such, teachers need professional, emotional, and autonomy support in making adaptations that fit each of their classrooms and teaching philosophies, so that they "own" the knowledge and skills and apply them as part of their teaching "style" or identity (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). Changed teacher behavior, which emerges in part through the implementation of SEL program, is the key to creating positive social and emotional contexts for learning (Greenberg, et. al., 2003). SEL curricula that complement academic curricula and is implemented in ways that do not diminish teacher authority, self efficacy, and professionalism is a promising avenue in maximizing students' learning and achievement. (Liew, J., & McTigue, E. M., 2010).

### **Structural Elements of Policy, Resources, and Organization**

Federal policy has begun to incorporate social, emotional, and behavioral factors into education accountability metrics (e.g., ESSA: Every Student Succeeds Act), and school climate initiatives, antibullying work, positive behavior supports (e.g., PBIS), and discipline reform are increasingly influencing the day-to-day practice of schools and communities (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). As these initiatives become more widespread, educators and other child and youth service providers are seeking to identify SEL programs that (1) meet their specific goals or needs; (2) fulfill certain requirements; (3) align with existing school-, district-, and state-wide regulations and initiatives; and (4) can be adapted and implemented with success in their unique settings (Cohen, 2006).

Addressing these barriers and realizing a vision of integrated approaches to SEL cannot happen at the school level alone (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Educational and public policies need to provide supports that enable these changes to occur. Building a shared commitment and vision among all of these stakeholders and structures will require finding common ground among competing values, priorities, and politics (Aber et al., 2011).

Policy supports should include (1) establishing an incorporating enough flexibility to accommodate schools' individual needs and contexts, (2) establishing state and local standards for teachers and schools that go beyond implementing programs to specify clear expectations, (3) integrating SEL into administrator, teacher, and staff training, (4) support assessment of SEL practices and skills, (5) creating opportunities for networking, learning, and continuous improvement, (6) incentivizing connections between SEL and academics, and (7) creating federal research funding streams that focus on daily practice approaches to SEL (Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

Moving toward integrated approaches to SEL development will require that all stakeholders be open to innovation and committed to evaluation and refinement (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). New approaches should be identified from multiple sectors—including the early childhood field, which has traditionally emphasized SEL skills and their integration with academics more than K-12 education—and rigorously tested (Bailey, R., Jones, S. M., & the Harvard SECURE Development Team, 2012). This shift in approach will require addressing challenges that include competing demands, limited professional development structures in schools, and need for data (Durlak et.al., 2011). Key to meeting these challenges is collaboration among policymakers, educators, families, and community practitioners like afterschool programs and social service agencies who can bring to bear existing expertise and supports (Jones &

Bouffard, 2012). In order for students to integrate SEL skills into their daily lives, schools and the adults in and around them need to do so as well (Elias et.al., 2003).

### **School Leaders and School Culture**

School culture is the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that has built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges (Deal & Peterson, 2016). This set of informal expectations and values shapes how people think, feel, and act in schools. This highly enduring web of influence binds the school together and makes it special.

School leaders from every level are key to shaping school culture (Elmore, 2000). Principals communicate what they value most in their everyday work. Teachers illustrate values in their everyday actions and words. Parents boost school spirit when they visit school, participate in governance, and celebrate success. In the strongest schools, leadership comes from many sources (Copeland, 2003). School leaders do several important things when sculpting culture. They research the culture, uncover and articulate core values, pursue a positive context, reinforcing cultural elements that are positive and modifying those that are negative and dysfunctional (Deal & Peterson, 2016). Educational contexts influence the development and expression of SEL skills (Denham & Brown, 2010).

First, the physical and human resources available to a child may facilitate or challenge a child's social and emotional learning (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Research shows that children who have positive relationships with adults – those that are contextually and developmentally appropriate, reciprocal, reliable, and flexible (Brion-Miesels & Jones, 2012) – typically have more access to interactions that support social and emotional learning. Second, specific settings

can be more or less likely to influence the ease with which a child accesses and expresses SEL skills that he or she already possesses, particularly among young children (Cole, et. al., 2009).

These contextual factors underscore the critical role that school leaders have to play in shaping children's social and emotional development. The culture and climate of educational settings influence student outcomes, and non-parental adults across settings have a unique opportunity to support the development of healthy relationships and prosocial contexts to facilitate the acquisition and expression of SEL skills (Jones, et.al., 2017). Despite the intrinsic overlap of early learning experiences and primary school, the focus on school leader effectiveness emphasizes the importance of being explicit and intentional about addressing this particular effort (Bransford, 2004). Investigating this endeavor allows meaningful understandings and changes in adult behaviors/skills and changes to the culture itself. Without this leadership and responsibility for understanding early learning, school leaders miss powerful opportunities to equal the playing field for all children (Spillane, 2001).

Elementary school leaders are essential to creating effective schools and improving student achievement (Hallinger, 2003). Marzano & Waters (2005) state the importance of school leaders as playing a crucial role in transforming our primary education system. School leadership and teacher quality make a significant impact on student learning. Specifically, elementary school principals are the conduits to aligning early learning programs to the K-12 sector and ensuring the seamless transition for students,

Principal leadership is critical to establishing aligned curriculum and instruction, which is created by collaborating teams of teachers, working on a regular basis, to plan, implement, and reflect on their instruction (Takanishi, 2016). In early learning programs and K-12, teams of teachers are already doing this work, but in silos, very separate from one another. Elementary

principal leadership can bring these teachers and their work together so that P-16 has the solid foundation to begin alignment and ultimately transforming the public education system.

### **The Role of Culture in Social Emotional Learning**

A long tradition of studies of emotion in non-Western cultural contexts has shown that norms regarding emotional expression, emotional experience, and emotional regulation are highly conditioned by culture (Hoffman, 2009, Markus & Kitayama, 1994). Not all cultures interpret emotional experience in the same way, nor do they assign the same kinds of regulatory or expressive responses (such as talk) commonly shared by the White, American middle class (Ballenger, 1992). Notably, when people inhabit many other kinds of worlds that are configured with ideas, practices, and institutions that do not construct the self as the primary source of action, strikingly different psychological tendencies are revealed (Markus & Kitayama, 2010).

In contrast to other cultural scripts for emotional expression, in the Anglo script there is a strong emphasis on behavioral control, combined with a belief that proper expression means talking about one's emotions (Wierzbicka, 1994). It was also noticed that many North American teachers frequently refer to the children's internal states and interpret their feelings for them; or example, "you must be angry," "it's hard for you when your friend does that," and so on (Plaut & Sharkey, 2003). The notion that the influence of culture on emotion and language is a universal claim to which western psychological research on emotions in cognition is commonly accepted, warrants challenging.

Similarly, in addressing SEL, Saarni (1997) writes:

In many respects, these skills of emotional competence reflect Western societies' notions of "how emotion works." I refer to such beliefs as folk theories of emotion. Other non-Western cultures do not necessarily view unexpressed emotions as accumulative or as explosive. (p. 47)

Denham and Weissberg (2004) caution that SEL programming must be “culturally relevant, empowering children within their unique cultural environments,” also noting the possibility that “certain SEL definitions may be unique to the child’s home culture” (p. 41). The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) observes that although children have “universal developmental needs in the five core areas of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making,” cultures may vary in how core emotional competencies are expressed, making “appropriate adaptation” important (Hoffman, 2009).

On the other hand, there appears to be a recognition in the literature that cultural differences and diversity may make some kinds of SEL problematic without sufficient “adaptation” and/or “self-awareness” (Hoffman, 2009). Hoffman cautions about the need to adapt SEL to different cultural beliefs and values that may not support cultural differences if fundamental assumptions about such things as “universal developmental needs,” or the nature of “positive relationships” remain intact. Assuming and encouraging fixed or trait based interpretations of differences that locate cultural meaning in behaviors, gestures, norms, instead of in the situation or interactional context can create unintentional consequences (Toomey & Dorjee, 2019). Emotion and its interrelationship with complex cultural domains of significance such as experiences and understandings of self and others, the difficulties of encoding such understandings into “teachable SEL competencies” for “all children” become evident (Chesebrough, 2011).

A one-size-fits-all approach to SEL instruction may not be the best fit for many learners. The reason for this lies within human nature itself: our social interactions, behaviors, and

emotions are intricate and fluid; moreover, they are heavily influenced by other factors, such as our cultures.

### **Culturally Responsive Teaching**

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) dimensions, while rooted firmly in psychology, did not explicitly address the broader lens of sociology, paying scant attention to socio-political context and culture (Simmons, 2017). Although the literature acknowledged a tacit understanding—at best—of the role culture plays in creating and sustaining respectful interpersonal relationships, the CASEL heuristic did not acknowledge the cultural nature of identifying and working with emotions and reflected a colorblind approach privileging white middle-class American values of what constitutes SEL competencies (Hoffman, 2009).

Culturally responsive and sustaining teaching is a pedagogy that has undergone a series of evolutionary refinement starting with Ramirez and Castaneda (1974) who provided the earliest introduction to the concept of CRST. They argued that schools force conformity onto children of minority groups through their “assimilationist philosophies.” The result was that the schools were not being culturally responsive to the Mexican American student so the notion of cultural democracy was the beginning of challenging the school institutionally to be more responsive to its constituency and the community it serves, regardless of the culture or language of the students (Sharroky, 2019).

Building upon this, it was defined as a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural and historical referents to convey knowledge, to impart skills, and to change attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 13). In order for teaching and learning to occur in classrooms, awareness and intention play an essential part of



creating the social interactions that support students to meet the criteria of academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness.

Lisa Delpit (1995) summarized it best when she made this statement:

We all interpret behaviors, information, and situations through our own cultural lenses; these lenses operate involuntarily, below the level of conscious awareness, making it seem that our own view is simply “the way it is.” Learning to interpret across cultures demands reflecting on our own experiences, analyzing our own culture, examining and comparing varying perspectives. We must consciously and voluntarily make our cultural lenses apparent. Engaging in the hard work of seeing the world as others see it must be a fundamental goal for any move to reform the education of teachers and their assessment (p. 151).

Culturally responsive teaching was further explored as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students (Gay, 2000). CRT is specifically committed to collective and not merely individual empowerment (Ladson-Billings, 1995). As our society increases in diversity, teachers and other school personnel have a corresponding need to increase in their understanding of the integral relationship between culture and social behavior and the need to view students' behaviors within a cultural context (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008).

Culture is referred to as a dynamic system of social values, cognitive codes, behavior standards, worldwide views, and beliefs used to give order and meaning to our own lives as well as the lives of others (Gay, 2000). Teachers need to recognize their own ethnocentrism and bias and realize that their worldview is not universal nor are their cultural norms absolute (Weinstein, Tomlinson Clarke, & Curran, 2004). All teachers, regardless of their racial and ethnic background, need to have self-awareness, they need to know about their own and other cultures, and they need to understand how their beliefs and biases can affect their teaching (Gay, 2002). Culturally responsive teaching requires teachers to believe that success is possible for each

student and a part of that success is helping students make connections between themselves and their community, national, ethnic and global identities (Grant, 1992).

Culturally Responsive Teaching is about building the learning capacity of the individual student by way of neuroscience (Hammond, 2015). Oftentimes, there is an attempt to disassociate CRT from other aspects of learning that involve being sensitive to the needs of students, such as social-emotional learning or brain-based teaching (Hollie, 2019). Hammond's work eliminates the disassociation and shows that CRT should be seen as a part of the holistic educational experience for all students (Hollie, 2019).

Descriptions of culture are merely “approximations of reality” (Gay, 2000). Moreover, the categories by which we classify people are constantly evolving, overlapping, mixing—even opposing each other (Scholl, 2001). Identity is not a “fixed essence lying unchanged outside history and culture” (Hall, 1989); rather, identity construction is an ongoing, lifelong process.

Three particular challenges that culturally responsive teaching poses for teachers are (1) the need to monitor our own behavior in terms of equitable treatment (Nieto, 2000), (2) the need to question traditional assumptions of “what works” in the classroom and be aware of the conventional management strategies and students' cultural backgrounds (Ballenger, 1992), and (3) the need to consider when to accommodate students' cultural backgrounds and when to expect students to accommodate (Grossman, 1995). The simplest way to judge whether teaching is culturally responsive is whether diverse students are learning (Hammond, 2016). Again, the need to address the social-emotional challenges that interfere with students' connecting to and performance in school is critical and interrelated with culturally and responsive teaching

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

*“I have never encountered any children in any group who are not geniuses. There is no mystery on how to teach them. The first thing you do is treat them like human beings and the second thing you do is love them.” -Asa Hillard*

This chapter presents the convergent parallel design study of the beliefs and practices of social and emotional learning of educators and parents in a small, affluent, high-achieving school district. The proposed methods of data collection provided quantitative and qualitative information about the social-emotional learning (SEL) and culturally responsive and sustaining teaching (CRST) practices and beliefs of educators and parents and its correlation to student experience. The overarching goal of this research is to determine how elementary school teachers and parents in a small, suburban, upper middle-class public school district, incorporate SEL and CRST to support or inhibit student relationships and how this impacts student social and emotional wellbeing.

#### **Research Questions**

This study attended to the beliefs, practices, knowledge, and attitudes of educators, parents, and students that contribute to or withhold ways in which SEL and CRST are utilized and integrated. I aimed to illuminate the beliefs and practices in order to further understand how approaches to SEL and CRST correlate and interact with the experiences of students. The primary hypothesis is that in the context of an affluent, upper-middle class elementary school district, the approach to SEL will indicate a connectivity to CRST in effort to create and maintain a positive school experience for students.

The specific research questions were the following:

1. In what ways do educators and parents conceptualize social emotional learning and culturally responsive and sustaining teaching?
2. What SEL and CRST beliefs and practices do educators endorse and enact in their classrooms?
3. Are there different patterns of practice or divergent belief systems by educators and parents?
4. To what extent are SEL beliefs and practices and CRST associated with student experiences?

Surveys were included to determine the knowledge educators, parents and students held regarding SEL and CRST. Educator interviews and student focus groups were conducted to better understand, and explore opinions, behavior, and experiences. Classroom observations were used to examine educators and students in their natural settings and in naturally occurring situations. All of these methods were used in effort to gain a most holistic view of SEL and CRST from a cross representation of stakeholders.

The research questions and aligned data collection methods listed in Table 1 are designed to determine patterns of beliefs and practices of social-emotional learning and culturally responsive and sustaining teaching among parents, educators, and students. The rationale for the various data collection methods was to validate through multiple sources the sound development of a detailed analysis, to learn about the educator's and school's language ideologies and instructional practices relevant to social and emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching, to capture the interactions of peers and educators, both descriptive & reflective, and finally to observe & listen to conversations without significantly altering their interactions.

**Table 1. Research Questions Aligned to Data Collection Methods**

Data Collection Methods	RQ1: In what ways do educators and parents conceptualize social emotional learning and culturally responsive and sustaining teaching?	RQ2: What SEL and CRST beliefs and practices do educators endorse and enact in their classrooms?	RQ3: Are there different patterns of practice or divergent belief systems by educators and parents?	RQ4: To what extent are SEL beliefs and practices and CRST associated with student experiences?
Educator Survey	X	X	X	
Parent Survey	X			
Semi-structured Interviews with Educators	X	X	X	
Student Focus Group				X
Student Survey				X
Classroom Observations		X	X	

Given the layers and reach of this study, the researcher wanted to be explicit in navigating the reader through the study. Table 2 outlines the four phases of the study, complete with procedures that took place during that phase and identifies the number of participants involved. Table 3 identifies the make up of the educator participants which included kindergarten through third grade educators, administrators, and paraprofessionals.

**Table 2. Research Study Phase Stages and Procedure**

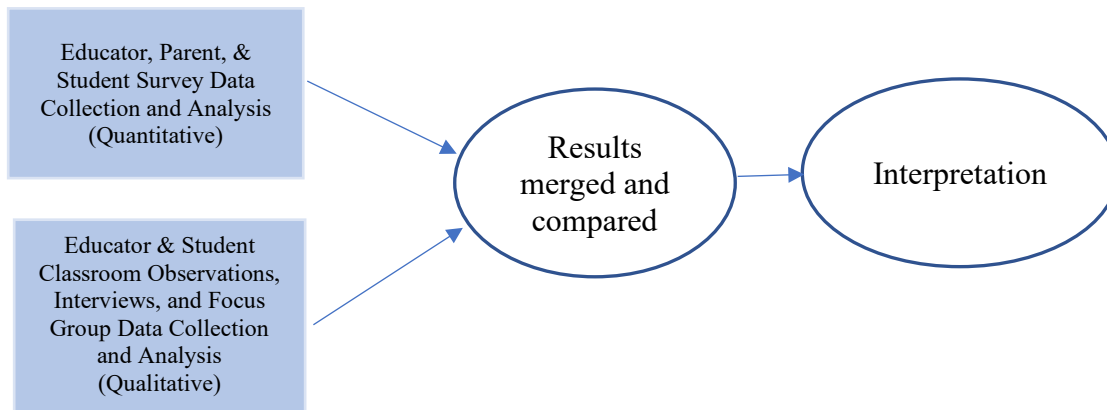
Phase #	Procedure	Participants
Phase 1	survey	37 educators 49 parents
Phase 2	interviews	14 educators
Phase 3	classroom observations	8 classrooms
Phase 4	student focus groups & student survey	8 groups 33 students

**Table 3. Educator Participants**

Kinder	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	Admin. Staff	Paraprofessionals
6	8	13	3	2	3

### **Research Design**

To answer these research questions, the researcher used a convergent design (figure 3) in four phases to bring together the results of the quantitative and qualitative data analysis so they could be combined or compared (Creswell, 2018). This design was used because it allowed the researcher to collect both qualitative and quantitative data at the same time for the purpose of comparing and contrasting the results and triangulating them (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The basic idea is to compare the two results with the intent of obtaining a more complete understanding of a problem, to validate one set of findings with the other, and to determine if participants respond in a similar way if they check quantitative predetermined scales and if they are asked open-ended qualitative questions (Creswell, 2018).



**Figure 3. The Convergent Design**

I started by collecting both qualitative and quantitative data at the same time. In the next step I began to analyze the qualitative and quantitative data independently. I started by comparing the data sets and merging them or simply comparing the data sets. Finally, I began interpreting these results to look for similarities and differences. Generally, I looked at the whole while trying to get the whole picture of the situation being researched by means of these data sets. The reward is that you're gaining a very in-depth insight into your data. you are utilizing the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research and finally it's an extremely efficient design because you're doing data collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data at the same time

A qualitative ethnographic approach was also used to describe and interpret the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language of a culture sharing group (Harris, 2001). For many researchers (Carspecken & Apple, 1992; Madison, 2005; Thomas, 1993) ethnography today employs a “critical” approach by including in the research and advocacy perspective (Creswell, 2007). Creswell explains that this approach is in response to current society in which the systems of power, prestige, privilege, and authority

serve to marginalize individuals who are from different classes, races, and genders. This approach describes and positions the researcher as a:

Critical researcher typically politically minded who seek, through their research, to speak out against inequality and domination (Carspecken & Apple, 1992). For example, critical ethnographers might study schools that provide privileges to certain types of students, or counseling practices that serve to overlook the needs of underrepresented groups. (p.70)

The major components of a critical ethnography include a value-laden orientation, empowering people by giving them more authority, challenging the status quo, and addressing concerns about power and control (Creswell, 2007). In the context of an ethnography, this study was designed to critically examine the experience of students and how power and control are used by the adults who interact with them. A critical ethnographer will study issues of power, empowerment, inequality, inequity, dominance, repression, hegemony, and victimization (Creswell, 2007).

This study was designed to include four sequential phases over approximately 5 months. Phase one included an initial survey sent to all educators and parents at six school sites. Ultimately, four sites participated. In the second phase interviews were conducted with educator participants who gave consent during the phase one survey. Phase three consisted classroom observations with educators who gave their consent during the interview process. The final phase targeted student focus groups, where teachers who agreed to the classroom observations chose 4-6 students to participate in the focus groups. Parent consent forms were sent home to the recommended student participants.

Table 4 outlines the four phases of this study in which they were sequentially conducted. All six sites participated in the survey portion. Three out of the six sites consented to participate in all four phases of the study.



**Table 4. Site Participation by Phases**

School Site	PHASE 1: Educator & Parent Surveys	PHASE 2: Educator Interviews	PHASE 3: Classroom Observations	PHASE 4: Student Focus Groups & Student Survey
Apple Tree Academy	X	X	X	X
Pear Tree School	X	X	X	X
Fig Tree School	X			
Banana Tree School	X	X	X	X
Plum Tree School	X			
Peach Tree School	X	X		

**District Context**

In order to better understand the importance of the beliefs and practices of educators regarding social emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching, this study examined four academically high-performing Kindergarten through sixth grade public elementary schools in the small, affluent suburban Rosetree School district in Southern California (to maintain anonymity, all participants, district name, and school names have been replaced with pseudonyms). The district's enrollment is approximately 2,900 students in grades K-6. The district has seven elementary schools and a Child Development Center with programs for toddler, preschool, before and after school support and services.

This study began during Winter of 2019, during which time Rosetree's enrollment included students from Kindergarten through sixth grade. According to the California Department of Education (2018) there were a total of 2891 students enrolled in Rosetree's seven schools during the 2018-2019 school year. Enrollment at these seven schools ranged in size from above 300 to nearly 600. As shown in Table 5, Rosetree's ethnic composition was primarily

White (52%), Asian (25%), and Hispanic (13%). The representation of ethnic distribution is nearly doubled in Rosetree district when compared to students in California schools (Table 5).

According to the California Department of Education (2019) 12% of Rosetree students were classified as English Learners (EL) and 11% of students were considered socioeconomically disadvantaged (Table 5). 98% of parents reported having graduated with college or beyond (Illuminate, 2018).

**Table 5. Ethnic, language, income, and education demographics for students enrolled in the Rosetree District, San Diego County and California Public schools**

Demographics	Rosetree District	San Diego County	State
White	51%	30%	23%
Asian	25%	6%	9%
Hispanic	13%	48%	55%
Two or More Races	8%	6%	4%
Filipino	1%	4%	2%
African American	<1%	4%	5%
American Indian	<1%	<1%	<1%
Not Reported	2%	1%	1%
Classified as English Language Learner	12%		20%
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	11%		60%
Students with Disabilities	9%		10%
At least one parent has a post- secondary degree	98%		33%
Ethnic <sup>a</sup> Diversity Index	48%		47%

*<sup>a</sup>The Ethnic Diversity Index is intended to measure how much "diversity" or "variety" a school or district has among the ethnic groups in its student population. More specifically, the Index reflects how evenly distributed these students are among the race/ethnicity categories reported to the California Department of Education (CA Dept. of Education, 2019).*

As shown in Table 6, 93% of Rosetree’s teachers during the 2018-2019 school year were White, as compared to 62% of California’s teachers. In addition, during the 2017-2018 school year, Rosetree teachers had an average of 15 years of teaching experience as compared to an average of 12 years of experience statewide.

**Table 6. Ethnic Distribution of the Rosetree District and California Public School Teachers**

Ethnicity	Rosetree District	California
White	93%	62%
Asian	3%	6%
Hispanic	3%	21%
Two or More Races	0%	1%
Filipino	1%	2%
African American	0%	4%
American Indian	0%	1%
Not Reported	0%	3%

*Note: At the time of this study, the most recent data available regarding teacher demographics at both the district and state levels was from the 2017-2018 school year (California Department of Education, 2019). These percentages may have changed slightly by the time data collection began in January, 2019.*

The district has a long-standing tradition of academic success coupled with innovative, experiential learning opportunities designed to maximize learning for each student. Property taxes play a significant part in the funding of this school district, and for this reason, these schools are among the best funded in the country. Often times the perception is that the concepts of social emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching are ideas that must be tended to by urban, low-income, or underachieving schools. There is a need for more research that examines school climate from multiple perspectives, that provides greater clarity about how social emotional learning (SEL) relates to diverse student populations, that clarifies the independent and combined effects of classroom, schoolwide, and family SEL programming, and

lastly to examine the level of commitment to SEL and culturally responsive teaching in affluent high performing schools.

Table 7 shows the demographics of each of the schools within this case study. Although Rosetree District comprises of seven elementary schools, not all school participated in this study. The demographics show data on the four schools that participated.

**Table 7. Demographics by School Site**

	Apple Tree Academy	Pear Tree School	Fig Tree School	Banana Tree School	Plum Tree School	Peach Tree School
Total # of student enrolled	298	343	346	572	494	0
Grade level	K-3	K-3	K-3	K-6	K-6	NA
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	5.5%	24.5%	6.6%	4.7%	17.6%	NA
English Language Learners	16.4%	12.6%	18.4%	11.5%	10.7%	NA

*Note: California Department of Education 2018-2019*

**Site selection.** Participants were recruited from three school sites of mid to high socioeconomic status in a suburban San Diego County school District based upon similar demographics, established rapport, and geographic proximity to the researcher. Table 8 shows the staffing demographic comparison of the four sites.

**Table 8. Staffing Demographics by School Site**

	Apple Tree Academy	Pear Tree School	Fig Tree School	Banana Tree School	Plum Tree School	Peach Tree School
<sup>a</sup> Certificated Staff	21	27	26	31	29	NA
<sup>b</sup> Classified Staff	12	15	16	16	15	NA
<sup>a</sup> Avg Years of Service	19	17	15	11	12	NA
<sup>a</sup> Master’s Degrees	14	17	11	20	11	NA

*Note: <sup>a</sup>California Department of Education 2018-2019; <sup>b</sup>California Department of Education*

### **Participants**

**Participation Selection.** Participants included students, educators and parents from four Kindergarten-3rd grade elementary schools in a small suburban school district, and a subset of school personnel as shown in Table 9. Participants were drawn from schools where the researcher had existing relationships with administrators and staff. A total of 38 educators, 49 parents, and 34 students participated in this study. Table 10 indicates how the participants represented each site within the district. This is a purposeful group of participants who can provide insight on how elementary schools, support or inhibit student relationships and how this impacts student social emotional wellbeing (Creswell, 2013).

**Table 9. Participants by School Site**

	Apple Tree Academy	Pear Tree School	Fig Tree School	Banana Tree School	Plum Tree School	Peach Tree School
Educators (survey, interviews)	8	16	7	3	2	3
Parents (survey, interviews)	25	11	13	0	0	0
Students (survey, focus groups, classroom observations)	55	101	0	21	0	0
Total Participants per site	88	128	20	24	2	3
						Overall Total 265

All educators and parents from the six elementary school sites were invited (see Appendices B & F) to participate in the anonymous SEL/CRT survey as shown in Table 10. At the end of the educator survey, staff were asked to give their consent for a follow-up interview. Educators who consented to the interview were then invited to participate in the classroom observation portion of this study. Those who agreed to be observed were asked to assist in the final portion of the study which consisted of the student focus group. Educators were given student consent forms to share with the parents of 4-6 students as an invitation to participate in the student focus group. Once the consent forms were signed and returned, the focus groups took place.

**Table 10. Participants by Phases**

	Apple Tree Academy	Pear Tree School	Fig Tree School	Banana Tree School	Plum Tree School	Peach Tree School
PHASE 1: Educator & Parent Surveys	33	27	20	3	2	3
PHASE 2: Educator Interviews	5	7	0	1	0	2
PHASE 3: Classroom Observations	3	5	0	1	0	NA
PHASE 4: Student Focus Groups & Student Survey	2	5	0	1	0	NA

**Procedures**

**Phase One: Parent & Educator Survey.** Educator and parent participants were recruited to complete the survey based on their status as a Rosetree District educator and as a Kindergarten through third grade or parent. A total of 39 educators and 49 parents completed the survey. Demographic data were gathered from the educator and parent self-report. Of the 39 educator respondents, 27 had experience teaching kindergarten while 17 parents had students in kindergarten as shown in Table 11.

**Table 11. Educator and Parent Survey Participants**

	PreK & TK	Kinder	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade
Educators	4	27	31	26	17
Parents	0	17	7	16	16

School building principals were contacted via email for recruitment of their staff and parents into this study. An anonymous social-emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching surveys (Appendices C, G) were administered to examine school climate from multiple perspectives. As well as student outcomes regarding their skills, attitudes, and behaviors from the perspectives of others (e.g., teachers, parents), in order to gain understanding on how K-3 educators and parents conceptualize social emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching. The principals of each school site sent the survey via email to each group participant. At the end of the survey, only educator participants will be asked if they were interested in a follow-up interview (Phase Two).

**Phase Two: Semi-Structured Interviews.** School educators were interviewed for this study by the primary investigator. My purpose in conducting the interviews is to further explore how educators conceptualize social emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching and to investigate whether there are different patterns of practice or divergent belief systems by and among educators within the K-3 span (see Appendix D). The principal investigator had built rapport with participants and the district community which allowed for deeper authentic responses. As shown in Table 12, educator interviewees, ranged from Kindergarten to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers, district office educators, and a school psychologist. Interviews were audio recorded for later data reduction and analysis. Due to the vulnerability of the educators, the adult interviews were held privately and individually. Some interviews were conducted over the phone, while other were face to face in order to accommodate the schedules and time of the educator participants.



**Table 12. Interview Participants by Site and Grade Level**

Educator	Apple Tree Academy	Pear Tree School	Fig Tree School	Banana Tree School	Plum Tree School	Peach Tree School
Kindergarten	1	1	0	0	0	NA
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	0	1	0	0	0	NA
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	2	3	0	1	0	NA
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	0	0	0	0	0	2
Other	2	2	0	0	0	0
<b>Total interviewees per site</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>

**Phase Three: Classroom Observations.** Research assistants observed the culture and climate of eight classrooms in which the teacher had given consent as shown in Table 13. Using the CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System, see Appendix M ), the social-emotional learning will be observed. The CLASS is an observation instrument developed to assess classroom quality in preschool through third grade classrooms (Pianta, LaParo, & Hamre, 2007). The CLASS dimensions are based on the developmental theory and research suggesting that interactions between students and adults are the primary mechanism of student development and learning (Pianta, 2006). This tool is based exclusively on the interactions between the teacher and the child to create a common vocabulary that could be used to describe classroom qualities.

Interactions between teachers and students can be grouped into three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support (Pianta, LaParo, & Hamre, 2007). For the purposes of this study the domain of Emotional Support was the sole focus.

**Table 13. Classroom Observations by Site and Grade Level**

Educator	Apple Tree Academy	Pear Tree School	Fig Tree School	Banana Tree School	Plum Tree School
Kindergarten	1	1	0	0	0
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	0	1	0	0	0
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	1	2	0	1	0
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	0	1	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total # of classroom observations</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

**Phase Four: Student Focus Group.** The student focus group protocol (see Appendix J) provided a forum to engage in discourse and activities by grade levels, Kindergarten to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, in which students could discuss how they felt about school. The focus groups were conducted by the primary investigator and with a research assistant on hand. Eight focus groups were conducted at three sites, ranging from Kindergarten to third grade as shown in Table 14. Each focus group comprised of 3-5 students per group. Focus groups were audio and video recorded for later data reduction and analysis. Focus groups were scheduled to disrupt participants' school routines as little as possible.

**Table 14. Student Focus Groups by Site and Grade Level**

Educator	Apple Tree Academy	Pear Tree School	Fig Tree School	Banana Tree School	Plum Tree School
Kindergarten	1	1	0	0	0
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	0	1	0	0	0
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	1	2	0	1	0
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	0	1	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total # of students</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>

## **Data Collection**

All data was collected by the lead author with the assistance of two undergraduate research assistants studying child development and education. After a training on using the CLASS observation tool by a certified CLASS observer, they conducted two trial classroom observations while following and recording data based on an explicit protocol on google forms. Regular checks on reliability occurred after the initial training. We also conducted “double coding” sessions during which the two research assistants coded the same classroom observation and checked their codes for consistency. We held regular meetings during which the observers coded videotaped segments together in an effort to keep them coding consistently.

In addition, the two research assistants accompanied me to the focus group sessions ensuring that the audio and video aspects of this phase of the study were of quality. During this phase they also assisted with supporting the students in completing the survey portion by clarifying any misunderstandings and answering questions.

Accumulatively, the data collection allowed for the triangulation of aggregate codes found in the surveys, structured interviews, classroom observations, and focus groups. Data collection took place over five months from February 2019 to June 2019. All data obtained from interviews were collected with full permission of the participants and in full compliance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines. The researcher kept all electronic files on a password-protected laptop.

## **Measures**

**Surveys.** Data for phase one of the convergent study included questions from Brackett’s (2012) Assessing Teachers’ Beliefs About Social and Emotional Learning survey, Buchanan’s (2009) Social and Emotional Learning in Classrooms survey, and Siwatu’s (2007) Preservice

Teachers' Culturally Responsive Teaching Self Efficacy and Outcome Expectancy Beliefs survey. This survey was completed online through Qualtrics Survey Software by classroom teachers, parents, administrators, and paraprofessionals. Prior to data collection, participants received an email invitation (Appendices A & B) followed by consent forms (Appendices C & D).

The self-rating surveys included two parts, a SEL portion and a CRT portion. Included are items Q2-Q12 from Brackett, et. al (2012) study where they developed a SEL Beliefs scale to assess teachers' beliefs about SEL, namely, teachers' comfort with teaching SEL, commitment to learning about SEL, and perceptions about whether their school culture supports SEL on a 5 point agreement scale (1= strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). This scale also assessed parents beliefs about SEL. Subscale items targeted comfort, commitment, and targeted culture.

Items Q13-Q16, and Q18 from Buchanan, et.al (2009) survey where they examined teachers' knowledge and attitudes regarding social and emotional learning in the classroom. The survey in this study was developed as a pilot survey and were based on findings from the literature on SEL programming. Questions were broad and specific, and designed to target teachers' knowledge regarding SEL, perceived benefits, use, barriers to SEL programming, and general attitudes toward implementation (Buchanan, 2009).

Items Q19-Q26 from the *Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcome Expectancy scale* (CRTOE; Siwatu, 2006a) were designed to assess teachers' beliefs that engaging in culturally responsive teaching practices will have positive classroom and student outcomes (Siwatu, 2007). The Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcome Expectancy (CRTOE) scale was constructed using the Culturally Responsive Teaching Competencies (Siwatu, 2006a) and Bandura's (1977) definition of outcome expectancies—"a person's estimate that a given behavior will lead to

certain outcomes” (p. 193). Participants were asked to rate the probability that the behavior will lead to the specified outcome (e.g., “Using culturally familiar examples will make learning new concepts easier.”) by indicating a probability of success from 0 (entirely uncertain) to 100 (entirely certain). Participants’ responses to each of the 26 items were summed to generate a total score. Participants who believe in the positive outcomes associated with culturally responsive teaching will have higher scores compared to those who do not believe in the potential outcomes associated with this approach to teaching. See Appendices C & G for the complete item pool.

Items Q1-Q15 of the student survey (appendix L), were taken the 2017-2018 California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS). The survey is designed to assess students at the local level to provide key data on school climate and safety, learning supports and barriers, and stakeholder engagement, as well as youth development, health, and well-being (California Healthy Kids Survey, 2017-18).

Appendix N illustrates how the educator and parent surveys were created using pre-published, pre-established surveys and combining items to create a 37-item educator survey and a 36-item parent survey. The student survey items were also pulled from a pre published measure, however, since the researcher was working with students who may be non-readers, emoji’s were added to choice responses to enable all students to successfully complete the survey with independence.

**Interviews.** Educators were invited to participate in interivews with the principal investigator. During interviews (appendix G), educators were assured of anonymity, safety, and research goals for developing a better understanding of how educators conceptualize SEL and CRST. Interviews provided an opportunity for more or less structured in-depth conversations with educators and helped get a sense of their reported experiences and differing perspectives on

the phenomenon of SEL and CRST. This method allowed participants to expose ambivalences or mixed reactions to SEL and CRST (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). Interviews with all participants were audio recorded for later data reduction and analysis. Each interview lasted approximately 20-30 minutes. At the end of the interview, educator participant consented to whether they would agree to a classroom observation and/or consented to sending their students families an Information Sheet & Parent Consent (Appendix I) for their students to participate in a future student focus group.

**Classroom Observations.** This study utilized The CLASS observation system (Pianta et al., 2008.) The purpose of this tool was to provide a research-based framework for assessing teacher-child interactions and resulting instructional quality in prekindergarten and primary classroom environments (Hamre & Pianta, 2007). The CLASS measures the quality of teachers' interactions with their students (La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004). The primary theoretical foundation for the CLASS framework is the developmental systems model of early learning (Pianta, 1999), which considers children's interactions with their teacher and the classroom environment to be crucial for academic success. Within the published CLASS framework, instructional quality is assessed in three primary domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support (Pianta et al., 2008). For the purposes of this study, the focus was solely on the domain of Emotional Support.

The CLASS™ tool requires four cycles of 15-minute observations of teachers and students by a certified observer which was myself and the research assistant working on this study. Those observations were then rated using a manual of behaviors and responses. The observers spent sufficient time getting to know the instrument by watching certified CLASS™ videos and conducting practice observations to have a thorough understanding of what the

instrument does and does not accomplish and communicating this openly and clearly to teach other. The research assistant and myself were available to play the role of resident experts in the use of the CLASS as recommended by Pianta (2008). The resident experts are the “point persons” who coordinates use of the instrument and assists with standardization and fidelity of implementation.

With regard to scheduling observations/assigning raters to classrooms, this study initially rotated two raters (research assistants) across teachers and in service of avoiding systematic variance in scores. They visited all classrooms on two or more days over the course of the 5-month study, and scheduled observations so that two different observers had the opportunity to rate each classroom on each of those observation days to produce more reliable estimates of typical teacher practices in those classrooms.

The classroom observations measured four areas positive climate, negative climate, teacher sensitivity, and regard for student perspectives. In each area there were several components that were examined. CLASS was scored using a specific protocol (See Appendix M). Following the observations of teacher-child interactions, the observers rated the emotional domain on a 7-point scale, from low to high.

- Scores of 1-2 mean the quality of teacher-child interactions is low. Classrooms in which there is poor management of behavior, teaching that is purely rote, or that lack interaction between teachers and children would receive low scores.
- Scores of 3-5, the mid-range, are given when classrooms show a mix of effective interactions with periods when interactions are not effective or are absent.
- Scores of 6-7 mean that effective teacher-child interactions are consistently observed throughout the observation period.

As a general rule, the observer systematically recorded any factors that could have bearing on the results of the observation along with the assessment scores. These environmental factors external to the observational ratings themselves were treated as data in the same way scores are treated as data. Some examples of factors recorded include: time of day, activity (math, science, social studies, managing classroom business), social setting in the classroom (numbers of adults and children, grouping), whether the typical members of the classroom are present, whether it is a typical day, and other environmental factors deemed relevant. These factors were kept as consistent as possible across observations.

**Student Focus Group.** The student focus groups met for 20-30 minutes during school in a central location on the school site. Focus group questions were appropriate to the age level, but still unstructured, and modified for kindergarten students with the use of emoji's, picture cards of important people, and role playing. Students in each group knew each, as all participants from each group were shared the same classroom. Each group had 3 to 5 student participants. I was the moderator of each group and I have collected years of experience in working with young children as educator for over 20 years. To motivate sustained interest, healthy snacks were provided. The protocol started with structured questions and responses that lead to forums that were more open-ended. Because structure influences how participants respond (Mertens, 2014), focus group questions were mostly open-ended; less-structured allowing for flexibility in what participants wanted to discuss and what was important to them. This led to a rich understanding of themes and constructs. Participants had the opportunity to write ideas and individual responses after discussing with the wider group, through a student survey.



The researcher generated on-the-record transcripts for use in the study, as well as memos jotted by the researcher immediately following each interview, observation, and focus group session. The qualitative survey data, interview data and memos were then causation-coded to uncover SEL and CRST beliefs and practices that support or inhibit the school experience of students. Table 16 summarizes the data collection and analysis used for each research question.

## **Surveys**

Teachers are the primary implementers of SEL so their beliefs about SEL influence program delivery, evaluation, and outcomes (Brackett et. al, 2012). Brackett (2012) developed a tool to measure these teacher beliefs and to understand whether those beliefs impact implementation fidelity and outcomes. Survey items were administered from this measure pertaining to teachers' comfort with teaching SEL, commitment to learning about SEL, and perceptions about whether their school culture supports SEL (Brackett, 2012).

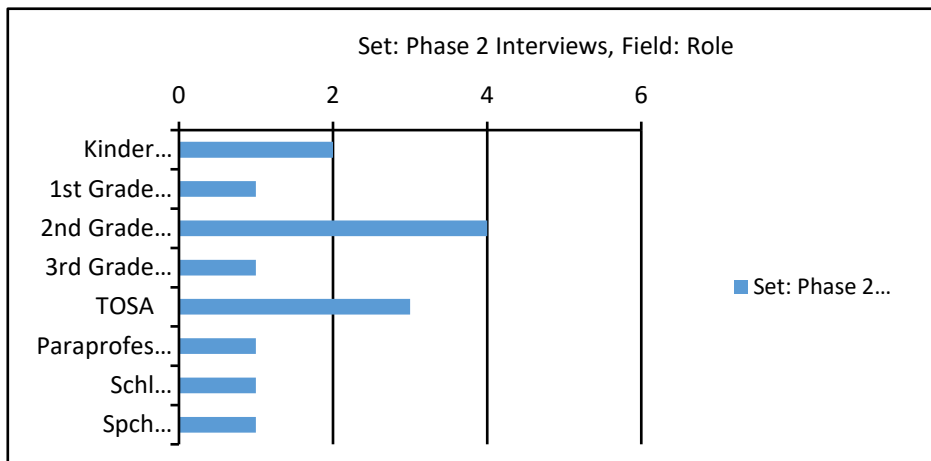
Participants were educators ( $N= 37$ ) and parents ( $N= 49$ ). Data on race and ethnicity were not collected from individual participants, however, based on information gathered from the CA Dept. of Education, the representation of educators was 93% White, 3% Asian, 3% Hispanic, and 1% Filipino. The racial and ethnic composition of educators in this sample resembled racial and ethnic breakdowns provided in the U.S. consensus data (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018).

Research question one investigates ways in which educators and parents conceptualize social emotional learning and culturally responsive and sustaining teaching. This was answered by the survey and interview data. The survey data was designed and administered using Qualtrics survey software. The analysis of the survey data was generated using SPSS data analysis software. There were two surveys, a parent version and an educator version. The educator survey consisted of 25 questions in which 15 questions focused on SEL and 10 questions focused on

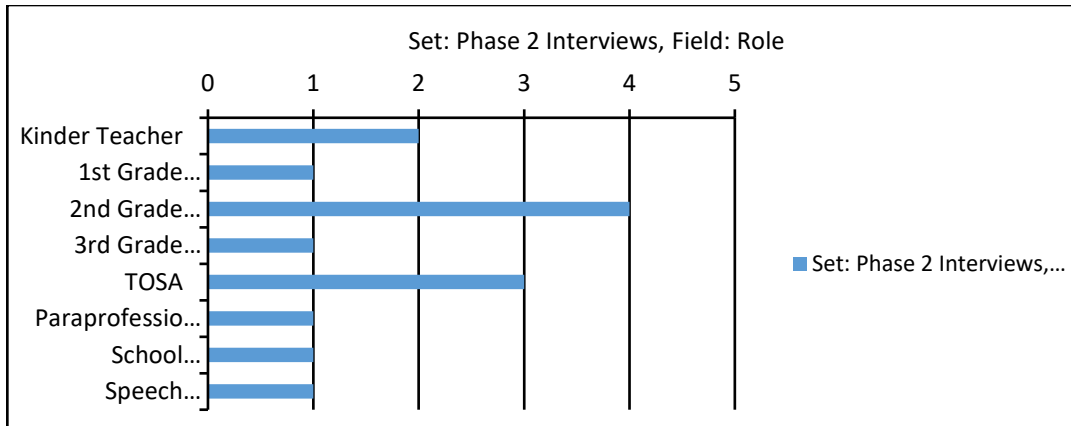
CRST. The parent survey consisted of 23 questions, where 13 questions pertained to SEL and 10 questions pertained to CRST.

### **Educator Interviews**

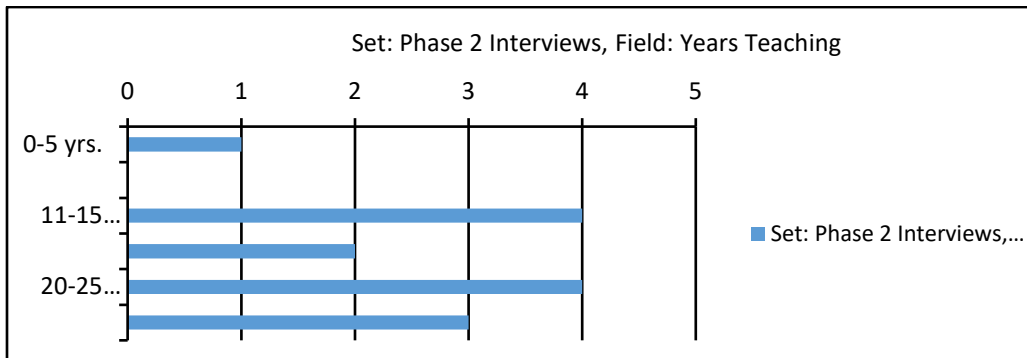
Twelve educator participants were interviewed. Figure 4 illustrates the diverse pool of perspectives from educators across the student support spectrum. Figure 5 shows the number of teaching years the participants have acquired. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the study the researcher interviewed twelve educator participants, representing diverse teaching experience and roles. Figure 5 and 6 shows the representation across roles of educator support and years of service. This phase of the study is focused on educator beliefs and practices regarding social emotional learning and culturally responsive and sustaining teaching. The interviews were audio recorded for the purpose of transcribing.



**Figure 4. Educator Interview Participants**



**Figure 5. Educator Interview Participants by Role**



**Figure 6. Representation of years of teaching**

### Classroom Observations

The third phase of the study comprised of eight kindergarten through third grade classroom observations using, Pianta (2012) Classroom Assessment Scoring System. This tool was designed to assess classroom quality in preschool through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classrooms. This instrument examines the interactions between teachers and students in the classroom within three domains: emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. For the purposes of this study, only the domain of emotional support was examined.

Children’s social and emotional functioning in the classroom is increasingly recognized as an indicator of school readiness (Denham & Weissberg, 2004). Children who are motivated

and connected to others in the early years of schooling are much more likely to establish positive trajectories of development in both social and academic domains (Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

CLASS was scored using a specific protocol (See Appendix M). Following the observations of teacher-child interactions, the observers rated the emotional domain on a 7-point scale, from low to high.

- Scores of 1-2 mean the quality of teacher-child interactions is low. Classrooms in which there is poor management of behavior, teaching that is purely rote, or that lack interaction between teachers and children would receive low scores.
- Scores of 3-5, the mid-range, are given when classrooms show a mix of effective interactions with periods when interactions are not effective or are absent.
- Scores of 6-7 mean that effective teacher-child interactions are consistently observed throughout the observation period.

Table 15, illustrates the eight classrooms that participated in the classroom observation phase of the study. Each classroom was observed within a 4-cycle structure.

**Table 15. CLASS Observation Results**

<sup>4</sup> observation cycles	# of Adults	# of Children	Observ Cycle	Positive Climate Score	Negative Climate Score	Teacher Sensitivity Score	Regard for Student Perspectives
Kinder	2	20	1	7	1	5	4
Kinder	1	20	2	7	1	6	7
Kinder	1	21	3	7	1	7	7
Kinder	1	20	4	7	2	5	6
1st	2	19	1	7	2	4	6
1st	1	19	2	7	1	3	6
1st	1	19	3	7	2	3	6
1st	1	19	4	6	2	6	7
1st	1	16	1	7	1	7	7
1st	1	16	2	7	1	7	6
1st	1	16	3	6	1	7	6
1st	1	16	4	7	1	5	6
2nd	1	21	2	6	2	3	6
2nd	1	18	3	7	2	3	6
2nd	1	18	4	7	2	5	6
2nd	1	20	1	7	1	7	7
2nd	1	18	2	7	1	7	7
2nd	1	20	3	7	1	6	5
2nd	2	17	4	6	6	3	5
2nd	1	20	1	6	1	4	7
2nd	1	21	2	6	2	7	4
2nd	1	21	3	6	1	4	4
2nd	1	20	4	4	1	4	4
3rd	1	21	1	6	2	3	6
3rd	1	17	2	7	5	5	5
3rd	1	20	3	1	5	3	5
3rd	1	21	4	6	3	3	7
3rd	1	21	1	6	4	4	5
3rd	1	21	2	7	3	4	4
3rd	1	21	3	6	3	3	6
3rd	1	21	4	6	1	3	5

Table 16 illustrates takes the reader back to the summary of methods and restates the research questions, the methods used to explore those questions and rationale behind why that method was selected.

**Table 16. Summary of Methodology**

Phase	Research Question	Method	Rationale
Phase 1: Educators & Parents	In what ways do educators and parents conceptualize social emotional learning and culturally responsive and sustaining teaching?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent Survey</li> <li>• Educator Survey</li> <li>• Semi-structured Interviews with Educators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple sources will support the development of a detailed analysis</li> <li>• to learn about the educator’s and school’s language ideologies and instructional practices relevant to SEL &amp; CRT</li> </ul>
	What SEL and CRST beliefs and practices do educators endorse and enact in their classrooms?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent Survey</li> <li>• Educator Survey</li> <li>• Semi-structured Interviews with Educators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple sources will support the development of a detailed analysis</li> <li>• to learn about the educator’s and school’s language ideologies and instructional practices relevant to SEL &amp; CRT</li> </ul>
	Are there different patterns of practice or divergent belief systems by educators and parents?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom Observations using the CLASS measurement tool</li> <li>• Semi-structured Interviews with Educators</li> <li>• Parent Survey</li> <li>• Educator Survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to capture the interactions of peers and educators, both descriptive &amp; reflective</li> </ul>
	To what extent are SEL beliefs and practices and CRST associated with student experiences?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus Group</li> <li>• Student Survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to observe &amp; listen to conversations without significantly altering their interactions</li> </ul>

**Positionality**

My positionality as the sole researcher is important to consider when establishing the context of this study from a district lens and from a worldview lens. I have been employed as an

educator in the Rosetree district since 2005 but began my career in 1997. I have taught grades transitional kindergarten, first, and second grade and in 2015 I was nominated the District's Teacher of the Year. Prior to working in this affluent district, I also worked in low to middle socio-economic districts, as well. After working for 10 years as a classroom teacher in the Rosetree district, I became a Teacher on Special Assignment for 1 year, supporting teachers and administrators in the district wide with the implementation of the California Common Core Standards. The following year I became an Assistant Principal (AP) as one of school site underwent re-modernization, resulting in the relocation of 500 students to two existing sites. The increase in enrollment at these sites required an additional administrator so an assistant principal was added to the staffing. The year following my role as AP, I was offered a Principal position at the same site as when I was an AP. Currently, I am in my 2<sup>nd</sup> year as principal. Having been in this small district for 14 years I have built positive rapport and meaningful relationships with many of the staff, parents, and students of the Rosetree Community.

I was and continue to be the only Black American educator in the district in the last 14 years that I have been with Rosetree. This demographic is visible, public, and obvious. Having fulfilled several leadership roles in the district, I suspect some educators and parents may or may not have been comfortable sharing their experience and beliefs with me especially as this study focused on social and emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching. My interactions and reassurances that my role as a researcher, was very separate than that as teacher or administrator may or may not have impact on the responses provided by my participants. As a 40-something Black American woman, I was aware of and attended to my own bias', assumptions, and worldview and attempted as best I could to keep my frame of reference at a distance.

## **Limitations of the Study**

One limitation is my positionality with the school district in which this study took place. Since I am employed as a district administrator in the role of an Elementary School Principal at one of the sites where the study was conducted. Educators, parents, and students may not be completely honest in their responses on the surveys and interviews. There may carry an expectation where they feel there is a particular way questions should be answered and that they need to answer a certain way or possibly be judged negatively by me the principal investigator. My positionality may cause educators to leave things out of their responses or add things that do not reflect authenticity. Another limitation is that the district I work in had already begun a district-wide initiative regarding SEL so responses may not reflect a history of beliefs or practices but simply what is currently being pushed out by the district. Additionally, the graduate research assistants who conducted the classroom observations may not have as deep of an understanding of the topic as the principal researcher.

I attempted to minimize these limitations as much as possible. I reminded the participants that all responses would be kept confidential and that they could decline to answer any questions at any time, as well as withdraw from the study with no ramifications. I encouraged open and honest responses by assuring participants that my role as principal investigator is to gather data that will help move our district forward in our efforts of social emotional learning and culturally responsive and sustaining teaching. During the invitational write-up of my study, I was transparent about my positionality and ways in which it may have affected my results. Despite the potential limitations, this study has important implications for educational research, policy, and practice.



## **Validity**

The researcher employed multiple procedures for both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the research study to ensure validity of the data, results, and interpretation. The quantitative data source was drawn from reliable surveys from peer-reviewed studies. The design of the study centers around beliefs and practices of educators and parents. The qualitative phase of the study employed the standardized technique known as triangulation. Triangulation, in the study, is evidenced by the use of data from parents, educators, and students based on surveys, interviews, classroom observations, and focus groups.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

The purpose of this study is to thoroughly understand how educators and parents engage with social-emotional learning (SEL) and culturally responsive and sustaining teaching (CRST) in an effort that supports or inhibits the school experience of students in service of offering them the best possible learning experience. This chapter addresses the following research questions:

1. In what ways do educators and parents conceptualize social emotional learning and culturally responsive and sustaining teaching?
2. What SEL and CRST beliefs and practices do educators endorse and enact in their classrooms?
3. Are there different patterns of practice or divergent belief systems by educators and parents?
4. To what extent are SEL beliefs and practices and CRST associated with student experiences?

Using a convergent mixed methods design, survey data was analyzed, along with classroom observations, interviews, and focus group data. Together, the results of all the data were compared for emergent themes related to beliefs and practices of SEL and culturally CRST. The overall objective was to compare the results with the intent of obtaining a more complete understanding of the conceptualization of SEL and CRST and to determine the ways in which those beliefs and practices are associated with how students experience school.

### **Educator and Parent Surveys**

To begin compiling the trends and patterns or divergent beliefs systems of SEL and CRST conceptualization, a survey including qualitative and quantitative items was administered. The first items elicited open ended responses of educators and parents which were coded for

emergent themes using Dedoose. The most common ways educators defined SEL fell into two areas (1) how a child manages emotions (97%) and (2) how teachers teach to the whole child (64%). Parents defined SEL into two primary areas (1) how one manages their emotions (49%) and (2) how one interacts with others (46%).

### **Managing Emotions**

Managing emotions was described as understanding one's feelings, showing empathy for others, and building positive relationships. This included teaching children how to respect one's own emotions in order to develop an understanding of their own feelings and learning how to interact in constructive ways, thus allowing students to understand various levels of problems and applying the appropriate conflict resolution strategies.

One educator defined SEL as:

Development of a person's social and emotional wellbeing- their ability to happily belong to a social group and their ability to regulate their emotional wellbeing. teaching skills that help children cope with the stress, interact kindly and appropriately with peers, and manage their feelings. (1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher, # 2107)

Parents understood managing of emotions as learning about emotions, regulating behavior, learning about working with others, collaborative skills and teaching children how to interact with each other and deal with their emotions in socially acceptable ways. Knowing how to interact properly with peers and adults in order to learn and understand, work and play with people who might think and react differently to situations than that of the child. Parent perception considered knowing your student and/or oneself, creating a learning plan that helps students feel good about their learning result, and students feeling confident and responsible for their learning.

One parent defined SEL as:

It means a kind of learning that goes beyond the assimilation of facts and figures. Social and emotional learning means discovering how you fit into the social scheme of a classroom, how to work in teams, how to deal with setbacks and success, and hopefully learning that to be truly successful, you must apply kindness and empathy to your intellectual development (2<sup>nd</sup> grade parent, #12327)

While another parent defined SEL as:

For me, the social and emotional learning is equally as important to a developing child as academics. It means, the process of learning to navigate interpersonally and to grow understand and be flexible in all settings and a variety of different personality types (3<sup>rd</sup> grade parent, #23434)

### **The Whole Child**

Teaching with the whole child in mind was considered a pathway to teaching academics, in other words, if a student is feeling upset, overwhelmed, excited, etc., it would be very difficult to teach academics. Looking at a child's needs throughout a school day, including actively knowing how to best meet the needs of students was perceived as an integrative part of teacher practice.

While another educator defined SEL as:

Seeing, valuing and teaching to each child's strengths and areas of need to create confident, happy students (Paraprofessional, #6120)

Educator and parents have overlapping definitions that define SEL as teaching students how to manage their emotions and feelings. Parents also view the interactions that their children experience as a part of SEL. In addition, educators perceive SEL to be about teaching to the whole child. In summary, these are the three main areas in which educators and parents describe SEL.

Continuing on the parents and educator survey, responses to Brackett's (2012) 5-point scale on Assessing Teachers' Beliefs About Social and Emotional Learning measure were analyzed using descriptive statistics to assess similarities in patterns of responses across the two

participant groups. Educators and parents perceive SEL positively. The areas with the greatest discrepancy was within the subscales of comfort and school culture. Educators scored themselves higher in terms of taking care of their own students' Social-Emotional needs coming naturally to them (M =4) Parents sense of confidence in this area was almost a point lower (M= 3.23) when they considered how naturally this comes to educators. Educators perceive their school cultures to support SEL (M=4.11). Parents responded positively to a schoolwide support for SEL (M=4.69) . In terms of school culture, overwhelmingly, educators perceived themselves as supporting a school culture of SEL (M=4.27), whereas parent perception was weaker in this area (M=3.71).

**Table 17. Descriptive Analysis on SEL responses**

	Educator	Parent	<i>t</i> -test	<i>Sig</i> (2-tailed)
	M (SD)	M (SD)	(df)	
Comfort: confident SEL Instruction	3.86 (.75)	3.43 (.91)	2.36(84)	0.20
			-	.500
Comfort: instruction on SE skills	3.84 (.76)	3.96 (.56)	.677(84)	
Comfort: providing SE needs	4.00 (.62)	3.23 (.95)	4.27(83)	** .000
			-	0.14
Comfort: Informal SEL Lessons	4.08 (.97)	4.54 (.71)	2.50(82)	
			-	*.006
Commitment: attend SEL workshop	4.16 (.87)	4.65 (.75)	2.80(84)	
			-	.135
Commitment: my own SE skills	3.46 (1.35)	3.90 (1.33)	1.50(84)	
			-	.363
Commitment: improve SE teaching	4.16 (.87)	4.35 (.97)	.916(84)	
Commitment: all teachers trained	4.76 (.50)	4.69 (.62)	.507(84)	.613
School Culture: SEL environment	4.10 (.85)	3.8 (.82)	1.65(84)	.102
School Culture: student SEL develop.	4.11 (.74)	3.86 (.87)	1.41(84)	.160
School Culture: school addresses SEL	4.27 (.80)	3.71 (.98)	2.81(84)	*.006

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

~ approaching significance

There were three survey subscales within these survey items, that of comfort, commitment, and school culture. A bivariate correlation analysis was conducted to investigate how the subscales were related.

**Comfort**

Comfort with teachers providing SEL instruction was positively correlated with confidence in the ability of teachers ( $r = .445^{**}$ ) and with SEL lessons being a part of teaching practices ( $r = .446^{**}$ ). Correlations were computed among four comfort items on data for 37 educators. The results suggest that 6 out of 8 correlations were statistically significant and were greater or equal to  $r(37) = +.41, p < .05$ , two-tailed. In general, the results suggest that educators who feel confident in their instructional ability on SEL also feel comfortable providing instruction on social-emotional skills to their students ( $r = .831^{**}$ ). This comfort is also positively correlated to teachers feeling like they are taking care of their students' social-emotional needs ( $r = .466^{**}$ ) is a natural part of their role as a teacher.

**Table 18. Bivariate Correlation for Educator Comfort**

	1	2	3	4
1. Confident SEL Instruction	1			
2. Instruction on SE skills	.83**	1		
3. Providing SE needs	.42*	.47**	1	.
4. Informal SEL lessons	.52**	.59**	.48**	1

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)  
 \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)  
 ~ approaching significance

**Table 19. Bivariate Correlation for Parent Comfort**

	1	2	3	4
1. Confidence in the ability of teachers	1			
2. Comfort with teachers providing SE instruction	.45**	1		
3. SE a part of the school experience	0.18	0.11	1	
4. SEL lessons a part of teaching practice	0.10	.45**	0.28	1

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

~ approaching significance

### **Commitment**

Educators are committed to learning about SEL and improving their ability to teach it. Overwhelmingly, parents support teachers attending workshops to learn how to develop children’s SE skills. They also believe strongly that all teachers should receive training on how to teach SE skills to students. Their own commitment to SEL was ranked lowest in terms of parents attending workshops to develop their own SE skills. Overall, educators and parent perceptions are that they are positively committed to the desire to participate in SEL training and teaching.

Commitment with teachers to attend workshop to learn how to develop their students' SE skills is positively correlated with their desire to develop their own skills ( $r = .625^{**}$ ) and with the desire to improve their ability to teach social-emotional skills to students ( $r = .667^{**}$ ).

**Table 20. Bivariate Correlation for Educator Commitment**

	1	2	3	4
1. Attend a SE Skills workshop	1	.	.	.
2. Workshop to develop my own SE skills	.63**	1	.	.
3. Improve my ability to teach SE skills	.67**	.50**	1	.
4. All teachers should receive SE training	0.22	0.21	.35*	1

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

~ approaching significance

### **School Culture**

School culture with teachers to attend workshop to learn how to develop their students' SE skills is positively correlated with their desire to develop their own skills ( $r = .625^{**}$ ) and with the desire to improve their ability to teach social-emotional skills to students ( $r = .667^{**}$ ).



**Table 21. Bivariate Correlation for Educator on School Culture**

	1	2	3
1. Environment that promotes SEL	1		.
2. School supports the development of children's SE skills	.83**	1	
3. School addresses children's SE needs	.59**	.51**	1

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

~ approaching significance

**Table 22. Correlation**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Comfort: confident SEL Instruction	1										
Comfort: instruction on SE skills	.54*	1									
Comfort: providing SE needs	.32*	0.16	1								
Comfort: Informal SEL Lessons	0.19	.50*	0.13	1							
Commitment: attend SEL workshop	0.04	.28*	-0.03	.35*	1						
Commitment: my own SE skills	-0.08	0.06	-0.10	.24*	.55*	1					
Commitment: improve SE teaching	-0.17	-0.06	-.36*	-0.03	.41*	.69*	1				
Commitment: all teachers trained	0.09	.29*	0.15	.42*	.54*	.34*	.26*	1			
School Culture: SEL environment	.42*	0.20	.33*	0.02	-0.09	-0.17	-.22*	0.05	1		
School Culture: student SEL develop.	.35*	0.15	.29*	-0.10	0.01	-0.15	-0.19	0.08	.82*	1	
School Culture: school addresses SEL	.49*	0.16	.44*	0.11	-0.09	-0.17	-.24*	0.04	.63*	.52*	1

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

~ approaching significance

## SEL Beliefs

Another component to the parents and educator survey was Buchanan's (2009) A survey of Teachers' Knowledge, Perceptions, and Practices measure. Responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics to assess similarities in patterns of responses to perceptions across the two participant groups. Overall, educators and parents have positive beliefs about SEL that include believing that SEL should be taught in school and that it impacts academics in a positive way. There exists some hesitancy among educators and parents about the impact of SEL. Interestingly, educator skepticism about SEL was slightly higher (14%) than parents (12%).

**Table 23. Educator & Parent SEL Beliefs**

	Educator Yes	Parent Yes
SEL should be taught	100%	90%
SEL for success	100%	96%
SEL enhances academics	95%	94%
Personal Skepticism about SEL	14%	12%

Parent and educator offered examples of what SEL meant to them on the qualitative portion to the survey. Trends and patterns were coded for by using Dedoose. Educators offered examples such as (1) as the explicit teaching of SEL through lessons or an SEL program, (2) the use of specific SEL tools, and (3) the notion of self-management. Educators and parents gave varying examples of SEL. Educators primarily believe that it is associated with explicit instruction (62%) that focuses on SEL, where many parents chose to skip (45%) offering an example. Both groups perceive self-management to be an important component of SEL.

**Table 24. SEL Definitions**

	Educator		Parent
Explicit SEL Instruction	62%	Skipped	45%
Use of SEL Tools	58%	Relationship Skills	35%
Self-Management	43%	Self-Management	27%

To illustrate, educators defined SEL through the tools they used. For example, educators described SEL as using the Zones of Regulation program, using a classroom mood meter, or using puppets. One educator said:

Using a mood meter: students have opened up about a grandfather dying; students tell what mother’s boyfriend is doing and saying. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher, #3010)

Other educators shared the following:

Puppet role play a tattling event that happened on the playground, and a Mood meter check to see how students are you feeling today using the color meters, blue, yellow, red, and green. (1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher, #2022)

When asked to provide an example of SEL, parents overwhelmingly skipped this question. Parents also used examples of relationship skills and self-management as examples of SEL. For example, a parent stated the following:

Having appropriate emotional responses to situations (i.e. yelling and jumping up and down may be appropriate at a sporting event but not in a classroom and vice versa, being quiet and mellow in rambunctious situations can also because for concern) (3<sup>rd</sup> grade parent, #23445)

Another parent shared:

Learning how to welcome and include a special needs student by practice. Including and making visible (as opposed to ignoring an invisible) parent who appears different by practicing how to address or converse day to day. (kindergarten parent, #13103)

In terms of barriers, educator survey responses perceive that time and resources get in the way of SEL implementation with full fidelity. No matter the grade level or role of an educator, time is a recurring barrier to the successful implementation of SEL. Other area perceived as a barrier was the lack of resources and training to fully support and sustain a SEL approach.

**Table 25. Educator Perceived Barriers**

	Educator
Time	57%
Resource	22%

One educator noted:

I need to make it more of a priority. TIME is a barrier. If we are running behind, 2nd steps lessons go by the wayside. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher, #4101)

Another educator said:

We need a more structured Social/ Emotional Program (systematic). More time, curriculum/resources, support of parents, lack of continuity between classes (2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher, #3015)

**CRST Beliefs**

Parents and educator survey responses to Siwatu’s (2007) CRST 1-100 scale on Preservice teachers’ culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy and outcome expectancy beliefs measure were analyzed using descriptive statistics to assess similarities in patterns of responses across the two participant groups. Overall, both groups had similar beliefs about CRST, however, educators consistently scored higher in all areas indicating a slightly stronger overall belief in CRST. Educator belief in developing a community of learners when the class consists of students from diverse cultural backgrounds to promote positive interactions between students was analyzed as approaching significance ( $t=1.87$ ) when compared to parents. Educators belief

in developing an appreciation for a students' culture by teaching about the contributions their culture has made over time was statistically significant among parents and educators ( $t=2.67$ ). two areas ranked lowest by both groups was the idea of changing the structure of the classroom so that it is compatible with students' home culture to increase student motivation. Encouraging students to use their native language to help students' maintain cultural identity was significant ( $t=2.13$ ). The belief that students' self-esteem can be enhanced when their cultural background is valued by the teacher was also significant ( $t=.032$ ).

**Table 26. Descriptive Analysis on CRST responses**

	Educator M (SD)	Parent M (SD)	t(df)	2 tailed
Building a sense of trust	98.11 (5.7)	94.22 (14.63)	1.52(84)	.13
Variety of Teach Methods	95.89 (9.5)	94.65 (11.05)	.547 (84)	.59
Community of Learners	97.3 (5.73)	93.38 (11.71)	1.87(83)	~0.65
Acknowledging home culture	82.43 (18.61)	80.65 (17.12)	.452(82)	.65
Communication preferences	89.42 (14.9)	89.35 (13.56)	0.22(83)	.98
Connecting prior knowledge	95.42 (7.9)	n/a		
Instruction material representation	92.33 (10.17)	94.06 (13.61)	-.641(83)	.52
Teaching about cultural contributions	94.25 (9.76)	84.08 (21.19)	2.67(83)	**0.01
Messages that parents are important	92.22 (8.77)	84.63 (22.25)	1.93(83)	~0.56
Cultural background understood	89.14 (12.5)	84.49 (15.91)	1.45(83)	.15
Changing structure of classroom	75.4 (19.74)	65.56 (26.45)	1.85(81)	~0.67
Designing instruction based on student interest	93.14 (10.9)	92.96 (13.99)	0.65(82)	.95
Encouraging the use of native language	79.58 (21.9)	66 (32.87)	2.13(81)	*0.35
Self-esteem enhanced when culture valued	96.25 (10.31)	88.73 (18.69)	2.17(82)	*.032
Increase confidence w/ diverse student	95.97 (8.00)	89.17 (14.2)	2.58 (82)	0.12
Using culturally familiar examples	91.78 (10.74)	84.24 (23.64)	1.79(81)	0.76
Positive self-identity	95.11 (9.9)	91.33 (13.02)	1.46(83)	.15

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

~ approaching significance

When asked to define CRST, educators overwhelmingly associated it with awareness (62%), describing it in terms of recognizing the different cultural backgrounds in the classroom and incorporating all the different cultures in teaching students in a safe environment. For instance, an educator said:

Being aware of cultural issues and being inclusive to individuals and whole group needs. Addressing the sensitivity of and respect for all students (even those not represented in the classroom). Looking at different perspectives and points of view, knowing so much of what is taught and how things are taught is skewed. (1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher, #2105)

Another educator shared :

Being aware that students from different backgrounds can have very different world views, different body language, or different etiquette and they can feel like a fish out of water in our classroom. It's very important to be actively in tune with each child and support them emotionally as well as academically (2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher, #3110)

When asked to describe what CRST meant to them, 31% of the parent participants skipped this question. This may reflect the educated, privileged perspective that CRST is not an issue for parents to concern themselves with. White children need and gain from having conversations around anti-bias and multicultural education and how White children enact racial power codes (Sparks, 2011). This was a fairly new term for parents, one parent shared:

Haven't heard this term before but assume it means you teach things that are associated with identities instead of assuming we can all learn the same. I don't think this is helpful. I come from distinct backgrounds myself and we all just want to assimilate and we just want to learn school Subjects and learn do well with that. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade parent, #12439)

However, a common description (27%) was to associate CRST with teaching about culture, specifically teaching students about cultural differences, race relations, and

history lessons and to do this without discrimination, Still there was some discomfort with the question asked

This honestly sounds a little out of my demographic and I don't think this poll is now applicable to me. (2<sup>nd</sup> grade parent, #32336)

Educators perceive CRST to be about awareness of different cultures and parents perceive it to be about the teaching that addresses the awareness of different cultures. Educators and parents have similar perceptions of CRST.

### Student Survey

Student survey responses to The California School Climate, Health, and Learning Survey (CHKS, 2018) were analyzed using descriptive statistics to assess similarities in patterns of responses across students.

**Table 27. Descriptive Analysis on Student responses**

	M	SD
I enjoy school.	2.42	0.614
School work is interesting	2	0.866
I feel safe at school	2.48	0.755
I learn a lot at school	2.55	0.711
The teachers are friendly	2.52	0.755
Adults are interested in what I say and do	2.09	0.879
Adults take time to help me	2.33	0.816
Teachers treat me fairly	2.45	0.754
People say my name correctly and ask for help if needed	2.27	0.761
Lessons are interesting	2.55	0.617
I am trusted	2.45	0.711
There is an adult I can go to	2.33	0.854
I feel safe on the playground	2.52	0.619
I ask when I don't understand something	1321.39	7576.469
I have lots of fun in school	2.81	0.397

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)



On a 0-3 scale (never, sometimes, most of the time, and always), 33 K-3 students took a survey on their feelings about school. In case, any student participant was a non-reader, the survey could be easily understood with the use of emoji expressions that represented the 0-3 ratings. Overall, students felt positive about school. Areas that received the lowest rating were in regards to school work being interesting (M=2) and adults being interested in what students say and do (M= 2.09). Despite the low ratings, many students perceive school as fun (M=2.81).

### **Educator Interviews**

Educators are on the frontlines of incorporating social and emotional learning as a part of their teaching practice. Their beliefs about SEL likely influence program delivery, evaluation, and outcomes (Brackett, et. al, 2012). Two trends emerged regarding the SEL beliefs of educators (1) relationships matter and (2) SEL is foundational. Regarding relationships, one educator stated:

It encompasses being successful in life and so much of life is not about working in isolation but working with people. And understanding yourself in those relationships and your responses to things and how that has effects and things like that. And those are life skills, hugely important. (Educator1, district staff)

Another educator shared:

To teach with an SEL mindset, that's one of the most important things that you can do in education because the relationships, especially between the students in my class and with me are an ultimate importance because that's how my school year goes. (Educator2, classroom teacher)

Social-emotional learning is foundational. One educator's perspective is:

I think the foundation of learning and education, and functioning in a society, are these foundational skills. So again, in order to build on something academically, or to connect with someone so that you can grow together, you would need to have these foundational skills in place. So to me they are the building blocks of education, and of learning to function in society, It permeates. It's across curriculum, so this can go into any subject matter. And again, to me it's the foundation, it's what we need. The benefits of it is, kids come ready to learn, they feel like they're in a safe environment, they feel appreciated, they feel like the

curriculum that is being taught to them speaks to them, and that it is relevant,  
(Educator3, classroom teacher)

In terms of social-emotional learning practices that educators enact in their classroom the major practice was centered around the quality of interactions that the students experience such as the micro interactions that teachers have every day with and how important the “off the cuff” interactions are. The notion of vulnerability of the teacher coupled with positive interactions was noted. One educator described the following:

...if you really want to authentically make a change, it has to be authentic and it has to be across a kid's day. It can't just be like we're doing social emotional learning and we're going to shake hands and smile at kids. But then, you're also suspending kids and giving kids detentions and giving kids red tickets and using unkind language. We have to be vulnerable and have really honest conversations and apologize when we screw up. (Educator1, District staff)

Vulnerability was a key element that educators shared as being a powerful practice when considering the SEL experiences of students.

Having the tough conversations, being vulnerable, being honest, listening to them. I think we don't sit down enough and talk to kids and say what do you like?  
(Educator4, District staff)

### **SEL Hindrances**

The top two hindrances to successful SEL implementation were time and mindset. Educators stated that they simply felt like they did not have enough time in the day to devote to SEL. Educators shared that they wish they had more time or that finding the time to look for the books that go with the SEL lesson was time consuming or that sometimes they need more one-on-one time with students and that it's difficult to make that happen. Mindset was another hindrance, specifically the attitudes that teachers hold about kids and language. The mindset of teacher as a role model but also in creating a culture of growth mindset in the classroom so that kids feel that they can learn and change, and adjust to what comes their way. Educators

expressed if their colleagues don't buy into the bigger idea itself (SEL and or CRST) and they are just specifically trying to implement a particular curriculum that they don't believe in the cause or understand the why behind what they're doing, that can be problematic. One educator stated:

I think it's definitely about culture. If it's not a culture to value differences and seeing kids as individuals and things like that, then I think it is hard. I think also seeing what we might consider bad behavior as bad behavior is sort of a hindrance. Instead of thinking about why might that be and what structures are in place for me that might be affecting that? Labeling behavior as bad behavior is a hindrance. We have to shift our mindset about thinking about why is that behavior? (Educator5, Support Staff)

It was also shared that there exist a top down message, that content is the most important thing, for instance testing or assessment, then educators feel like that can affect the implementation. The focus shifts from what's important to the kid to what's important to a test score and this sort of pressure of all the other things that teachers have to do.

### **CRST Hindrances**

As educators reflected on culturally responsive teaching practices, they shared practices that centered around celebrations and the practice of acceptance which was described as being open and trying not to make any assumptions about students. One educator gave this example of acceptance:

I always start the year with we all may look different and we ... so we take off our shoes and we mix them all up and then we try to just grab a shoe and put it on and we say, "Oh, it doesn't fit." And even though the shoes look similar, we all have strengths and weaknesses. (Educator2, classroom teacher)

In regards to celebrations, some shared that when holidays come up that it's a baseline to read books about students and to ask students if they would like to share about what they know about their culture and to invite families into the classroom to share traditions from home.

One educator shared that they would

make the Indian headband, with the feathers in an effort to make sure that every culture was represented and that when they are teaching it, they are very neutral about it. I always try to chime in wherever I can in lessons. Words, or customs, or traditions from their home countries to validate the importance of those, and just to celebrate their cultures. (Educator3, classroom teacher)

Many shared that being aware of the needs of students and trying to meet their needs through honest acts of caring was key because the more they know, the more they're going to understand and love. Their perception is that in many classrooms there is an expectation that we love each other and we're friends and everyone in our classroom is important and that it just from day one.

One educator eloquently stated:

Understanding one's own culture, understanding another's culture, and being able to sort of transfer that understanding of worldview and appreciate it to the level that an individual's not isolated to their own environment. I mean, I say that in the sense of their environment includes their family, their community, their city, their state, their country, their world. So how does their world relate to others and how can we learn and appreciate from others what each person has to bring to learning. (Educator6, District Staff)

### **Classroom Observations**

Classroom observations took place in eight different K-3 classrooms using The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) to assess classroom quality in the domain of emotional support. This domain consisted of four dimensions to be investigated (1) positive climate, (2) negative climate, (3) teacher sensitivity, and (4) regard to student perspectives. Each classroom consisted of four 20-minute observation cycles using a 7-point range. On average the eight classrooms scored a mean of 6.34 which reflects a high positive climate in which the emotional connection between the teacher and student and among students was warm, respectful, and enjoyment was communicated by verbal and non-verbal interactions.

Using Howe's (2016) development of Secure and Positive Relationships framework helped guide the observations to attend to the teacher internal processes such as the emotional

regulation of the teacher and the state of mind of the teacher. The teacher processes combined with peer interactions led us to the study to be grounded in the social and emotional climate of the classroom in regards to responsive teaching.

Negative climate was low (M=1.97) in these classrooms, indicating that the teacher and students do not display strong negative affect and only rarely, if ever, display mild negativity.

Teacher Sensitivity (M=4.69) fell in the range indicating that the teachers are sometimes aware of students who need extra support, assistance, or attention. The teacher is responsive to students sometimes but at other times is more dismissive or unresponsive, matching student support to the needs and abilities of some students but not others. Here, the teachers are sometimes effective at addressing students' problems and concerns.

Regard for Student Perspectives was scored to be in the mid-range (M=5.75), where the teacher may follow the students' lead during some periods and be more controlling during others. The teacher sometimes provides support for student autonomy and leadership but at other times fails to do so. There are periods during which there is a lot of student talk and expression but other times when teacher talk predominates. And lastly, the teacher is somewhat controlling of students' movement and placement during activities.

**Table 28. Descriptive Statistics on Classroom Observations**

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	M	SD
Positive Climate Score	6.34	1.18
Negative Climate Score	1.97	1.36
Teacher Sensitivity Score	4.69	1.55
Regard for Student Perspectives	5.75	1.02

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\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

~ approaching significance

**Table 29. Correlation Matrix**

	1	2	3	4
1. Positive Climate Score	--			
2. Negative Climate Score	-.40*			
	0.03			
3. Teacher Sensitivity Score	0.32	-.42*		
	0.07	0.02		
4. Regard for Student Perspectives	0.29	-0.26	0.26	
	0.11	0.15	0.16	

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

~ approaching significance

### **Positive Climate**

Positive Climate was defined by four indicators, (1) Relationships, (2) Positive Affect, (3) Positive Communication, and (4) Respect. All classrooms scored a positive climate score of 6 or 7 (on a 0-7 scale) in one or more of the four cycles. Positive climate was observed to be a classroom which the class seemed very engaged with the reader and the book being read. Children were laughing and chatting with one another about the stories. A student shared that her tooth fell out the day before and the teacher responded, "Congratulations!" and awarded her a tooth certificate. Positive language and constantly encouraging students, "Zoe is doing a wonderful job using inside voices" was observed. One student was playing by himself, another student noticed and joined him. The teacher was getting down to the students' eye level when talking. Students were laughing and engaging one another during play. Students were offering help to one another by stating, "I can help you practice with writing". Some students were even singing together.

There were mixed-gender groups, some groups were mixed with boys and girls, and others by gender. Some students were working on an art piece together and shared with their peers what they had created. When the teacher asked the class to clean up, a few kids finished putting away their materials and went to another station to help out their peers without anyone asking even though they didn't use those materials at all.

The teacher praised the students for a nice transition to the carpet and rewarded them with the "happy rock" jar by adding more happy rocks into a jar. If the jar is filled, then the class gets to have a treat. The general mood in the classroom was very calming as the students worked in small groups to finish up their reading/drawing tasks. They were sharing with one another at their table, "look what I drew for this!". The teacher used fun and catching attention getters like, "friends-friends?" The students who finished the task were asked to read a book, some decided to read together/ to one another.

Teacher joined students on the carpet for morning circle where a student was awarded a little trophy for using "thoughtful words" (awarded every week, nominated by teacher). Both teacher and students using polite and respectful language, ex. "thank you for offering, I appreciate it". Students working on art/poem project to express gratitude towards a teacher/staff, several students made their project for the teacher being observed. Students sharing their ideas with one another.

Respectful language was used such as "can I borrow your title?". Many students were participating. One might overhear the teacher saying, "That's a good idea!" or "Golf clap for opinion". Some students brought their stuffed animals for show & tell, sharing with one another before gathering on the carpet. Ex. "say hi to Mr. Narwhal!"

There was lots of positive encouragement, ex. "I love it! Good try!" One student forgot the name of the restaurant she wanted to write about, the teacher raised the question and the whole class started naming restaurants to help her. Students were laughing and having fun when sharing their experiences with the teacher and one another.

Positive language was evidenced by the teacher counting in Spanish, some counted along. Teachers would say "wow that's cool! Good job!" or "Woo I love it!". When going over the mood meter, one student shared, "I'm in blue and yellow and green and the teacher responded with "Wow you're so complex!". Students felt comfortable sharing how they feel and most shared why. Another teacher said , "Wow you are on fire today!" and "wow, you read that so fast!".

Positive language and tone of voice was both engaging and enthusiastic such as, "I love how \_\_\_ always follows along". Students did a great job on helping one another out and collaborating to work together on assigned work.

Students were laughing as they went around in circle to share their news of the day. Whole class seemed excited to play. The teacher shared own news with students and relating with one another, for example, the teacher shared that she went somewhere in the morning with her son for his birthday, sharing with students about where she went. Students were having fun during the game, for those who got out, they joined on the carpet and played amongst themselves while music was softly playing in the background.

When picking out prizes for raffle, the students who didn't get picked said "oh shucks, maybe next time". One student cleaned up the table and picked up all the pencils for another student without being asked. One student shared the marker she no longer needed with her peer, by saying, "I don't need this marker anymore, here you go". One student reminding another, "you



forgot your name". After finishing assigned tasks, students helped each other out with questions such as, "where did you get that?" or "you can just turn that in and work on this after".

Classrooms have a positive climate when teachers and students have positive relationships and clearly enjoy being with each other, when children are excited about learning and spending time in the classroom, and when teachers and students are respectful of one another.

**Table 30. Descriptive Statistics on Eight Classroom Observation**

ClassID		Positive Climate	Negative Climate	Teacher Sensitivity	Regard for Student Perspectives
Kinder3110	Mean (SD)	6.75 (0.50)	1.75 (0.50)	4.00 (1.41)	6.25 (0.50)
Kinder3113	Mean (SD)	5 (2.71)	3.75 (1.50)	3.50 (1.00)	5.75 (0.96)
Kinder3114	Mean (SD)	6.75 (0.50)	1.75 (0.50)	3.75 (0.96)	6.00 (0.00)
Kinder3115	Mean (SD)	6.75 (0.50)	2.25 (2.50)	5.75 (1.89)	6.00 (1.16)
Kinder3116	Mean (SD)	7.00 (0.00)	1.25 (0.50)	5.75 (0.96)	6.00 (1.41)
FirstGrade2106	Mean (SD)	6.25 (0.50)	2.75 (1.26)	3.50 (0.58)	5.00 (0.82)
FirstGrade2107	Mean (SD)	6.75 (0.50)	1.00 (0.00)	6.50 (1.00)	6.25 (0.50)
SecondGrade5118	Mean (SD)	5.50 (1.00)	1.25 (0.50)	4.75 (1.50)	4.75 (1.50)

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

~ approaching significance

### Negative Climate

Negative climate was highlighted by four indicators, (1) Negative Affect, (2) Punitive Control, (3) Sarcasm/Disrespect, and (4) Severe Negativity. There was some evidence of negativity in the classrooms observed. One student said quietly, "it's hurting my ears" when the class got a little noisy. There was some peer aggressing, for example, one student said to another, "stop staring at me". A kid also told on other kids who were "playing with the happy rocks".

Interactions between students were a little aggressive, for example, one student said. "Did you take my scissors?" with a harsh tone while looking through someone else's pencil box.

Students expressed negativity towards the "full write" activity.

Word choice and tone of the teacher was observed to be tense when the teacher said, "please repeat 'please stop talking'", students repeated. As one boy was joining the circle on the carpet, the teacher announced, "please find an appropriate (with an emphasis on the tone) way to join the group". Another teacher stated, "Please don't say the number, I can see it and so can you" (sarcastically), to which the student replied, "I'll redo it, only to have the teacher respond saying, "Redo it how (repeated several times)".

Students were asked to skip a question on the practice exam, to do so, they needed to enter a random letter in for answer. One student was confused on what to do, the teacher approached her, "what's your favorite letter?", the students said "I don't know". The teacher said "ok" and did not follow up with the student. When helping other students, the teacher's tone of voice was a bit harsh, for example, "yes sweetheart (emphasis on tone) a random letter".

One student was distracted by the iPad when the teacher was talking so the teacher said, "Hands out, stop touching the iPad". One student asked "what was the question again?" another student commented "oh my gosh". One student shared a thought, another student, "I literally just said that". Teacher said to a student, "Shush, I can see it, I know". Students tried to tell the teacher the answer but teacher responded with, "uh oh don't tell me, don't tell me!". Use of a behavior chart was evidenced in several classrooms. They were not necessarily used negatively, but everyone can tell what "level" each student is on.

At one point, the teacher was repeating the same two students' names during the whole time to get their attention. When the student asked as question, the teacher responded with "solve your own problem my dear" (sarcastic tone) and "do you have to tell me when you're done? Please don't. When you're done, you've just begun". When another student tried to help his peer, the teacher replied with, "Ok, stop he already got it" (tone was a bit harsh).

One student expressed negativity towards their peer when they frowned upon hearing their peers' answers while at the same time the teacher stops the lesson to call out a student who came back into the classroom when forgetting headphones, by stating, "Why are you coming back and forth? Every time at group, you need iPad and headphones"

There was evidence of negative language such as when a teacher stated, "I don't want to waste any more time", or a student says "I need it", referring to a book and the teacher takes the book over to the student and throws it on the floor (teacher). Another incident was when a student was writing the time on the board to show peers how much time they had left, the teacher responded with "No, no more. That's time-wasting".

A negative affect was referenced to when a teacher asked a student, "Did you read it? If you did, it tells you exactly what to do" with a frustrated tone. Or when a teacher said to a group of students, "If you're humming I'd like you to stop". Or "You're not following directions, look at everybody else! Oh my goodness".

In one observation, a parent volunteer in the classroom said, "do you hear what I was saying?" (repeated to student several times) and student responded with frustration, "I don't want to rewrite it!". The parent volunteer responded with, "You haven't done anything!" and "I'm waiting, I'm waiting for you" (sarcastic tone). The parent volunteer sounded harsh with the students who were not understanding the material. The adult went on to say, "It's right here, read it!". "I'm trying to teach you something shhhhh..." "did you read it?" (repeated several times). This entire dialogue happened within hearing range of the classroom teacher who chose not to intervene.

Another observation took place when the student were playing a game. A few students were a bit frustrated when they got out of the game. The teacher did not follow up with the

students after they shared their frustration. One student announced, "My dumb iPad" and another student heard and replied, "it's not your iPad, It's just you."

During a morning meeting, when one student was sharing, another one was talking, the teacher responded by addressing the student by their name in a harsh tone. When students ask if they could go check if they're getting hot lunch for the day, the teacher responded by, "yes", said nicely, but pretended to roll her eyes. When counting the number of stars they received, one student said she had nine, but the other suggests that she only had eight. The two students started arguing, "it's not your name, so you can't count mine" and "I know you cheated."

The overall negative climate scores of each observation cycle of the eight classrooms observed. Classrooms have a negative climate when teachers and students demonstrate frequent irritation with each other, when negative situations escalate and the teacher is unable to diffuse them, and when there are examples of threatening or bullying behaviors, when there is frequent teasing or humiliation, or when harsh punishment is used.

### **Teacher Sensitivity**

Teachers are sensitive when they know their students well enough both academically and socially to be aware of and respond to their needs, when children are comfortable enough to freely participate and take risks, seeking adult support and guidance when needed, when teachers respond to student needs, and when children are comfortable enough to freely participate and take risks, seeking adult support and guidance when needed. There are four indicators of Teacher Sensitivity (1), Awareness, (2) Responsiveness, (3) Addresses Problems, and (4) Student Comfort.

The observations provided evidence of teacher sensitivity that ranged from 3 (mid-range quality emotional support) to 7 (high quality emotional support). Some observations that

indicated a mid-range of emotional support was when a teacher reader was very engaged when reading the stories to the class. However, she wasn't exactly responding to the kids who were making connections to the readings. The teacher had to redirect the students once by saying "Let's check our bodies friends. Check your voices, criss-cross apple sauce".

Another observation occurred when dismissing students from the carpet, the teacher said, "if you have glasses on go get a paper" while only one child had glasses on. During this time, the teacher wasn't physically aware of which students needed more help or who wasn't following directions. Students would ask the questions again so the teacher had to repeat herself. When a student couldn't answer a question, the teacher responded with, "Will you choose a friend to help you?".

Teacher displayed low awareness when the only two students of color in the classroom were not participating at all when the whole class was brainstorming together. The teacher appeared to have low awareness that some students were not focused or following along when reading the prompt, but the teacher did not interfere. The example provided by the teacher to introduce persuasive essay wasn't applicable to all students. For example, . "movies: Minions, Endgame; destinations: Mammoth, Hawaii; restaurants". Many students were relating to the examples in a very different way than was intended such as, "I've seen that movie" or "I've been to Mammoth". However, a few had not seen the movie or gone to vacation places. One girl shared that she's never been to any of the restaurants given as examples. Could privilege and whiteness play a part in the teacher awareness of student participation and experience? The long term effect on bias and inequity can be devastating.

The teacher was aware of her ELL student and placed her with a partner to help her. However, she said, "go sit next to \_\_\_\_, She can just copy your writing, this is hard writing".

Some students chose to write a persuasive essay on the video game Fortnite, but opened with a question "Do you like guns?", but the teacher was not aware at all to the appropriateness of this opening sentence. The teacher helped one student who didn't have a topic by asking her questions like "What restaurants do you like and would you want people to go to or know about?"

At one point, the teacher is shaking her head and whispering "no" to a student when he was talking. She addresses the problem with one student (most likely ELL) who was not able to read the Mother's day poem the class was practicing. The teacher told the student, "You'll be able to read it by the day of the performance". The student seemed kind of lost and worried, but the teacher did follow through and practice with her later on. The teacher was aware that some students may not necessarily be fully participating or enthusiastic about the Mother's Day performance. The teacher explained to the class, "your mom carved out time from her busy day to be here, so be enthusiastic!"

During this observation, the teacher introduces new seating and explained to the students, "one way you can show me that these new seating assignments work is to be on task. You can do some polite ignoring with your friends if they are distracting you". There was one English Language Learner in the classroom, but the teacher failed to assign a task for this student while giving out group works, so the student read independently, but was merely flipping through the book. The teacher later worked with the student one-on-one to focus on more reading. When a student came into the room from groups to grab headphones for his peers (also at groups), the teacher called out the student for forgetting materials instead of appreciating him for helping out his peers.

A teacher was working with one small group while the rest of the class worked independently in rotations. The teacher mainly focused on the small group, but was not very aware of what the other students were doing most of the time unless it is very obvious. For example, when the teacher noticed that one student was goofing off instead of staying on task, she would say, "\_\_\_ focus ok?". Some students weren't exactly on task, going to other websites on the iPad instead of working on assigned work.

There were classrooms that exhibited high quality teacher sensitivity. A teacher was very responsive in terms of comments and questions the students raised. For example, some students wanted to take their artwork outside for display, but it was raining that day. The teacher responded by saying "Let's look at the weather later during recess and see, it looks awesome!" When prompting for the art station students to help with clean up, the teacher didn't call them out by names; instead, she said, "I need my artists to help me clean the art table they were using".

There was an observation where a teacher was helping a student find an appropriate book to read, "I like \_\_\_! Are you looking for something longer?" The teacher exhibited great awareness by preparing students for the day and for transitions by stating, "I know you guys are typing right now, but if you'd like to sharpen your pencil, you can do it now!" and "I'm looking for a smooth transition like \_\_\_".

Teacher awareness exhibited when the teacher noticed students weren't on task, she would redirect them. She had to separate a table of boys because they were off task. For example, "\_\_\_ find a new table please". One student was cleaning up his flashcards to go to another center after rotation. Another student didn't have flashcards, the teacher noticed and suggested for the student to take their peer's flashcards. One student was coughing when his neighbor said "stop coughing" which the teacher added, "please" and explained "he can't help it".

In high quality teacher sensitive classrooms, problems are addressed appropriately. For instance, a student didn't have an answer yet so the teacher responded, "That's ok, I'll come back to you". The teacher helping students deal with their emotions, "When you start out frustrated in the morning, can you \_\_\_?" and brainstormed ideas with the class. The teacher led mindful breathing activity. The teacher exhibited awareness when she stated, "oh I noticed that \_\_\_ does this and \_\_\_ and \_\_\_ put their hands together". The teacher was also responsive when a student said, "it's the day after tomorrow!", the teacher responded: "yes it is!"

When redirecting students when they were off task, she would say, "are we talking about \_\_\_ Book Title \_\_\_ my friends?" and "Thank you for talking about the book". Teacher responded to one student who said, "do you know how I know which one is my left/right hand? my left hand has five fingers and my right has four!". The teacher responded: "Wow that's a special way, lucky!" and "I'm noticing that kids are writing ever so neatly", wow I heard that a student said to do rock, paper, scissors to decide on who goes to the spot!". A student said, "I have a great idea" and the teacher responded, "you always do!"

Teacher provided "privacy folders" for students who were distracted by their peers who were done. A student was calling for the teacher, teacher responded: "I hear that someone is calling me, but I don't see a hand", which the student followed by raising their hand. One student felt unmotivated after making a mistake on her writing. The teacher noticed and said "Oh, I made like three mistakes this morning, but look how much you've done already!"

### **Regard for Student Perspectives**

Regard for student perspectives as defined by CLASS is: “the degree to which the teacher’s interactions with students and classroom activities place an emphasis on students’ interests, motivations, and points of view and encourage student responsibility and autonomy.”



(Pianta, 2012). The keywords within this definition that are of utmost importance regarding the types of interactions—degree, student, and classroom activities. The majority of the observations were rated as highly effective (rated 6 & 7) in regard to student perspective.

When students used recycled papers for art work, the teacher noticed and responded with "good job using scrap paper, we're saving Earth!" During Social Circle time, the kids had free-choice on where and what they'd like to do, for example, Legos, art, puzzles, etc. When cleaning up, the teacher didn't have to constantly tell the kids, instead she played the "clean up" song. The kids were all responsible for picking up after themselves. During reading time, the teacher asked students for help on recalling the sequence of events in the story.

In one classroom, students brainstormed ideas with one another. While doing the writing activity, the teacher implemented a little bit of math when folding paper. ex. "when we fold it once, it turns into two halves, and twice would make four quarters". She asked students to rephrase prompt in their own words. The teacher asked for students' opinions, for example, "raise your hand if \_\_\_\_". Using students' vocabulary and introducing new words to the class, one student used the word "risky" and the class brainstormed synonyms of the word.

There was a student-led math calendar in one classroom. Students wrote their own math expressions to represent the number of days in school. Students led share & tell, showing an item that was special to them.

Students were focused on a typing practice exercise. The teacher paired a student up with another peer who was on crutches and used this as an example to teach empathy, for example, "class, we want to think about others and think about how we can help each other out". Students were eager to participate during whole class time. Encouraging student leadership and expression, the teacher asked, "can you turn to your neighbor and brainstorm some action

verbs?". The teacher using guiding questions, for example, "what word does 'inform' sound like?" Instead of telling the students the answer, the teacher, said, "I'm going to write a sentence, and I want you to see if you can identify the verb and helping verb". The teacher was helping a student figure out the past tense of "eat" by asking "What did you eat last night" and the student answered, "I ate \_\_\_\_" and realized that he knew the answer. Having students help one another also encourages student leadership. Students were able to choose where to sit.

When writing the sentence of the day and spelling out the word perfect, the teacher allowed the class to work it out themselves, by asking, "what sounds do you hear in 'perfect'", "spell it to someone near you". Encouraging student leadership, the teacher led a Star of the Day activity and had students come up with a sentence to share. During mindful breathing, students were sharing how they felt and physically letting go of the feelings from their hands. Students were engaged and participating.

Joining children's play during free choice provides easy opportunity to follow their lead and add to the depth of the activity through questions and participation. The same can be said for teacher-directed activities. By knowing your students, walking through the activity, and anticipating student responses and engagement, teachers increase their flexibility within the activity and increase opportunities for student expression.

The degree to which this occurs in teacher-directed activities may look different than in child-directed activities, depending on perspective. Defining perspective as a particular attitude toward or way of regarding something; a point of view: true understanding of the relative importance of things; a sense of proportion (New Oxford American Dictionary), demonstrates that perspective involves attitude and regard.

## **Student Focus Groups**

The purpose in conducting the student focus groups was to address research question #4: How are SEL beliefs and practices and CRST associated with student experiences. The focus groups allowed the researcher to gain as accurate a picture as possible of student experiences associated with SEL and CRST. Through the focus group discussions, the researcher discovered information that identified steps to improve teacher practice. Student voice represented a broad cross-section of students from kindergarten through third grade, some of whom have had positive experiences and some of whom have had negative experiences at school. Most students had both.

The focus group transcripts were organized and analyzed using Dedoose, where the researcher was able to code and recode data by examining words and phrases used most often and then merging similar phrases and related ideas. The result was four key patterns that emerged from the student focus group portion of this study which included (1) descriptions of a perfect school or class, (2) who pays attention to students, (3) anger and sadness, and (4) student experience. The following are ways in which students perceive their school experiences.

### **A Perfect School**

Kindergarten through third graders described a perfect school or classroom as one in which the principal was really nice, the staff was nice, where students had lots of friends and no bullying or cheating in handball, having longer recess, and if school could be self-paced. A third grader shared that the best classroom:

would probably be people who listen to the teacher and not just chat when the teacher is talking and not just laugh randomly and then like when we learn we have fun doing it instead of looking at the clock all the time. And I would just like if you don't know a math problem at all if somebody would walk you through it right away.

A first-grade student described a school in which:

the adults were” nice, kind, loving to kids, no bullying and where there was principal would always like if a kid is bullying another person then she shouldn't blame the kid who is getting bullied.

Another 2<sup>nd</sup> grader said:

The perfect school would be like, a pretty nice principal, one that doesn't call assemblies on Fridays like random out of nowhere. And a place where if we were all nice to each other and if we were to play together and get along together and where we'd tell the truth and be honest together.

### **Who Pays Attention**

When students were asked who pays attention to them, many of them mentioned teachers, a professional therapist, and lots of friends. When asked why these people pay attention, a kindergartener said:

Because they can watch you, and there's like a clip chart because you know when she's watching you, and every time you know she's watching you she moves your clip up.

Another student added to that statement by saying, “She pays lots of attention, that's why she has a clip chart. Yeah, like so much attention. She even pays attention like when we walk out to snack.”

A 2<sup>nd</sup> grader differentiated between big things and little things. He said:

Well if it's like, if I get my feelings hurt I would go to my teacher. If it was like someone saying a really mean thing I would go to my teacher and they could rally help. Friends are like little things. I feel like mostly the teacher because they understand more. Like if I have friends that are a little younger than me, sometimes they won't understand.

A few students described not feeling like anyone pays attention to them. Some students shared that they just walk away, or talk to themselves, or pay attention to their own self, or just wait and then get home and tell their parents.

## **Anger and Sadness**

Students shared that often they get angry or sad and some of the reasons for that is when people sometimes argue it's upsetting or if the classroom gets really loud it becomes annoying. When students cheat and teachers are not paying attention to it, students can feel anger. A third grader said:

I don't like it when the people like bully people because they're different like if they have hearing aids or glasses and I feel like that's just mean.

Another student said:

It makes me angry when we do games and the other team, they always brag if they win. And they always cheat and they hurt us sometimes. And it makes me sad and mad. And most times the teachers don't say anything. So like people cheat in games, like handball, four square sometimes, they do the L (Loser) dance.

Students experience exclusion in the form of no one wanting to play with a particular student and when friends say that they may feel sad. Many students spoke of the need to be included, for example,

"I feel sad when my friends don't exclude me".

"When ---- says, "No, you can't play with me."

A second grader commented:

I feel like I see a lot of people getting hurt and a lot of people getting in fights all the time - and they used to be people who were friends. And when they fight they go into these secret areas where they meet and they start fighting, and the teachers or aides can't find them. Sometimes teachers yell and I'm like, "why do you yell at them if they didn't do nothing"? I sometimes get sad or mad if they yell at my friends.

## **Student Experience**

Students were asked about their experiences in school and to share what it's like to be a student. A student shared his frustration of when students are trying to do something good and

teachers are in a rush and don't notice or don't seem to care. And sometimes a student might get in trouble because the good that you are trying to share is being said at the wrong time. A first grader talked about trust and gave this example:

Yeah, like in ---- class, if you get two handfuls of litter you can move your clip up. But she makes us throw it away. And sometimes Mrs. doesn't believe us because we don't have the two handfuls, but she believes some of us. But like when people really do, but those people aren't that trustworthy, they just don't get their clip up for doing a good thing.

A third grader stated:

Some teachers are really strict about how you do something, and how to do it. Some teachers are less strict but sometimes always wanting to do something their way but sometimes they let you do it by yourself. I wish they would let us try it by ourselves more. I feel like they think they're important and they are. I think if the adults of this school also had to follow some rules like us, then they would be nicer.

Another third grader shared:

The teacher usually gives everyone the same thing. I like that when teachers would give out worksheets depending on things that were different. When they do that I feel like the teacher can understand me you know.

### **Student Survey Data**

On a 0-3 scale (never, sometimes, most of the time, and always), 33 K-3 students took a survey on their feelings about school. In case, any student participant was a non-reader, the survey could be easily understood with the use of emoji expressions that represented the 0-3 ratings. Overall, students felt positive about school. Areas that received the lowest rating were in regards to school work being interesting and adults being interested in what students say and do. Despite the low ratings, many students perceive school as fun.

**Table 31. Descriptive Statistics on Classroom Observations**

	M	SD
I enjoy school	2.42	0.61
My school work is interesting	2.00	0.87
I feel safe when I am at school	2.48	0.76
I learn a lot at school	2.55	0.71
The teachers and staff are friendly and helpful	2.52	0.76
Adults are intersted in what I do and say	2.09	0.88
Adults take time to help me	2.33	0.82
Teachers and staff treat me fairly	2.45	0.75
People say my name correctly and ask for help if needed	2.30	0.79
Lessons are interesting and fun	2.55	0.62
I am trusted to do things on my own	2.45	0.71
There is an adult I can go to if I feel worried	2.33	0.85
I feel safe in the playground	2.52	0.62
I ask when I don't understand something	2.50	0.88
I have lots of fun in school	2.81	0.40

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

~ approaching significance

These findinds suggest that Rosetree School District would benefit from initiating clearly articulated messaging regarding SEL and CRST this would align teacher and educator perspectives as well as address any skepticism about those concepts that may occur. Affluent school districts should be responsible for the intersection of SEL and CRST of students. Learning that the social emotional issues that students face and how they play out at school are often invisible. CRST is a critical component of responding to the SE needs of youth. A necessary and unavoidable first step in teaching SEL and CRST is the building of self awareness among our educators. Increasingly, the student demographics at Rosetree School District is becoming more and more diverse and yet the staff remains overwhelmingly made up of White females who hold a monolingual, monocultural perspective.

Parents consider the interactions their students experience at school to be of major importance while educators perceive teaching to the whole child to be just as vital. Explicitly articulating that teaching the whole child encompasses teaching how to interact with each other could be a next step.

Educators will want to look at what practices or actions reflect “teaching the whole child” and how one becomes aware of the importance of modeling positive adult to child interactions as well as teaching about positive interactions among peers. As educators reflected on CRST practices, they shared practices that centered around celebrations. Some shared that when holidays come up they considered it a socially acceptable opportunity to discuss culture and traditions. This may imply that there is discomfort in addressing culture which means there is a discomfort in accepting the whole child, which leads to student-teacher relationship that lacks depth.



## Chapter 5: Interpretation of Findings

The researcher interpreted the findings of chapter 4 through the lens of a researcher and an experienced educator to give context to the data, making the connection from research to practice. The purpose of this research is to inform practices in regards to SEL and CRST. The findings suggest that although educators and parents embrace SEL and CRST, there exists some misalignment in their perspectives, barriers perceived to for full endorsement, and even some skepticism regarding these concepts. Overall, findings reveal that students feel positive about school, there are areas within their experiences of school that need further refinement.

The following are the research questions and the summary of themes and patterns that emerged during analysis:

### The Research Questions

**RQ1: In what ways do educators and parents conceptualize social emotional learning and culturally responsive and sustaining teaching?**

- The most common ways educators defined SEL via the survey fell into two areas (1) how a child manages emotions (97%) and (2) how teachers teach to the whole child (64%). Managing emotions was described as understanding one's feelings, showing empathy for others, and building positive relationships.
- Teaching with the whole child in mind was considered a pathway to teaching academics, in other words, if a student is feeling upset, overwhelmed, excited, etc., it would be very difficult to teach academics. Looking at a child's needs throughout a school day,

including actively knowing how to best meet the needs of students was perceived as an integrative part of teacher practice.

- Parents defined SEL into two primary areas (1) how one manages their emotions (49%) and (2) how one interacts with others (46%). Parents understood managing of emotions as learning about emotions, regulating behavior, learning about working with others, collaborative skills and teaching children how to interact with each other in socially acceptable ways. The notion of being socially acceptable emerged often.
- In regards to open ended questions on survey, educators defined SEL as explicitly teaching SEL, using tools such as SEL curriculum such as Zones of Regulation program, using a classroom mood meter, or using puppets , and lastly learning how to manage the self. Nearly ½ of the parent participants skipped defining SEL, those that did not defined it as navigating relationships and similar to educators, self management.
- The survey indicated more shared beliefs regarding SEL. Both educators & parents believe SEL should be taught in schools, that it impacts overall success, & enhances academics. A t-test showed personal skepticism about SEL as non-significant indicating no difference in the responses between educators and parents. Overall both held highly moderate amount of SEL skepticism.

**RQ2: What SEL and CRST beliefs and practices do educators endorse and enact in their classrooms?**

- Educators hold positive beliefs about SEL, its role in school and the positive impact on academics
- Educators believe they are taking care of their students' SE needs & that it is a natural part of their role as a teacher

- Vulnerability is necessary
- Time and resources get in the way of SEL implementation
- During the Interview: The top two hindrances to successful SEL implementation were time and resources but mindset also emerged. Mindset was another hindrance, specifically the attitudes that teachers hold about kids, culture, and behavior. The mindset of teachers in creating a culture of growth mindset in the classroom so that kids feel that they can learn and change, and adjust to what comes their way. Educators expressed that if their colleagues don't buy into the bigger idea itself whether that be SEL and or CRST and they are just specifically trying to implement a particular curriculum that they don't believe in, that can be problematic

**RQ3: Are there different patterns of practice or divergent belief systems by educators and parents?**

- The greatest discrepancy within the 5-point subscales of comfort and school culture
- Two areas ranked lowest by both groups in CRST
  - changing the structure of the classroom so that it is compatible with students' home culture to increase student motivation.
  - encouraging students to use their native language to help students' maintain cultural identity.
- Educators overwhelmingly associated CRST with awareness (62%), describing it in terms of recognizing the different cultural backgrounds in the classroom and incorporating all the different cultures in teaching students in a safe environment.
- 31% of the parent participants skipped this question. This was a fairly new term for parents. There was even some discomfort. with the question asked.

**RQ4: To what extent are SEL beliefs and practices and CRST associated with student experiences?**

- Educators had a stronger overall belief in CRST than parents
- Educator belief in developing a community of learners when the class consists of students from diverse cultural backgrounds to promote positive interactions between students
- Educator belief in developing an appreciation for a students' culture by teaching about the contributions their culture has made over time was statistically significant among parents and educators
  
- Educator belief that students' self-esteem can be enhanced when their cultural background is valued by the teacher was significant
  
- Student Experience
  - Students felt positive about school
  - Areas that received the lowest rating
    - School work being interesting
    - interesting and adults being interested
  - High positive classroom climate
  - Teacher Sensitivity fell in the range indicating that the teachers are sometimes aware
  - Regard for Student Perspectives was scored to be in the mid-range
    - Regard for Student Perspectives was scored to be in the mid-range (M=5.75), where the teacher may follow the students' lead during some periods and be more controlling during others. The teacher sometimes

provides support for student autonomy and leadership but at other times fails to do so. There are periods during which there is a lot of student talk and expression but other times when teacher talk predominates. And lastly, the teacher is somewhat controlling of students' movement and placement during activities.

To tease apart the findings even further, detailed interpretations of the findings follows:

### **Misaligned Perceptions**

Although educators and parents perceive SEL positively, the greatest discrepancy was within the subscales of comfort and school culture with educators scoring themselves higher in terms of addressing their own students' social-emotional needs coming naturally to them. Parents sense of confidence in this area was almost a point lower. While educators perceive that meeting the needs of their students social-emotional needs comes naturally to them, parents feel less confident about that instinctive support. It's important to remember that the goal of social-emotional learning (SEL) is to help children (and adults) "enhance their ability to integrate thinking, feeling, and behaving to achieve important life tasks" (Zins et al., 2004, p. 6).

Developmental needs of the whole child, including academic achievement and social-emotional learning, must be considered and aligned throughout the educational process (Kaufman et.al., 2009). Children experience classrooms through their relationships with their teachers and with their peers, and together children and teachers contribute to a dynamic and enduring set of interactions characterized by regular and consistent patterns (Kontos & WilcoxHerzog, 1997; Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003; Meyer, Wardrop, Hastings, & Linn, 1993; Pianta, 1999; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004).

**Communication.** The implication of misaligned perceptions is that there may exist a lack of communication or an absence of mutual understanding impairing the quality of the relationship. Rousseau (2001) drew attention to the need for such alignment of individuals' perceptions of relationships in her examination of the social psychology of organizations. Although people tend to mistakenly believe that others share their perceptions (Turk and Salovey 1985), Rousseau (2001) argued that true "mutuality" means "that the parties involved do in fact hold the same beliefs regarding their obligations to each other" (534). Such shared beliefs help actors to trust one another's intentions, words, and actions, making mutuality, or alignment, necessary for individuals to work together effectively toward common goals

In an effort to align these perspectives, educators may consider presenting the importance of SEL and its positive impact to parents early in the school year through Back to School Night presentations, class/school newsletters, and share ways SEL is integrated into the classroom or school culture. Intentionally, clearly, and explicitly communicating the role that SEL plays in a student's academic and social school experience will begin to realign the perspectives of educators and parents. Being proactive about the topic may lend itself to being perceived by parents as more "instinctual" and a natural part of the educator practice. CASEL (2013) contest that schools take a holistic view of children and address not only the head through academic skills and knowledge but also the heart through new situations that will arise in the course of a students' work and personal life.

**Collaboration.** The opportunity to work in partnerships or groups allows students to exercise skills needed to cooperate and build community. This also allows students to make their own choices and develop confidence with self advocacy. According to the SEL & CRST Framework (2013), allowing students the opportunity to make responsible decisions

demonstrates and practices the SEL competency of making constructive, safe choices about self, relationship, and school which directly aligns with the CRST competency of being respectful, accountable, and prudent. Collaborating and working with others is an important life skill. It provides the opportunity to negotiate with peers, developing leadership skills and the necessity for students to discover their own strengths and as a result contributes to the collective group. In support of CRST, affirming students' cultural connections not only stresses collectivity, but the honors the importance of building one's individuality as well (Gay, 2018).

**Practices in the Classroom.** Supporting students with the expansion of their vocabulary by giving students new words to utilize. Supplying students with positive phrases they can use to foster their resilience and overcome failure may help to combat negative self-talk that individuals unconsciously use. However, addressing the conscious mind and giving it an inventory of positive words can support and increase the incidences for positive self talk. To train and support students in social constructs based on emotional intelligence and its application to social, emotional, and academic work in the classroom (Jennings, 2009) is key. According to the SEL & CRST Framework (2013), allowing students the opportunity to demonstrate the SEL competency of self awareness as the ability to identify strengths in self, community, and culture which directly aligns with the CRST competency of being grounded, self-confident, and optimistic.

Schools can and should play a role in helping children to become good people and not merely good learners (Kohn, 1990, 1991). As a classroom teacher, I always have a "Peace Table" where the purpose was for students to take a break when they were upset or angry or needed to calm themselves. This space which was as simple as small table in a corner with a flower vase, smooth rocks, and comfy chairs or pillows designed to create a peaceful

atmosphere. An anchor chart with positive words, phrases, or prompts were displayed so that they could be referred to with ease. Students also used this space to problem solve conflicts with peers without the aide of a teacher. In place for complying with the adults' expectations, or punitive consequences for failing to do so, there's more of an emphasis on collaborative problem-solving—and, for that matter, less focus on behaviors than on underlying motives, values, and reasons (Kohn, 2015).

One can not underestimate the practice of role-play. Sometimes putting yourself in someone else's shoes to understand a situation can make an impactful difference for students. Educators can take time to role-play situations that are tricky or troubling that show up as students experience school. Role play helps students develop empathy and understand other people's feelings (Brown, 2003). Allowing for talk time by giving students a lot of opportunities, both structured *and* unstructured, to talk to one another during the course of the day is important. Bouncing ideas off of one another or figuring out problems with a little give-and-take will help students build understanding and confidence. According to the SEL & CRST Framework (2013), allowing students the opportunity be socially aware, practices the SEL competencies of empathy, perspective taking, and reflective listening, which directly aligns with the CRST competency of being inclusive, resourceful, and perceptive.

**Defining SEL.** Educators and parents give varying examples of what SEL is, from associating it with tools that are used to support an SEL program to skipping and possibly not knowing an example to give, to associating it with social awareness. This indicates the need to create a common understanding of what SEL means, the expected outcomes and the action steps to achieve agreed upon outcomes. SEL is a complex integration of multiple contexts, approaches, competencies, and skills. Including SEL as part of a school and districts' Site Strategic Plan



which serves as a road map for achieving student success throughout all district/school operations is vital to building a common understanding of the role of SEL in the classroom, into to practice, in the experience of students. With SEL as a written district or site goal, parent and educators can focus their energy and drive toward a common direction.

### **On Common Ground**

**SEL is Important.** An area where educators and parents were on common ground was their understanding of the importance of SEL in supporting students to learn how to manage emotions. This being a common understanding, naturally this could be an avenue in which to launch the concept of SEL and a place to begin the discourse regarding the importance and impact that SEL has on academics and student relationships at school. Teaching students the connection between how they feel and how they act is powerful . According to the SEL & CRST Framework (2013), self management is regarded as resilient in the face of obstacles, compassion for oneself and others, and perserverance which aligns with the CRST competency of being adaptable, self motivated, and self fulfilled.

Most adults can manage their feelings throughout the day through mindfulness or taking a break, many student don't have those coping skills yet. Emotional regulation is the management that takes place deep inside the emotional center of the brain (Burkitt, 2017). When it's working, you can go smoothly from one interaction to another, managing the different emotions that arise. When you can't manage your emotions, each interaction can bring difficulties and challenges known as emotional dysregulation (Cole, 1994). For students dysregulation creates overall challenges, friendships are difficult, and most significantly, it can make learning indigestible. Educators can teach emotion regulation so students can realize that they're in control of their feelings and subsequent actions.

**Emotions Drive Behavior.** Educators and parents can have explicit discussion about the idea that emotions drive behaviors by talking about emotions. Until recently emotions haven't really been the mainstream topic in classrooms, adults should be asking how any given event makes the student feel and how that subsequent emotion makes them behave. Teaching emotions and how emotions drive behavior is a positive approach. Students need to know how to connect emotions to behavior and making these connections is critical (Appleton et al., 2008). Educators can do this frequently and consistently and as a result can contribute to changing the way kids think.

As trusted adults, the notion of patience has its virtues. Students who struggle with academics and relationships at school probably are the ones having the most difficulty managing their behavior and establishing trust with adults. If a child develops trust, he or she is likely to feel safe and secure in their world. Caregivers who are inconsistent, emotionally unavailable, or rejecting contribute to feelings of mistrust in the children they care for (Schipper, et.al., 2006) Most of the time, the students have been the victims of their emotions for a really long time resulting in what may be perceived as misbehavior. So in order to get to the core of behavior issues we must explicitly teach about emotions (Jennings & Greenburg, 2009) with the upmost patience in doing so.

**Practices in the Classroom.** Again, setting the tone cannot be understated. The first thing every educator should do in the morning is allowing opportunities for students to share thoughts and feelings that are on their heart. It might be the celebration they want to share or an issue that is weighing heavy. The purpose is to open up dialogue for everyone to share. This sets the tone for the day, and gives educators clues as to who needs a connection that goes beyond the daily routine. Establishing "Landmarks" throughout the day for quick check-ins benefits not only

the student that builds the relationship between student and adult. Currently mindfulness is a common approach many educators use in the classroom. Sometimes it looks like quiet moment of breathing and another times this is shortsighted meditation. Either way it's an opportunity for students to have a quick regulation check.

Parent and educators can do their part to take the focus off of academic success. If students are not explicitly taught how to regulate their emotions, all of the academic support a student receives could prove to be useless. Taking the time to teach students about the importance of emotions for result in increased focus which will have a direct impact on their academic achievement.

### **Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Learning**

Educator and Parent participants shared narratives that accepted an understanding of what it means to be culturally responsive. Their responses detailed culturally responsive learning as focused on cultural awareness and the need to understand the whole child, in terms of recognizing different cultural background classroom and incorporating that knowledge in teaching students. Surprisingly, many parents (31%), skipped this question and a few parent participants share that this was a new term to which they were unfamiliar with.

**Build Context.** Simply asking the question “what is culturally responsive in sustaining teaching?” to parents and educators is an important first step to establishing a common understanding of the term and building a context that illustrates not only the relevancy but the necessity to include this approach within the school and classroom environment. In order to understand the whole child we must understand their lived experiences which include culture, language, traditions, expectations, and values that they have established as important to them and their families (Howard, 2003). We can’t claim we understand the needs of students if we fail to acknowledge they are and their identity. We need to acknowledge and affirm both. Denham and Weissberg (2004) caution that SEL programming must be “culturally relevant, empowering children within their unique cultural environments.

Educators and parents must create spaces for students to be seen, and are able to be their authentic selves. This means building a common language for equity within schools which is critical to building capacity for culturally responsive and sustaining teaching. We must honor and validate the living experiences of students and provide the space for cultural connectivity where the space reflects a structural design in an individualistic space. Doing this values authenticity and the diverse ways students process information. We need to ask students “what is your welcoming environment?”. Many times adults design environments that could be very different from what a student finds welcoming so this is an invitation to have a blank canvas at the beginning of the year on which students and educators build the learning space together.

**Build Relationships.** The biggest part of teaching children is building relationships (Newberry, 2010). You can't actually build relationships and connections with people if you don't know who they are. If you were asking them to leave parts of their identity at the door that doesn't build enough authentic connection. When we don't have genuine connections, you can hinder learning. Educators and parents must embrace perspectives through the relationship building peace. All teachers, regardless of their racial and ethnic background, need to have self-awareness, they need to know about their own and other cultures, and they need to understand how their beliefs and biases can affect their teaching (Gay, 2002) and their relationships with students. According to the SEL & CRST Framework (2013), the SEL competency of relationship skills described as listening and communicating goes hand in hand with CRST competency outlined as supporting a student to connect, to cooperate. And to be encouraging to others.

The reality is that many of our teachers don't look or sound like our students. We as the adults are not validating our students beyond the monolingual, Mono-cultural perspective then we can tap into the students full potential. There are teachers with huge hearts, well if you talk the way they were taught, who manage classrooms the way they were manage. However, now there's more awareness about privilege, identity, race, language, and culture what did we do with the awareness, there still a lack of action. Talking about culturally responsive teaching and doing something about it it's simple in theory yet it may be hard to put into action. The simplest way to judge whether teaching is culturally responsive is whether diverse students are learning (Hammond, 2016).

**Build Resilience.** There exists fear. Fear of not doing it right, fear of saying the wrong thing, fear of offending each other, fear of having to face that what we've been doing is not working for some students, and facing the fact that those students are students of color or

students learning the language or students who are in poverty. By embracing culture and language, we can begin to close some of the opportunity and achievement gaps that many of our students come to us with. Whether caused by poverty or other factors, educators can't control all those pieces but they can't control what they're doing in their classrooms. When educators tell students who they are and what they bring is relevant and important we're going to use those skills to create the best learning environment in the classroom, that's the way to create equitable systems where everyone thrives and culturally responsive and sustaining teaching is manifested.

### **School Culture**

According to parent and educator survey and interview responses, parents may not feel the sort of school culture that educators perceive that they are creating. Educators perceive it as much more inclusive and welcoming than parents perceived. Parents may not feel their students are as strongly supported in developing their social-emotional skills as educators believe.

**Defining Culture.** Clearly communicating to your school or classroom community that the definition of culture is a framework from which we define ourselves as individuals. It's what makes you you, it's what influences us in our approach to interacting with the rest of the world. It's our beliefs, what we value and the positions or stances that we take. We all have a culture and often this culture intersects with multiple cultures. There is a need to explicitly define what culture it and how it intersects what social and emotional learning. Culture is about race the culture extends beyond the race. Just like note to snowflakes are the same no to students are the same even if they share a lot of common things. We need to be open to learning about the characteristics that are students develop.

**Asset-Based Approach.** As educators we need to adopt a more asset based teaching (Diamond & Spillane, 2004) which is a practice of viewing students as having strengths that

counter the many ways we tend to see them as having deficits. Educators need to be cognizant of how their beliefs and practices are influenced by perceptions of student and work to interrupt the reproductive tendencies these perceptions entail. In a very real sense, the everyday choices that educators make can contribute creating environments where students social-emotional needs are attended to and thus becoming more aligned with the perceptions of parents. The way in which educators interpret behaviors, information, and situations are seen through their own cultural lenses (Delpit, 1995). Educators may need to unpack this interpretation in order to create the most optimal learning environments for students.

### **Barriers to SEL**

When it comes to things that get in the way of educators fully embracing social-emotional learning, educators shared that perceived barriers were a lack of time and educator mindset. To address the issue of time, educators described the time to implement and receive the training to implement SEL or CRST are needed. Educators perceive that all too often, a need is revealed, in this case, social and emotional development as an essential element to education but the action steps necessary to successfully implement is lacking. The need for clarity and support for teachers is essential for the success.

**Time.** One of the larger issues schools face in implementing SEL is the “how” – how to teach social and emotional skills without adding one more thing into an already crowded school day (CASEL, 2013). Educators especially feel the strain of having to do more than they are already asked. However, when SEL is effectively implemented, teachers end up needing to spend less time on classroom management, providing an initial proof point that bringing SEL into the classroom may provide teachers with more time to spend on academics (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

**Educator Mindset.** Educator mindset was described as a barrier to implementing SEL and CRST with fidelity. Educators must examine their own beliefs as most educators understand, value, and are committed to developing students' SEL skills and feel positive about CRST. In individual interviews, educators recognized the importance of developing students' SEL as critically important. While committing oneself to the work of supporting students emotional well-being, a commitment to doing the Self's work is also essential. As educators we have to be willing to identify our own blind spots the students with whom we teach. Self work is where we need to start, it's where we examine our own identities in the way we've been socialized to view other people. When outside in equitable outcomes, it tells the story about culture, social emotional learning, the school climate, the leadership, what is discussed with in meetings, and the pacing of self work.

In building relationships with students it includes understanding the systems students are operating and how we play a part and co-constructing that reality. Examining our own beliefs, values, and expectations for all students are necessary for doing self work double impact students and the learning environments they exist within. Lastly, parents overwhelmingly mentioned the notion of social acceptance, stating that SEL was about being and acting in socially acceptable ways. Educators rarely mentioned it. Educators should be aware that this is on the mind of many parents.

### **Are We Really Student-Centered?**

In this study, student survey and focus groups revealed that overall students felt positive about school. Areas that received the lowest responses were in regards to school work being interesting and adults being interested in what students say and do. Despite the low ratings, many students perceive school as fun. Students are resilient and at the same time there is a need to



make the work students are given to do more relevant and the students should be able to answer why the work that they do matters in the world. As educators would ask ourselves “why do students need to learn this?”, “what impact does this work have on the real world”, and “why this work is important for my students to engage in?”. If these questions are difficult to answer than modifying the assignment or lesson should be considered.

Students want their lives and the work that they do to be important to the adults around them. Students ranked adults being interested in them lower than other ratings. How does one show that they are interested in the words and actions of others? We engage in authentic ways, we ask questions, we are non-judgmental, we are authentically curious, we come to the other ready to learn something new. Students want this from us too, when we begin asking those questions then the result is being student-centered.

### **Emotional Support in Classrooms**

Teacher Sensitivity was ranked lowest among the dimensions within the Emotional domain. Overall, classroom observations revealed incidences where the awareness of a teacher was in the mid-low range, indicating that the teachers are sometimes not aware of students who need extra support, assistance, or attention. Teachers who are aware of and respond to children's academic and emotional needs and consistently provide comfort, reassurance and encouragement are considered sensitive.

There must be more of an awareness on children's interests, motivations and points of view. What it means to teach with sensitivity may vary with context. Given the important role of educators, increased opportunities for supportive interactions and with multiple adults responsible for the care of children is vital. One area in particular with the teachers I've worked with the support these interactions is through Professional Learning Community (PLC) structure.

PLC may have shades of interpretation in different contexts, but there appears to be broad international consensus that it suggests a group of people sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented, growth-promoting way (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000).

During PLC, there should be a concerted effort to focus on, nurture, and provide opportunities to promote teacher awareness in two facets, (1) to focus on getting to know students and their families beyond academics in ways that build relationship and connectivity between educator and student and (2) to focus on ways to support students academically, socially, and culturally. By addressing these to areas with intentionality, educators will gain more awareness and increase the element of teacher sensitivity.

### **The School Experience**

This chapter's sole purpose was to be a practical guide for educators, clearly making the connection from research to practice with tangible next steps that can be implemented in a school or classroom right away. The big picture this research encompasses is improving upon the ways in which students experience school. To have a sense of connectedness with school it is suggested that a child should feel that they belong in some way to the school (Finn 1993, 1997). Children who feel connected to school, and feel cared for by people at school, report a higher degree of well-being (McNeely et al., 2002). Here we see the strong connections in the web of connectedness. This emphasis on the power of positive relationships is the connection between social inclusion and well-being.

During the educator interviews, vulnerability was identified as a key element that educators shared as being a powerful practice when considering the social emotional learning experiences of students. According to The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (1997), the word

vulnerable is derived from the Latin word, *vulnerare*, meaning “to wound.” The definition includes “capable of being wounded” and “open to attack or damage” (Brown, 2006).

Connecting with others, student to student, adult to student, is a vulnerable act but a necessary act to begin paving the pathway to SEL and CRST, which as this chapter reflects, are parallel pathways.

## **Chapter 6: Implications & Conclusion**

### **Introduction**

As previously stated, the research on primary education in the United States suggests an increased focus on academic growth, often at the expense of developing relationships and social-emotional learning. A contributing factor to the success of social and emotional learning (SEL) is culturally responsive and sustaining teaching (CRST). The beliefs and practices of social and emotional learning of 37 educators and 49 parents were studied to determine how elementary school teachers and parents in a small, suburban, upper middle-class public school district support or hinder the student experience.

### **Research Questions**

1. In what ways do educators and parents conceptualize social emotional learning and culturally responsive and sustaining teaching?
2. What SEL and CRST beliefs and practices do educators endorse and enact in their classrooms?
3. Are there different patterns of practice or divergent belief systems by educators and parents?
4. To what extent are SEL beliefs and practices and CRST associated with student experiences?

### **Summary of the Findings**

**Educator, Parent, and Student Surveys:** The educator and parent surveys regarding the definition of SEL were clustered around the first three research questions. The findings revealed that participant definitions were somewhat aligned to each other. Educator participants defined SEL as supporting a student with managing their emotions and teaching to the whole child.

Parent participants defined SEL as managing student emotions and the quality of interactions that students experience. Overall, educators and parents perceive SEL positively. Educators score themselves slightly higher in regards to taking care of student social emotional needs and supporting a school culture of SEL, whereas parents sense of confidence in this areas were slightly lower. There exists some hesitancy among educators and parents about the impact of SEL.

Overall, both groups had similar beliefs about CRST, however, educators consistently scored higher in all areas indicating a slightly stronger overall belief in CRST. Educators belief in developing an appreciation for a students' culture by teaching about the contributions their culture has made over time was statistically significant among parents and educators. Two areas ranked lowest by both groups was the idea of changing the structure of the classroom so that it is compatible with students' home culture to increase student motivation and encouraging students to use their native language to help students' maintain cultural identity. When asked to define CRST, educators overwhelmingly associated it with awareness, describing it in terms of recognizing the different cultural backgrounds in the classroom and incorporating all the different cultures in teaching students in a safe environment. When asked to describe what CRST meant to them, 31% of the parent participants skipped this question, indicating that parents are not very confident or familiar enough with CRST to provide a response.

The student survey addressed research question that explored to what extent are SEL beliefs and practices and CRST associated with student experiences. Overall, students felt positive about school. Areas that received the lowest rating were in regards to school work being interesting and adults being interested in what students say and do. Despite the low ratings, most students perceived school as fun.

**Educator Semi-Structured Interviews:** Educator interviews addressed research questions #2 and #3 that investigated what SEL and CRST beliefs and practices do educators endorse and enact in their classrooms if there different patterns of practice or divergent belief systems by educators and parents. Two trends emerged regarding the SEL beliefs of educators, (1) relationships matter and (2) SEL is foundational. In terms of SEL practices that educators enact in their classroom the major practice was centered around the quality of interactions that the students experience such as the micro interactions that teachers have every day with and how important the “off the cuff” interactions are. The notion of vulnerability of the teacher coupled with positive interactions was noted. The top two hindrances to successful SEL implementation were time and mindset. Educators stated that they simply felt like they did not have enough time in the day to devote to SEL. Mindset was another hindrance, specifically the attitudes that teachers hold about kids and language.

As educators reflected on culturally responsive teaching and sustaining practices, they shared practices that centered around celebrations and the practice of acceptance which was described as being open and trying not to make any assumptions about students. In regards to celebrations, some shared that when holidays come up they considered it an “invitation” or opportunity to read books about students and to ask students if they would like to share about what they know about their culture and to invite families into the classroom to share traditions from home.

**Classroom Observations:** Classroom observations addressed research questions #2, #3, and #4 which explored SEL and CRST beliefs and practices that educators endorse and enact in their classrooms, probed the different patterns of practice or divergent belief systems held by educators and parents, and searched for ways in which SEL beliefs and practices and CRST were

associated with student experiences. Overall, classrooms were observed to be positive environments in which students learned. Interactions between students or word choice and tone of teacher could be observed to be tense. Teacher sensitivity was ranked as the lowest of the four dimensions.

**Student Focus Groups:** Student focus groups addressed research question #4, exploring the ways in which SEL beliefs and practices and CRST were associated with student experiences and they illustrated a narrative of student student experiences associated with SEL and CRST. Four key areas that patterns emerged from the student focus group portion of this study which included (1) descriptions of a perfect school or class, (2) who pays attention to students, (3) anger and sadness, and (4) student experience. A perfect school or classroom was described as one everyone is nice, there is no bullying and classes were self paced. When students were asked who pays attention to them, many reported that adults at school appeared genuinely interested while others reported feeling like no one paid attention to them. Students shared that often they get angry or sad because of peers arguing or feeling excluded from a peer group. When students shared about their experiences in school, some reported anger with adults for being in rush and not noticing or don't seem to care. Or feeling sad when they get in trouble for trying to share something good at the wrong time.

### **Limitations of this Study**

This study had certain limitations in the area of researcher affect and generalizability. As a former teacher and current administrator, at the time this study was conducted, my positionality within the Rosetree district could have been a possible limitation. Parent, educator and student participants may have been reluctant in being completely honest during the surveys, interviews, and focus group portions of the study. By relying on the information that came from interviews,

focus groups and surveys, there is a risk of participants telling the researcher what they think they want to hear. Because I am a Black American female my identity may have impacted their responses. Throughout the study, every effort was made to encourage participants to respond based on their own experience, thoughts, ideas, and understandings.

This study also has a limited generalizability. Since the study took place within the context of one small, suburban elementary school District in Southern California, the results may be generalized to schools in other regions, neighborhoods, or socioeconomic conditions. Given a larger participant size, the voices, backgrounds and perceptions may have been more diverse resulting in deeper and more enriching data. Since I also relied on volunteers to participate, these participants may not necessarily represent all stakeholders of the Rosetree School District.

### **Implications for the Rosetree School District**

Rosetree School District would benefit from initiating clearly articulated messaging regarding SEL and CRST this would align teacher and educator perspectives as well as address any skepticism about those concepts that may occur. This would include offering professional development training to educators and education sessions for parents. School districts, and Rosetree being no different, no longer have a choice but to embrace social-emotional learning and culturally responsive and sustaining teaching. There is an increased awareness of how important it is for educators to support students socially, emotionally, and culturally. SEL and CRST are two sides of the same coin. If SEL requires one to build a relationship with another, one can not do that authentically, without embracing all that a student has to bring.

As a high-achieving, affluent district, it may have been easy to say that the focus on academic learning alone should suffice, however we are now learning that the social-emotional issues that students face and how they play out at school are often invisible and that culturally



responsive and sustaining practices are a critical component of responding to the social-emotional needs of youth. The question is not if Rosetree School District should be responsible for the intersection of social-emotional learning and CRST of students. The question is, how does Rosetree School District help confront the issues that lie at this intersection.

A necessary and unavoidable first step in teaching SEL and CRST is the building of self awareness among our educators. Increasingly, the student demographics at Rosetree School District is becoming more and more diverse and yet the staff remains overwhelmingly made up of White females who hold a monolingual, monocultural perspective. Many of the educators don't look and sound like the students they work with. If educators are not validating students beyond the monolingual, monocultural perspective, then they can not tap into a students' full potential.

Many educators have huge hearts, mean well but teach the way they were taught and manage classrooms the way they were managed. They most probably loved school it had positive experiences at school. But now there is more awareness about privilege, identity, race, language, and culture. This talk is followed up with the lack of action. And shouldn't we hold all educators to be accountable for any disparities in student achievement, student teacher relationships and quality interaction.

Educators must do the self work first, examining their position, beliefs, biases, assumptions, and how they've been socialized in ways that have created their perceptions. I identify this as a "first step" in educating others about SEL and CRST but in reality this is where the magic happens but it's an "ongoing step". Educators must continually reflect, constantly challenging their actions and reactions, and make this a part of their practice as educators.

The shared understanding of educators and parents defining SEL as teaching our children how to manage emotions is a starting place to begin the foundational blocks of a solid SEL and CRST framework. However, parents also consider the interactions their child experience at school to be of major importance while educators perceive teaching to the whole child to be just as vital. Explicitly articulating that teaching the whole child encompasses teaching how to interact with each other could be a next step. Educators will want to look at what practices or actions reflect “teaching the whole child” and how one becomes aware of the importance of modeling positive adult to child interactions (Pianta, 2009) as well as teaching about positive interactions among peers.

Parents overwhelming mentioned the notion of social acceptance specifically, that SEL was about teaching children how to behave and act in certain ways that are socially acceptable but educators rarely mentioned it. Educators of Rosetree should be aware that this is on the mind of many parents. Many stereotypes are socially acceptable forms of prejudice. Rosetree School district may want to explore how parents define social acceptance and their expectations regarding it. This may be an opportunity to challenge some stereotypes and replace them with more realistic views.

As educators reflected on culturally responsive teaching and sustaining practices, they shared practices that mainly centered around celebrations. Some shared that when holidays come up they considered it a socially acceptable opportunity to discuss culture and traditions. This implies that there is discomfort in addressing culture which means there is a discomfort in accepting the whole child, which leads to student-teacher relationship that lacks depth. The educators of Rosetree District would benefit from understanding the importance of becoming a culturally responsive educator. Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) offers a framework on how

to interact positively with people from diverse groups, whether based on ethnicity, race, culture, class, sexual orientation, gender, or other social groups..CRT uses the cultural knowledge and experiences to make learning more appropriate and effective (Gay, 2010).

A culturally responsive educator (Gay, 2010) can identify their own biases and recognize their impacts, identify how biases and deficit narratives manifest in disciplinary practices, create an inclusive environment that leverages the strengths of students' cultures, languages, experiences, families, and communities and deliver effective learning experiences about race, class, gender, culture, etc. Every school district in the nation should want this of their educators.

The biggest part of teaching children is building relationships. You can't truly build relationships and connections with people if you don't know who they are. And it doesn't build an authentic connection. When we don't have genuine connections, it can hinder learning. The only way to embrace perspectives is through the relationship-building process.

### **Implications for Practice**

One of the important findings is regarding the topic of culturally responsive and sustaining teaching (CRST) within an affluent district. Affluent districts with high test scores may perceive themselves to be protected from the need to address culture head on. The majority of research regarding culturally responsive and sustaining teaching is in low-income, urban communities, isolating upper middle income communities and perpetuating the assumption that CRST does not apply to them.

Professional development on culturally responsive and sustaining teaching that is ongoing, meaningful and intensive could prove to be the much needed common denominator to begin building a solid foundation for equity and a practical means of supporting the relationships among our educators and students. When educators understand and embrace their

own culture and the various ways of socialization, one can't help but find limitations to one's own perspectives which can negatively impact the student-teacher relationship. Support in structuring a culturally responsive and sustaining classroom could have an overwhelmingly positive impact on all students and improve the teachers' ability to reach culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) populations.

We need to provide educators with different practices and a set of questions they can use to challenge their assumptions and misconceptions about children. The number of CLD students enrolled in the United States education system has been on a steady incline, yet, teachers feel unprepared and unable to successfully reach culturally and linguistically diverse populations (Marbley, Bonner, McKisick, Henfield & Watts, 2007; Richards, 2011). The focus can not be solely on the beliefs held by educators but to invest in investigating what behaviors are needed to make a change in the learning environment. What educators do to improve relationships with students which will positively impact academic outcomes.

We all have biases, whether silent or overt. Educators need safe spaces, brave spaces to have dialogue about biases. Biases and assumptions exist in affluent districts and perhaps with it, more power to willfully ignore topics that could bring discomfort to educators and parents. However, the true and authentic adults who are needed to help prepare our young students for a world full of differences, requires them to feel the discomfort in order to teach about it. Implicit bias, social justice, and cultural responsiveness are not a part of the central focus piece in most school districts but should be.

As educators, the struggle is to address the head and heart. The head requires us to raise awareness and the ability to be static in practice. The heart allows individuals the opportunity to

reflect grow in safe spaces. Affluence should not prevent educators from doing the self work regarding culturally responsive in sustaining teaching.

Educators and parents of Rosetree District are enveloped in an affluent district with access to resources and yet parent perceptions regarding confidence in their own ability to support SEL to their own child and that taking care of their own students' SE needs is low. School districts could consider way in which to inform and educate parents about SEL but also support their lack of confidence. Educators need time to build their skills and knowledge of SEL. CASEL (2018) recommends communicating with families and educators and inviting them to participate in SEL partnerships, organizing opportunities for families and educators to come together and discuss SEL topics. These school practices could lead to suggesting SEL strategies to use at home that are also used a school, resulting in strengthening partnerships between school and home.

Parent involvement and the building of school and home partnerships have proven beneficial to children's development and learning. Knowing and understanding one's own culture and cultures other than one's own enable teachers to create an inclusive environment that welcomes everyone and lays the groundwork for strong partnerships among families and schools. Districts are responsible for preparing educators to work with all children and their families. This preparation includes both factual knowledge as well as strategies for applying cultural competencies to a culturally relevant and responsive teaching practice.

### **Implications for Social Justice**

Authentic and caring relationships can not be established if issues of social justice that directly impact children's lives are not engaged (Ladson Billings, 2014). While the practice of social-emotional learning and culturally responsive and sustaining teaching are growing trends,

an issue within those fields is its individualist focus. Individual relationships are important, however, the whole as a community is what needs just as much focus. As diversity is steadily increasing in our classrooms, educators must understand the importance of getting to know students, their home and how they learn best.

In the multicultural environments of typical American schools, teachers and educators are challenged by strong “collectivist” approaches used by many people of color in the U.S., however schools offer more of “individualistic” styles of teaching. Addressing the differences in the societies’ embedded moral and cultural values, families and educators fight to establish the optimal common ground necessary for a better learning experience. It is becoming obvious that a balancing strategy is needed in order to create the best learning environments for students.

In the process of schooling, parents, teachers, administrators and students all need to acquire a basic knowledge of SEL and CRST in order to generate common understanding, agreed upon outcomes, developed action steps, and determine the resources needed to get there. By having parent-educator discourse in the early stages of learning, they will be well positioned to build bridges between home and school and in essence build a common language for equity within schools. It is critical to build capacity for this work.

In order to begin to close the opportunity and achievement gaps that many of our students come to school with, we must connect by embracing culture and language. Whether caused by poverty or other factors that educators can’t control, what can be controlled is what is happening in classrooms. When an educator tells the student that who they are and what they bring is relevant and important and that those skills are going to be used to create the best learning environment in that classroom, that’s a way to create equitable systems where everyone thrives.

Giving every child and opportunity to feel like the school experience is one that is positive, memorable, and full of opportunities must be a priority.

Culturally responsive in sustaining teaching is about getting to know kids, and their pluralism. Celebrating those things that students bring, Sharing it with other kids so they can learn and then you using that to build new knowledge is social justice. Educators have to know enough to bring that into the classroom. Which means educators must do enough of the work understand the communities that they teach so that they can build connections, and leverage student voices as resources in classrooms, making schools and curriculum stronger and more diverse.

### **Implications for Further Research**

One important implication is that more research is needed on CRST and SEL in high achieving and affluent communities. CRST needs to be normalized as essential to all young children, not a “fix” for “at-risk” communities. By keeping the discussion of CRST within low-income/urban communities we are contributing to a deficit perspective around CRST. This discussion needs to be expanded and inclusive of all schools, affluent, low income and everything inbetween. CRST and SEL go hand in hand in service of authentically connecting and engaging with all students and therefore no district or school is immune to having these ongoing courageous conversations becoming a part of a schools’ culture. To truly transform education, researchers need to look within communities that have historically reinforced the status quo and may be most resistant to self-reflection. This current study should be replicated using other affluent schools with the wider range of participants to co-construct our present state in terms of CRST in order to gather information on next steps for these districts in particular.

Further research in teasing apart how educators perceive behavior and misbehavior is an important component of SEL and CRST. In many schools, there still exist a traditional school of thought that the teacher is the one that holds the power in the classroom and compliance is associated with student engagement. Naming the identifying how teachers assess behavior and distinguishing it from an assumed mindset on the role of the teacher. If educators exercised the metacognitive approach to their behavioral approach in the classroom it may have a significant impact on the successful implementation of SEL and CRST.

Another area for future research would benefit from broadening the scope of this study to a wider range of participants. The small and limited sample size may have led to a significant decrease in reliability and the ability for the study to represent the larger population. The participants were more homogeneous than they would have been if the sample had been taken from varying schools, districts, grade levels, and communities.

Leadership matters. Further research would benefit from narrowing the focus to solely school leaders of school sites and exploring their perceptions culturally responsive teaching. Surely, if teachers should adjust their craft in ways that respond effectively to children's cultural learning and social needs in the classroom, as Gay (2011) suggested, then school administrators must have a similar mandate regarding the entire school culture and climate (Khalifa, et.al 2016).

If academic achievement is linked to the social development in students, this in turn encourages the positive connections to the school. However the prerequisite to this is fostering positive interaction between parents and school staff, a task for which most staff people are not trained (Comer, 1988). Perhaps digging deeper into the ways in which positive interactions of school and home are nurtured. What are ways affluent district engage families as compared to districts of lower income.



Last but not least, the notion of the significance of caring and how it shows up in classroom and schools. Future research might examine the role of supportive relationships in caring particularly between the student and teacher. Often, “care” and “support” are assumed terms that educators believe they are exercising and conveying to their students. As this study illustrates students perceive more care from peers than adults. Extending that perception to adults may have a positive impact on SEL and CRST.

### **Implications for Educational Policy**

As SEL and CRST initiatives become more extensive, educators are seeking systemic ways to implement these constructs to meet specific goals or needs of their school or district, determine what outcomes they are expecting, establish the action steps necessary to accomplish the outcomes, ascertain the resources required of the action steps and align goals and understandings with families. This is a tall order coupled with the expectation for schools to reform their policies and practices to better align with evidence-based practices. CRST and SEL are still in its early stages of building a pool of “evidence-based” practices.

Although there is increasing awareness that culturally responsive teaching strategies improve classroom culture, student-teacher relationships, student engagement, and academic outcomes, these experiences have not yet been documented, published, or shared. And again, for these experiences to be shared, a safe space must be created in which to share. It’s unlikely that districts currently implementing CRST and SEL interventions have the capacity or know-how to engage in rigorous evaluation of their own programs and practices. To support this deficit, among states’ priorities should be to foster partnerships with researchers and university professors to invest in training so that school and district staff can conduct their own evaluations

of CRST and SEL interventions. Doing so could prove critical to increasing our understanding of what interventions work, for whom they work, and under which conditions they work.

It is critical that educators participate in reforming the educational system so that it becomes inclusive. Educators are in a decisive position to facilitate change as they are the direct link between the school and the students. By continuing with the expectation to conform, teachers perpetuate a monocultural institution that ignores the identities of many students. By questioning traditional policies and practices, and by becoming culturally responsive in instruction, teachers can work towards changing schools (Ladson-Billings, 2001).

### **Conclusion of the Study**

Educating the whole child sounds beautiful. However that is not the reality as an educator. Students have experiences that we are not celebrating, embracing, validating, uplifting, we are not highlighting the language and culture, and identifying these amazing assets to enrich the teaching and learning happening in the classroom. Culture is a part of someone's identity and if we don't see that, then what do we see? We are negating important components of the whole child.

Preparing students for life success requires a broad, balanced education that both ensures their mastery of basic academic skills and also prepares them to become responsible adults (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2007). It is important for families, schools, and communities to identify and act upon research-based approaches that promote children's social, emotional, cultural, academic engagement and growth in the early years of school. It is my hope that this study serves as a contribution to educational research that assists in developing teaching and learning practices that include CRST and SEL, which may

increase the intellectual and social successes of all students and staff including those who are reside in affluent school districts.

This study should shed light on different perspectives and narratives from the participating educators, parents, and students in an effort to broaden the awareness of CRST and SEL knowledge, skills and practices that can help ensure schools in the US provide and humanize education for all and design to support the interest of learners from all social backgrounds including those children who participated in this dissertation study. But we can't humanize education authentically without hearing and responding to the very notions that reveal what is necessary for every child to succeed socially, emotionally, and culturally.

## **Chapter 7: Guide for Educators Understanding the Intersection of CRST and SEL**

### *Three Pathways To Becoming A More Responsive Educator*

The purpose of this chapter is to be a guide for educators in creating the most optimal learning environments for students by taking a proactive approach to creating positive interactions for and among students and educators. In service of offering students the best possible learning experience, this is my contribution to the field, this chapter as a “mini-professional development” for educators. First, let’s begin with the two acronyms, CRST and SEL.

CRST is short for Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Teaching. Teaching practices that are responsive to and assist with sustaining cultural and linguistic heritage are essential to creating an environment where all students can learn. The effectiveness of these practices is predicated on social-emotional learning (SEL), and in particular positive relationships between teachers, students, and the learning community. The Aspen Institute (2018) recommends, “Rather than being pursued as two separate bodies of work, the field needs to identify ways in which equity and social, emotional, and academic development can be mutually reinforcing” (p. 1). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2018) defines Social Emotional Learning (SEL), . . . as the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions.

How do we create schools that inspire young people so they are prepared for the future? By ensuring that practices in schools are responsive to the needs of students. There are three key pathways that educators can endorse and enact today to begin addressing the needs that lie at the intersection of CRST and SEL.

## **#1: Do the Self Work**

In addition to all the gaps in education that exist such as achievement gaps, funding gaps, school-readiness gaps. There is another gap that often goes unexamined which is the cultural gap between students and teachers. The biggest part of teaching children is building relationships. Teachers can't truly build relationships and connections with others if they don't know who they are. If the thoughts of exploring other cultures makes teaching uncomfortable then that is an indicator of work that must be done.

Self work is where educators need to start. Examining their own identities and the ways they've been socialized to view other people is crucial. Being an effective, successful teacher does not mean you never make mistakes or that you are free of fear. It just means that you have the courage to reflect and learn from those mistakes and explore the fear. This is why is imperative that educators create safe spaces not only for students but for themselves to learn and question and be vulnerable on this path. Educators must question their motives and practices so that they can become the most effective teachers for students.

How we've been socialized impacts how we view talent. Educators must examine the assumptions and misconceptions that they hold and continually check oneself and to be conscious of not holding those biases against people because of their experiences or their backgrounds. To truly engage students, educators must reach out to them in ways that are culturally and linguistically responsive and appropriate, and they must examine the cultural assumptions and stereotypes that are brought into the classroom that could hinder interconnectedness.

An understanding of "Equality vs. Equity" is needed as many times these terms are used interchangeably. There has been much intentional focus on the difference between equity and

equality. It’s important for educators to make the distinction that equality means treating every student the same, while equity means making sure every student has the support they need to be successful. In this work in education, these discussions about equity begin with these conversations about implicit bias. Assumptions and misconceptions must be scrutinized, teased apart, put back together, and dismantled when it no longer holds the truth that it was perceived to once hold. Doing this work with a mentor or like-minded partner is beneficial.

It’s also important to think about how the culture of the educators impact teaching practices. This reflection can help develop the mindsets that strengthens relationships with all students, including those from different backgrounds than your own.

Questions to ask Yourself	Actions I Can Take
How am I being intentional in seeking out supplemental materials and resources that provide a well-rounded view of history?	Make the commitment to be a reflective teacher
Am I giving my students frequent opportunities to share information about their lives, feelings and cultures?	Bring a diverse range of poetry, music, or other forms of expression into the classroom on a regular basis.
Am I allowing for different communication styles, patterns, and norms that my students may use?	Find a partner or mentor for shared discussion

## #2: Focus a Building a Strong Relationship

Educators can begin extending responsibility to students that allow them to “check” the educators or question them. They may use words that imply or outright say “we value students” but then often times educators engage in behaviors that may express the opposite. Educators must be aware of their body language for it has to be affirming and positive. If an educator declares that they value all students but all of the classroom library books are about white men or only the good kids get called on to share, or students only communicate through writing, then are

the behaviors supporting the valuing of all students? Here, teachers must reflect on how their words are aligned with their actions and pedagogies. The assumption is that the messages being communicated are the messages that students will hear with their ears or read with their eyes and that is not always the case. Behavior is of powerful form of communication.

Educators must build relationships with students rooted in trust and respect so that teachers are truly supporting the whole child or whole person. This means creating spaces where students feel seen and where children are able to be their authentic selves. Begin by honoring and validating the lived experiences of students. Valuing authenticity and the diverse ways students process and encode information and how they represent that learning within schools is critical.

Exercising humility by recognizing that your own ideas and opinions are only a part of the story and that other people may have access to pieces of the puzzle that you don't know about. Students need to feel both physically and emotionally safe to learn and that safety includes being free from the threat of stereotypes, harassment and exclusion. Safety is especially important when learning about issues of identity, power and justice. Many of these issues touch students at a personal level and leave them feeling simultaneously vulnerable and passionately invested. Creating a safe climate takes time and work on the part of both teachers and students.

The responsibility to act lies at the feet of the educators. To move at the pace of those resistant and uncomfortable is not an option. Educators must hold themselves accountable for understanding how to build relationships. The time spent unpacking the "how" is not enough. Educators must determine the measuring stick of when they've actually established a connection with someone.

Questions to ask Yourself	Actions I Can Take
How are my classroom behaviors, methodologies and pedagogies in line with the words I profess?	Have students share their own stories and experiences.
Are my words and intentions aligned with my actions?	Talk about your own stories and experiences. There is great power in the authentic, thoughtful sharing of personal anecdotes by teachers. Choose stories carefully, keep them relatively brief and communicate them at a level that invites appropriate student sharing.
What are some of the individual strengths my students have?	Help students cross social boundaries and create a more inclusive school/class community by meeting unfamiliar classmates over lunch or changing up the seating arrangement on a regular basis in the classroom
Do my students receive regular, authentic messages of affirmation from me?	Find out your students' interest sto help guide your instruction.
	Learn how to say students' names correctly.

### #3: Make Education Relevant

If you want students motivated to do the work, make the work relevant to their lives. Students want to make the connection of how information is connected to them. This is no different from adults and educators going into meetings and conferences and wondering how the information presented will be worthwhile and meaningful to them. And when it is not, it is quickly concluded that our valuable time has been wasted. Students are no different. What may be different is the mindset that we have as educators. Do we value the time of our students? Do we honor our students as learners? Or do we see ourselves as “the teacher”, “the one in charge” and the designer of the academic day and whether the lessons are relevant or not, the job of the student is to follow directions and pay attention.

Yes, the work is about reading, writing, listening and thinking but it is also about how to do these things in ways that promote student identity and magnify student voices. As society has



changed, the demands upon the people who construct that society has changed in information travels quickl. Educators and students need to know how to question, how to critique, how to synthesize, and construct knowledge byconnecting and looking at the genealogy of ideas.

Educators must center student voice and have a full and thorough understanding thatv this idea of “understanding” is relative. An understanding that I have is colored by my own experience. Students also have an understanding that is colored by their experiences. Multiple and competing understandings or ways of knowing can coexist in the classroom. But often we think about knowing any singular way so that this thing that the teacher brings to the classroom is the only form of knowing that we value. When educators do that they erase the various knowledges that students bring with them.

How do educators link the content to students reality? For reality is a relative term. The assumption is that reality isn't one thing. When seeking to connect teaching and learning to students, educators have to listen and investigate. It's about always listening as a form of data collection. Where we invest our time tells everything about what we value.

<b>Questions to ask Yourself</b>	<b>Actions I Can Take</b>
Why is this important?	Creating a classroom structural design that reflects a layout that supports the way students perform best
How can I articulate to my students why they should care about this?	Arrangement of furniture and supplies that supports collaboration, fosters dialogue and encourages student ownership and comfort
How does this lesson or content connect to the real-world?	Inclusions of multicultural images in the classroom should be as natural as any other image posted
Am I addressing the head (content, knowledge, skills) and the heart (why it matters, why should they care, how it connects to real-life) with this lesson?	Design research projects that allow students to focus on issues in their own community.
	Encourage students to present their work publicly. For instance, they could present to classmates, families, community members, or on social media.

CRST supports SEL and SEL support CRST. CRST helps you get to know your students. When you plan social-emotional learning lessons, educators can use that knowledge to make sure lessons value students. By pairing SEL with CRT, educators can help students navigate multiple contexts both inside and outside of school. It's really important that students see themselves in all aspects of their schooling and feel valued and respected. To foster this understanding of others, students will grow up, able to work with all different kinds of people and live in a world where they have built alliances across differences.

## Epilogue

As I come to the end of my dissertation writing journey, I end in the Land of Quarantine due to Covid-pandemic outbreak. March 13, 2020 our schools closed and we said good bye to our students not knowing that may have been our last goodbye of the year. Since that date districts around the country have propped up a Distance Learning approach that has revealed more questions than answers to what learning and teaching means. Students are having to be autonomous and in charge of their own learning. Students are problem solving and making decisions about their learning tasks. They are now responsible for their learning and parents are, in many cases, following their lead. The idea of learning is at pivtol moment in time to re-examined, redefined, unlearned.

As I consider SEL and CRST, it is needed more than ever as families and students embark upon their own versions of trauma that school closure, social distancing and isolation have caused. The ramifications of what is happening at this current time, will have lasting effects on the well-being of our students. The need to put sound systems of SEL and CRST in place is a necessity. I ask the question, who owns the learning but also how do we afford all students access? How do we support the social, academic, and intervention learning of our students? How do we support families so they can support the learning? How do we provide ongoing PD and support to our educators? Do we need to redefine teaching and learning? How do educators connect with students in authentic ways? And what point does the role of technology become a hindrance? Each day the list of questions grows. But also my hope grows for the potential silver lining that this pandemic may leave us with. The hope that we can take this moment to reimagine and redefine what school, teaching, and learning can be for our students.

## **Appendix A: Educator Invitation**

### **UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO Invitation to Participate in Study**

Dear SBSB Teachers,

I am currently a doctoral student at UCSD. For my dissertation project, I am interested in understanding more about social emotional learning (SEL) and culturally responsive teaching (CRT) in PreK-3rd grade. I believe this will help educators in their work with children and families.

I am inviting you to participate in this research study because I believe your experiences can be of great help in this work. This packet includes consent forms and a SEL/CRT survey that teachers are invited to complete. The information gathered will remain confidential. This survey will take about 5-10 minutes to complete. Please return the consent documents and survey within one week from today's date.

I will be carrying out this study as a researcher from the University of California, San Diego. This research has no connection at all to your school or the Solana Beach School District. Your decision to participate in this study has no bearing on your employment status.

All responses will be kept completely confidential. I will never use your name, your students' or their parents' names, the name of your school, or the school district in any publication or presentation. I will safeguard any risk of loss of confidentiality by using pseudonyms for all research participants as well as the names of the district and all schools. All data will be stored on a password-protected computer in an encrypted and password-protected folder accessible only to me.

Since this is an investigational study there may be some unknown risks that are currently unforeseeable. You will be informed of any significant new findings.

If you have any questions at all regarding this project, or the survey, please call me at 760-529-1111 or email me at [sejara@ucsd.edu](mailto:sejara@ucsd.edu) and I will be happy to clarify.

Thank you very much,  
Shawntanet Jara

## **Appendix B: Parent Invitation**

### **UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO Invitation to Participate in Study**

Dear SBSB Parents,

Hello, my name is Shawntanet Jara. I am currently a doctoral student at UCSD. For my dissertation project, I am interested in understanding more about social emotional learning (SEL) and culturally responsive teaching (CRT) in PreK-3rd grade. I believe this will help educators in their work with children and families.

I am inviting you to participate in this research study because I believe your experiences can be of great help in this work. This packet includes consent forms and a SEL/CRT survey that teachers are invited to complete. The information gathered will remain confidential. This survey will take about 5-10 minutes to complete. Please return the consent documents and survey within one week from today's date.

I will be carrying out this study as a researcher from the University of California, San Diego. This research has no connection at all to your school or the Solana Beach School District. Your decision to participate in this study has no bearing on your employment status.

All responses will be kept completely confidential. I will never use your name, your students' or their parents' names, the name of your school, or the school district in any publication or presentation. I will safeguard any risk of loss of confidentiality by using pseudonyms for all research participants as well as the names of the district and all schools. All data will be stored on a password-protected computer in an encrypted and password-protected folder accessible only to me.

Since this is an investigational study there may be some unknown risks that are currently unforeseeable. You will be informed of any significant new findings.

If you have any questions at all regarding this project, or the survey, please call me at 760-529-1111 or email me at [sejara@ucsd.edu](mailto:sejara@ucsd.edu) and I will be happy to clarify.

Thank you very much,  
Shawntanet Jara

## **Appendix C: Educator Consent (online survey)**

You are being invited to participate in a research study titled **Social Emotional Learning Practices & Beliefs of Educators in a PreK-3 School Community & Its Impact on Student Experiences & Culturally Responsive Teaching**. This study is being done by Shawntanet Jara from the University of California - San Diego (UCSD). You were selected to participate in this study because you are a PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> grade educator in the Solana Beach School District. There will be 50-100 parent participants and 15-26 educators in the survey (phase 1) of this study. This survey will ask about social emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching and it will take you approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.

The purpose of this research study is to find out more about social emotional learning (SEL) and culturally responsive teaching (CRT) within PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> grade. The field of social emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching is rapidly expanding. The information gained from this study will provide an important glimpse at the beliefs and practices of educators and parents in relation to social emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey and indicate on the last sentence if you are willing to participate in a future interview regarding the same topics.

If you agree, and are selected, you will participate in a face-to-face interview (phase 2) lasting approximately 20-30 minutes. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. If you wish, you will be able to view and assess the accuracy of the interview transcription. The overall duration of your involvement with this study will end upon completion of the interview in March-April of 2019.

Participation in this study may involve minimal risks or discomforts. These include:

1. A potential for feeling discomfort, stress, boredom, or fatigue when participating in the survey or during interviews. No questions are mandatory and you are free to skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering.
  
2. A potential for the loss of confidentiality. Shawntanet will make every effort to ensure that all of your answers will remain completely confidential. All data will be stored on a password-protected computer in an encrypted and password-protected folder. Audio recordings of interviews will be stored on a password-protected computer. Shawntanet will remove all identifying information from transcripts and other documentation of your participation in this study. Shawntanet will assign pseudonyms to all participants and will keep the pseudonym key in a password-protected file. Shawntanet will never use your name or any other identifying information, or the name of the Solana Beach School District in any publication or presentation. Shawntanet will safeguard against any risk of loss of confidentiality by using pseudonyms for all research participants as well as the names of your students, their parents and your schools. All digital records will be stored in a password-protected computer account accessible only to Shawntanet Jara. All paper documents

will be locked in a file cabinet. Research records will be kept confidential. Research records will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and may be reviewed by the UCSD Institutional Review Board.

3. A potential to feel uncomfortable while answering interview questions. At any time, you may decline to answer an interview question or you may direct Shawntanet to delete a portion or the entire recording of the interview in progress. Furthermore, you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time during the duration of this study, at which time all recordings would be erased and all records of your participation would be destroyed.

The alternative to participation in this study is simply not to participate. Your job and position within the Solana Beach School District would not be affected in any way by your decision to either participate or not participate in this study.

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. Shawntanet Jara, however, may learn more about how schools and families perceive social emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching.

Participation in research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate, withdraw, or refuse to answer specific questions in an interview or on a survey at any time without penalty. If you decide that you no longer wish to continue in this study, please inform Shawntanet Jara and she will delete any evidence of your participation in this research project. You may also be withdrawn from the study without your consent if at any time, based on subjective assessment, Shawntanet Jara determines that it is in your best interest to do so. You will be told if any important new information is found during the course of this study that may affect your desire to continue.

In compensation for your time, you will receive a \$10 gift card for participating in the interview.

There will be no cost to you for participating in this study.

If you have questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact the researcher, Shawntanet Jara at 760-529-1111 or by email at [sejara@ucsd.edu](mailto:sejara@ucsd.edu). If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact the UCSD Human Research Protections Program Office at 858-246-HRPP (858-246-4777).

This page is a record of your consent document.

By clicking “You agree” below you are indicating that you are at least 18 years old, have read this consent form, and agree to participate in this research study. Please print a copy of this page for your records.

You  
Agree

You Do  
Not Agree

## **Appendix D: Parent Consent (online survey)**

You are being invited to participate in a research study titled **Social Emotional Learning Practices & Beliefs of Educators in a PreK-3 School Community & Its Impact on Student Experiences & Culturally Responsive Teaching**. This study is being done by Shawntanet Jara from the University of California - San Diego (UCSD). You were selected to participate in this study because you are the parent of a PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> student in the Solana Beach School District. There will be 50-100 parent participants and 15-26 educators in the survey (phase 1) of this study. This survey will ask about social emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching and it will take you approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.

The purpose of this research study is to find out more about social emotional learning (SEL) and culturally responsive teaching (CRT) within PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> grade. The field of social emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching is rapidly expanding. The information gained from this study will provide an important glimpse at the beliefs and practices of educators and parents in relation to social emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey and indicate on the last sentence if you are willing to participate in a future interview regarding the same topics.

If you agree, and are selected, you will participate in a face-to-face interview (phase 2) lasting approximately 20-30 minutes. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. If you wish, you will be able to view and assess the accuracy of the interview transcription. The overall duration of your involvement with this study will end upon completion of the interview in March-April of 2019.

Participation in this study may involve minimal risks or discomforts. These include:

1. A potential for feeling discomfort, stress, boredom, or fatigue when participating in the survey or during interviews. No questions are mandatory and you are free to skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering.
  
2. A potential for the loss of confidentiality. Shawntanet will make every effort to ensure that all of your answers will remain completely confidential. All data will be stored on a password-protected computer in an encrypted and password-protected folder. Audio recordings of interviews will be stored on a password-protected computer. Shawntanet will remove all identifying information from transcripts and other documentation of your participation in this study. Shawntanet will assign pseudonyms to all participants and will keep the pseudonym key in a password-protected file. Shawntanet will never use your name or any other identifying information, or the name of the Solana Beach School District in any publication or presentation. Shawntanet will safeguard against any risk of loss of confidentiality by using pseudonyms for all research participants as well as the names of your students, their parents and your schools. All digital records will be stored in a password-protected computer account accessible only to Shawntanet Jara. All paper documents



will be locked in a file cabinet. Research records will be kept confidential. Research records will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and may be reviewed by the UCSD Institutional Review Board.

3. A potential to feel uncomfortable while answering interview questions. At any time, you may decline to answer an interview question or you may direct Shawntanet to delete a portion or the entire recording of the interview in progress. Furthermore, you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time during the duration of this study, at which time all recordings would be erased and all records of your participation would be destroyed.

The alternative to participation in this study is simply not to participate. Your job and position within the Solana Beach School District would not be affected in any way by your decision to either participate or not participate in this study.

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. Shawntanet Jara, however, may learn more about how schools and families perceive social emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching.

Participation in research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate, withdraw, or refuse to answer specific questions in an interview or on a survey at any time without penalty. If you decide that you no longer wish to continue in this study, please inform Shawntanet Jara and she will delete any evidence of your participation in this research project. You may also be withdrawn from the study without your consent if at any time, based on subjective assessment, Shawntanet Jara determines that it is in your best interest to do so. You will be told if any important new information is found during the course of this study that may affect your desire to continue.

In compensation for your time, you will receive a \$10 gift card for participating in the interview.

There will be no cost to you for participating in this study.

If you have questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact the researcher, Shawntanet Jara at 760-529-1111 or by email at [sejara@ucsd.edu](mailto:sejara@ucsd.edu). If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact the UCSD Human Research Protections Program Office at 858-246-HRPP (858-246-4777).

This page is a record of your consent document.

By clicking “You agree” below you are indicating that you are at least 18 years old, have read this consent form, and agree to participate in this research study. Please print a copy of this page for your records.

You  
Agree

You Do  
Not Agree

### Appendix E: Educator Survey

Thank you for participating in this survey. The information gathered will remain confidential. The survey will ask a variety of questions about social emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching. There is a wide range of responses with no right or wrong answers. The survey will take about 5-10 minutes to complete. For each portion below, please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 approximately how often this notion is perceived by you:

<b>Social Emotional Learning</b> 5=Extremely	1= Not at all	2=Slightly	3=Somewhat	4=Quite
1. On most days, how enthusiastic are the students about being at school?				
1. How confident are you in identifying whether a student is socially and emotionally competent / incompetent?				
2. How supportive are students in their interactions with each other?				
3. How respectful are the relationships between teachers and students?				
4. How often do you see students helping each other without being prompted?				
5. How important are social emotional competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management and responsible decision-making for our students?				
6. How difficult is it to infuse SEL into your lessons/day?				
7. Overall, how positive is the working environment at your school?				
<b>Educator-Family Relationships</b> 5=Extremely	1= Not at all	2=Slightly	3=Somewhat	4=Quite
8. When you face challenges with particular students,				

how supportive are the families?					
9. At your school, how respectful are the parents towards you?					
10. How challenging is it to communicate with the families of your students?					
<b>Familiarity with Social and Emotional Learning</b>					
5=Extremely 1= Not at all 2=Slightly 3=Somewhat 4=Quite					
11. How important do you feel social emotional learning is to student achievement?					
12. How important do you feel it is for teachers to possess social emotional skills?					
<b>School Conditions and Context</b>					
5=Extremely 1= Not at all 2=Slightly 3=Somewhat 4=Quite					
13. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement about your school: <i>Students are engaged and motivated</i>					
14. How would you describe the amount of attention given to your students' social and emotional learning as compared with the development of academic skills and content knowledge?					
<b>Preparation and Training</b>					
5=Extremely 1= Not at all 2=Slightly 3=Somewhat 4=Quite					
15. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: <i>My training adequately prepared me to address students' social and emotional learning</i>					
<b>Culturally Responsive Teaching</b>					
5=Extremely 1= Not at all 2=Slightly 3=Somewhat 4=Quite					
16. I examine class materials for culturally appropriate images and themes					

17. I ask students to compare their culture with American culture					
18. I learn words in my students' native languages					
19. I use mixed-language and mixed-cultural pairings in group work					
20. I elicit students' experiences in pre-reading and pre-listening activities.					
21. I spend time outside of class learning about the cultures and languages of my students.					
22. I supplement the curriculum with lessons about international events					
23. I ask for student input when planning lessons and activities.					
24. I am knowledgeable of the various cultures represented by the students in my classroom.					
25. I recognize and consider my own cultural influences and how they affect the way I communicate, my expectations and how I teach.					

May I contact you with follow up questions? Participants selected for an interview will receive a **\$10.00 gift card** for their time. If you are interested, please enter your name and contact information below.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone # or email: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you!

### Appendix F: Parent Survey

Thank you for participating in this survey. The information gathered will remain confidential. The survey will ask a variety of questions about social emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching. There is a wide range of responses with no right or wrong answers. The survey will take about 5-10 minutes to complete. For each portion below, please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 approximately how often this notion is perceived by you:

<b>Social Emotional Learning</b>	1= Not at all	2=Slightly	3=Somewhat	4=Quite	5=Extremely
1. At school, my child's social emotional needs are being met?					
2. How positive are the attitudes of the school staff?					
3. How supportive are teachers in their interactions with students?					
4. How respectful are the relationships between teachers and students?					
5. How often do you see students helping each other without being prompted?					
6. To what extent do you feel you are a partner with your child's <i>teacher</i> ?					
7. To what extent do you feel you are a partner with your child's <i>school</i> ?					
8. Overall, how positive is the environment at your school?					
9. When you face challenges with your child, how supportive is the school?					
10. How challenging is it to communicate with the teacher of your student?					

11. How important do you feel social emotional learning is to student achievement?					
12. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement about your child: <i>My student is engaged and motivated</i>					
13. How would you describe the amount of attention given to your students' social and emotional learning as compared with the development of academic skills and content knowledge?					
<b>Culturally Responsive Teaching</b> 1= Not at all    2=Slightly    3=Somewhat    4=Quite 5=Extremely <i><b>At our school we:</b></i>					
14. have clear expectations in our charter for celebration of diversity, stating the right of all children to feel culturally safe.					
15. recognize that diversity within individual students is influenced by gender, cultural heritage(s), socio-economic background, ability/disability and personality					
16. see the importance of building a school curriculum that is culturally relevant for all students, acknowledging different knowledge, languages, and world values					
17. recognize and respect the cultural protocols of our					

students and their families					
18. provide opportunities for students to use their cultural knowledge in the classroom					
19. use multi-cultural materials with inclusive content					
20. celebrate and participate in events that are important to the cultural communities of our school.					
21. continually strive to improve our knowledge and understanding of the languages, cultures, and identities of students who come to our school					
22. have a physical environment that reflects the cultures of all students and the cultures of our wider community and country					
23. provide opportunities for parents of different cultural origins to share their valued knowledge and expertise at the school as vital components of student learning					

May I contact you with follow up questions? Participants selected for an interview will receive a **\$10.00 gift card** for their time. If you are interested, please enter your name and contact information below.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone # or email: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you!

## Appendix G: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

### *Introduction:*

- Begin by thanking the educator for participating and purpose of the project. Explain that I am interested in what educators think about social emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching in a PreK-3 school community. Provide assurance that there is a wide range of possible responses with no right or wrong answers.
- Explain that the interview will be audio recorded for the purpose of transcribing; however their responses will remain confidential. Remind them that they may choose to not answer any question and that they can stop the interview at any time. Let them know the interview will take approximately 20-30 minutes.
- Review the consent forms and ask if they have any questions before beginning the interview.

### *Beliefs of Social Emotional Learning*

2. Why are social emotional competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management and responsible decision-making important for our students?
3. What are the indicators of a socially and emotionally competent / incompetent student? or How do you know that a student is socially-emotionally competent / incompetent?
4. How do you see your role in trying to infuse SEL into your lessons?
5. What difficulties do you face in trying to infuse SEL into your lessons?
6. What do you think are the benefits of infusing SEL into the curriculum?
7. What do you think can hinder the effective implementation of SEL in the curriculum?
8. What changes do you think are needed in the school system to enable a better implementation of SEL?
9. How do you think your school/district mission and values support the acquisition of SE competencies?
10. How would you describe the amount of attention given to your students' social and emotional learning as compared with the development of academic skills and content knowledge?

### *Beliefs of Culturally Responsive Teaching*

11. **What does this term mean to you?**
12. **How do you build trust and rapport with students?**
13. How do you recognize and value the cultures represented by the students in your classroom?



14. Can you identify an instance in your own teaching where you feel your cultural frame of reference interfered with the effectiveness of your instruction? Conversely, can you identify an instance in which you exhibited cultural responsiveness to your students that enhanced your instructional effectiveness?

15. What factors are influencing your students' growth mindset?

***Wrap-up***

**16. Is there anything else you would like to add about SEL or CRT that we haven't discussed?**

**Thank you for your time!**

**Appendix H: Audio Recording Release Consent Form**

**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO  
Audio Recording Release Consent Form**

As part of this project, an audio recording will be made of you during your participation in face-to-face interviews or focus groups.. Please indicate below by writing your initials next to the uses of these audio recordings to which you are willing to consent. This is completely voluntary and up to you. In any use of the audio recording, your name will not be identified. You may request to stop the recording at any time or to erase any portion of your recording.

- 1. The audio recording may be studied by the researcher for use in the research project. \_\_\_\_\_  
initials
- 2. The audio recording may be used for scientific publications. \_\_\_\_\_  
initials
- 3. The audio recording may be reviewed in presentations to fellow researchers interested in the study of *Social Emotional Learning and Culturally Responsive Teaching*. \_\_\_\_\_  
initials

You have the right to request that the recording be stopped or erased in full or in part at any time.

Please sign to confirm that you have read the above description and give your consent for the use of audio recording as indicated above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness Date

160372

**Appendix I**  
**INFORMATION SHEET & PARENT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

Dear Parent or Guardian,

My name is Shawntanet Jara, and I am a doctoral researcher at California State University San Marcos and UC San Diego. I am also the principal at Solana Highlands Elementary School and have taught in the Solana Beach School District since 2005. I am passionate about helping students feel heard and understood in their school. I am conducting a research study on understanding social emotional learning (SEL) and culturally responsive teaching (CRT) in PreK-3rd grade, and I would like to invite your child to participate in this research. This research study is conducted under the supervision of Dr. Alison Wishard Guerra, Professor UCSD Education Studies, with the approval of Solana Beach School District. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information that will help you decide if you will give consent for your child to participate in this research. You are receiving this invitation because you are the parent of a PreK-3rd grade student and your child's teacher has also agreed to participate.

**Key Information About This Research Study**

The following is a short summary of this study to help you decide whether you want your child to be a part of this study. Information that is more detailed is listed later on in this form. The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of school college cultures on students' perceptions of and aspirations toward higher education. Your child will be asked to complete a questionnaire and potentially be one of student representatives from each third, fourth, and fifth grade class to participate in a focus group discussion around future aspirations and college perceptions. We expect that your child will be in this research study for 10-15 minutes during the questionnaire, and approximately 30 minutes if selected to participate in the focus group. There are minimal risks of participation. The main benefit is the study may contribute to knowledge about college-going elementary school cultures.

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:**

The purpose of this study is to understand to what extent does social emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching effect the experience students have at school.

**PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:**

If you agree for your child to participate in the study, she or he will:

- Take a quick, 11-question survey called "My Feelings About School". It will take about 5 minutes to complete.
- b. Be part of a focus group with 3-5 other students, where they will answer some questions about their experiences. Each question will be voluntary, and students will not be forced to answer questions they do not wish to. The focus groups will be scheduled at the student's convenience in a confidential location and will last approximately 15-20 minutes.

**Risks and Safeguards to minimize risk:**

There are less than minimal risks attached to this study. This study will in no way affect their grade in their current classes, nor will any information be shared with their teachers. If, however, the study causes any emotional burden for the participant, they will be referred to Susanna

Romero-Reiss, who is the School Counselor at Solana Highlands Elementary and can be reached at sromoerreiss@sbsd.net. We will also take frequent breaks during interviews if your child feels tired, and he/she can stop participating at any time.

The surveys will be anonymous, and interview will be kept confidential. All names will be removed from the data and the essence of their experiences will be used for the study. All video and audio files will be kept in password protected computer that belongs to me. Finally, I will permanently delete all of the files upon completing the dissertation.

**Benefits**

There are some direct and indirect benefits for the participants and the school at large. Through the reflective focus group process, students can better understand themselves, their experiences, and use their suggestions to anonymously help improve the system. Additionally, this study will benefit Solana Highlands Elementary School and other schools as a whole. Through findings of this study, educators can learn about how to best connect with their students.

**Voluntary Participation and Contact Information**

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary; you or your child may choose to withdraw participation at any time. Your child may choose not to answer any question or participate in any part of the study. In order for him or her to participate, a parent or guardian must give written consent by signing this consent form.

This study has been approved by the University of San Diego’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child’s participation in this study, I’d be happy to discuss them further. Please contact the researcher, Shawntanet Jara at sejara@ucsd.edu or (760) 529-1111, or the researcher’s chair, Dr. Alison Wishard Guerra at awishard@ucsd.edu. Questions about your rights as a research participant should be directed to UCSD Human Research Protections Program Office at 858-246-HRPP (858-246-4777).

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

**Parent Consent**

\_\_\_\_\_ I give permission for my child to be audio recorded in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not give permission for my child to be audiotaped for this research study.

Student’s Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent’s Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix J: Student Focus Group Protocol and Script

### *Welcome participants and introduce yourself*

Begin the session by welcoming everyone and introducing yourself. Explain your role in the school community.

#### **Explain the Purpose of the Discussion**

SAY: “We are interested in learning how students feel when they are at school. We want to learn from you about how to make school the best experience for students. There are lots of different answers so there are right or wrong answers.

#### **Explain What You’re Going to Do and Ask Permission to Record**

SAY: “We’re [or I’m] going to ask you a few questions about how you feel about school. With your permission, we’d like to record our conversation. Everything you say will be treated confidentially. Remember, you may choose to not answer any question and we can stop the interview at any time. This will take 20-30 minutes. Is that OK? “Any questions before we get started?”

#### **Ask Participants to Introduce Themselves**

SAY: “Now, tell us a little something about you. Let’s go around the table [room/circle] and introduce ourselves – what is your first name?”

**Begin the Discussion Important:** Wait at least 15 seconds after asking a question to give students time to respond. Use the prompts only if no one speaks up or to get the discussion back on track.

1. How do you feel about school? Why?  
(prompt-use as needed) *Do you look forward to coming to school?*
2. What excites you most about school?
3. Are there things that make you sad or angry about school?
4. How would you describe the perfect school or classroom?
5. Are the adults at school helpful?
6. Who pays attention to you the most at school?  
(prompt-use as needed) *Who listens to you the most?*
7. If you are feeling sad or mad at school, who do you talk to?
8. How do the adults help you when you have big feelings?
9. Can you ask for help when needed?

10. How could the adults at school be more helpful?
11. Finish this sentence; "I am most happy when my teacher does \_\_\_\_"
12. Finish this sentence; "I am most happy when my teacher says \_\_\_\_"
13. Is there anything else you would like to add about your feelings or thoughts about school?
14. The last thing we have is a fun questionnaire, please fill it out and we can help you if needed.

Thank you for your time

## Appendix K: Assent Script

**Project Title:** Social Emotional Learning Practices & Beliefs in a PreK-3 School Community & Its Impact on Student Experiences & Culturally Responsive Teaching

**Principal Investigator:** Shawntanet Jara

Hi my name is Shawntanet Jara. I'm a principal and also a student. I go to school at California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) and the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). If you have any questions about what I am telling you, you can ask me at any time.

I want to learn more about how kids feel when they are at school and you are invited to participate. You are being asked to be in this because you are PreK- 3<sup>rd</sup> grade student. Your parents/people taking care of you say it is okay for you to be in this study. If you have questions for me or for your parents/people who care for you, you can ask them now or later.

If you agree to participate, you will be part of something called a Focus Group where I will meet with you and other kids from your grade to ask questions about your feelings about school.

Only kids in PreK, Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade will get to be part of the Focus Groups. Each group will get together for about 20-30 minutes during class time at your school. If you give me permission, I will record our conversation so I can type up what we talked about afterwards.

You do not have to be in this study. It is totally up to you. You can say yes now and still change your mind later. All you have to do is tell me. No one will be mad at you if you change your mind. You may ask me questions about the project at any time. If you decide to be in the focus group I will use a fake name for you so no one will be able to tell how you answered or what you said.

After all the focus groups, I will write a long paper about what I learned from you and your classmates. Please let me know if you want to be in the Focus Group

Do you understand what I am saying and are you willing to talk about your feelings about school?

End of verbal script.

To be completed by person obtaining verbal assent from the participant:

Child's/Participant's response:       Yes                                       No

Check which applies below:

The child/participant is capable of understanding the study

The child/participant is not capable of understanding the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Child's/Participant's Name (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (printed) and Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date











## Appendix L: Student Survey

### My Feelings About School




Please circle or tick the smiley face that shows how you feel about each question.

		Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
1	I enjoy school.				
2	My school work is interesting.				
3	I feel safe when I am at school.				
4	I learn a lot at school.				
5	The teachers and staff are friendly and helpful.				
6	Adults are interested in what I do and say.				
7	Adults take time to help me.				
8	Teachers and staff treat me fairly.				
9	People say my name correctly and ask for help if needed.				
10	Lessons are interesting and fun.				
11	I am trusted to do things on my own.				
12	There is an adult I can go to if I feel worried.				
13	I feel safe in the playground				

14	I ask when I don't understand something.				
15	I have lots of fun in school.				

What I like most about my school...

This school would be better if...

Thank you for sharing your opinions with us. 

## Appendix M: K-3 CLASS Observation Protocol

### Social Emotional Learning & Culturally Responsive Teaching

#### Protocol for Conducting a K-3 CLASS Observation:

1. Start at the beginning of the school day, arriving 5-10 minutes before the students enter the classroom to observe the initial greeting between teacher and children.
2. Plan to observe for at least 2 hours, ideally 3 hours
3. Follow the 30 minute observation cycle: 20 minutes Observe + 10 Minutes Record
4. Minimum of four cycles should be obtained

#### *During Observation Period*

- Watch the *who*, *what*, and *how* of everything that happens in the classroom, focusing on the lead teacher's instructional interactions and behaviors
- Use the Notes area to jot down notes during the 20 minute observation period
- Numerical Ratings are based on observers knowledge of the dimension definitions and written notes made during observation period.
- Observations are based on the overall experience of all children and are not focused on a single child or adult.

#### *Rules for What TO and What NOT to Observe*

- Observe all activities that take place *inside* the classroom
- DO NOT observe during recess or outside. Observer should terminate observation and not assign codes during recess and outside time.
- All other periods – music, art, transitions, language arts, and/or academics, free choice, and centers – should be coded.
- If the students go to recess in the middle of the observation portion of the cycle, STOP observing.
- If at least 10 minutes of observations were completed, assign ratings based on the 10+ minutes of observation.
- If less than 10 minutes of observations were completed, do not assign ratings and begin the next observation when the children resume eligible activity (e.g. music, art, transitions, language arts, and/or academics, free choice, and centers), typically when they begin to transition from their outdoor/recess activity.

#### *Scoring*

- Each of the constructs is rated on a 7-point scale.
- All the constructs require some inferences. To help with scoring, think about the "spirit" in which the individual construct was written. Which number best characterizes the classroom along this dimension? When trying to decide between two numbers, use the higher score only if you are convinced that the classroom characteristics reflect that rating.
- Care should be taken not to allow a single incident to be given too much weight in an overall rating. In general, specific incidents that are markers for the different constructs are noted and contribute to the rating, but care should be taken that the rating characterizes the classroom overall.
- The scales are intended to be analytically distinct, although overlap is apparent, and each scale should be rated independently of the others.

Basic Info	Format	Content
Teacher ID: _____ Observer: _____ Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____ Adult Present (list all) _____ Total # _____ # Children _____ Notes: _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routines/Transition</li> <li>• Meals/Snacks</li> <li>• Whole Group</li> <li>• Small Group (teacher led)</li> <li>• Free Choice/Centers (child led)</li> <li>• Individual</li> <li>• Other: _____</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> ELA (oral, writing, reading) <input type="checkbox"/> Math (counting, geometry, calendar, measurement) <input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies (history, culture, maps, economics) <input type="checkbox"/> Science (health, living things, scientific thinking, weather, tech) <input type="checkbox"/> Art/Dramatic Play <input type="checkbox"/> Social-Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

<b>Positive Climate</b>							
<b><u>Positive Climate Supporting Evidence:</u></b>							
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Negative Climate</b>							
<b><u>Negative Climate Supporting Evidence:</u></b>							
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Teacher Sensitivity</b>							
<b><u>Teacher Sensitivity Supporting Evidence:</u></b>							
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Regard for Student Perspectives</b>							
<b><u>Regard for Student Perspectives Supporting Evidence:</u></b>							
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>

**Observation Cycle 1**

Basic Info	Format	Content
Teacher ID: _____ Observer: _____ Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____ Adult Present (list all) _____ Total # _____ # Children _____ Notes: _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routines/Transition</li> <li>• Meals/Snacks</li> <li>• Whole Group</li> <li>• Small Group (teacher led)</li> <li>• Free Choice/Centers (child led)</li> <li>• Individual</li> <li>• Other: _____</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> ELA (oral, writing, reading) <input type="checkbox"/> Math (counting, geometry, calendar, measurement) <input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies (history, culture, maps, economics) <input type="checkbox"/> Science (health, living things, scientific thinking, weather, tech) <input type="checkbox"/> Art/Dramatic Play <input type="checkbox"/> Social-Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

<b>Positive Climate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Positive Affect</li> <li>• Positive Communication</li> <li>• Respect</li> </ul>	<b>NOTES</b>  1 2 3 4 5 6 7
<b>Negative Climate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative Affect</li> <li>• Punitive Control</li> <li>• Sarcasm/Disrespect</li> <li>• Sever Negativity</li> </ul>	<b>NOTES</b>  1 2 3 4 5 6 7
<b>Teacher Sensitivity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness</li> <li>• Responsiveness</li> <li>• Addresses Problems</li> <li>• Student Control</li> </ul>	<b>NOTES</b>  1 2 3 4 5 6 7
<b>Regard for Student Perspectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility and Student Focus</li> <li>• Support for Autonomy &amp; Leadership</li> <li>• Student Expression</li> <li>• Restriction of Movement</li> </ul>	<b>NOTES</b>  1 2 3 4 5 6 7

## Observation Cycle 2

<b>Basic Info</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Content</b>
Teacher ID: _____ Observer: _____ Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____ Adult Present (list all) _____ Total # _____ # Children _____ Notes: _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routines/Transition</li> <li>• Meals/Snacks</li> <li>• Whole Group</li> <li>• Small Group (teacher led)</li> <li>• Free Choice/Centers (child led)</li> <li>• Individual</li> <li>• Other: _____</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> ELA (oral, writing, reading) <input type="checkbox"/> Math (counting, geometry, calendar, measurement) <input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies (history, culture, maps, economics) <input type="checkbox"/> Science (health, living things, scientific thinking, weather, tech) <input type="checkbox"/> Art/Dramatic Play <input type="checkbox"/> Social-Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

<b>Positive Climate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Positive Affect</li> <li>• Positive Communication</li> <li>• Respect</li> </ul>	<b>NOTES</b>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>1</span> <span>2</span> <span>3</span> <span>4</span> <span>5</span> <span>6</span> <span>7</span> </div>
<b>Negative Climate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative Affect</li> <li>• Punitive Control</li> <li>• Sarcasm/Disrespect</li> <li>• Sever Negativity</li> </ul>	<b>NOTES</b>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>1</span> <span>2</span> <span>3</span> <span>4</span> <span>5</span> <span>6</span> <span>7</span> </div>
<b>Teacher Sensitivity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness</li> <li>• Responsiveness</li> <li>• Addresses Problems</li> <li>• Student Control</li> </ul>	<b>NOTES</b>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>1</span> <span>2</span> <span>3</span> <span>4</span> <span>5</span> <span>6</span> <span>7</span> </div>
<b>Regard for Student Perspectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility and Student Focus</li> <li>• Support for Autonomy &amp; Leadership</li> <li>• Student Expression</li> <li>• Restriction of Movement</li> </ul>	<b>NOTES</b>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>1</span> <span>2</span> <span>3</span> <span>4</span> <span>5</span> <span>6</span> <span>7</span> </div>

### Observation Cycle 3

<b>Basic Info</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Content</b>
Teacher ID: _____ Observer: _____ Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____ Adult Present (list all) _____ Total # _____ # Children _____ Notes: _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routines/Transition</li> <li>• Meals/Snacks</li> <li>• Whole Group</li> <li>• Small Group (teacher led)</li> <li>• Free Choice/Centers (child led)</li> <li>• Individual</li> <li>• Other: _____</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> ELA (oral, writing, reading) <input type="checkbox"/> Math (counting, geometry, calendar, measurement) <input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies (history, culture, maps, economics) <input type="checkbox"/> Science (health, living things, scientific thinking, weather, tech) <input type="checkbox"/> Art/Dramatic Play <input type="checkbox"/> Social-Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

<b>Positive Climate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Positive Affect</li> <li>• Positive Communication</li> <li>• Respect</li> </ul>	<b>NOTES</b>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>1</span> <span>2</span> <span>3</span> <span>4</span> <span>5</span> <span>6</span> <span>7</span> </div>
<b>Negative Climate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative Affect</li> <li>• Punitive Control</li> <li>• Sarcasm/Disrespect</li> <li>• Sever Negativity</li> </ul>	<b>NOTES</b>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>1</span> <span>2</span> <span>3</span> <span>4</span> <span>5</span> <span>6</span> <span>7</span> </div>
<b>Teacher Sensitivity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness</li> <li>• Responsiveness</li> <li>• Addresses Problems</li> <li>• Student Control</li> </ul>	<b>NOTES</b>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>1</span> <span>2</span> <span>3</span> <span>4</span> <span>5</span> <span>6</span> <span>7</span> </div>
<b>Regard for Student Perspectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility and Student Focus</li> <li>• Support for Autonomy &amp; Leadership</li> <li>• Student Expression</li> <li>• Restriction of Movement</li> </ul>	<b>NOTES</b>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>1</span> <span>2</span> <span>3</span> <span>4</span> <span>5</span> <span>6</span> <span>7</span> </div>

### Observation Cycle 4

Basic Info	Format	Content
Teacher ID: _____ Observer: _____ Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____ Adult Present (list all) _____ Total # _____ # Children _____ Notes: _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routines/Transition</li> <li>• Meals/Snacks</li> <li>• Whole Group</li> <li>• Small Group (teacher led)</li> <li>• Free Choice/Centers (child led)</li> <li>• Individual</li> <li>• Other: _____</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> ELA (oral, writing, reading) <input type="checkbox"/> Math (counting, geometry, calendar, measurement) <input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies (history, culture, maps, economics) <input type="checkbox"/> Science (health, living things, scientific thinking, weather, tech) <input type="checkbox"/> Art/Dramatic Play <input type="checkbox"/> Social-Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

<b>Positive Climate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Positive Affect</li> <li>• Positive Communication</li> <li>• Respect</li> </ul>	<b>NOTES</b>  1 2 3 4 5 6 7
<b>Negative Climate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative Affect</li> <li>• Punitive Control</li> <li>• Sarcasm/Disrespect</li> <li>• Sever Negativity</li> </ul>	<b>NOTES</b>  1 2 3 4 5 6 7
<b>Teacher Sensitivity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness</li> <li>• Responsiveness</li> <li>• Addresses Problems</li> <li>• Student Control</li> </ul>	<b>NOTES</b>  1 2 3 4 5 6 7
<b>Regard for Student Perspectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility and Student Focus</li> <li>• Support for Autonomy &amp; Leadership</li> <li>• Student Expression</li> <li>• Restriction of Movement</li> </ul>	<b>NOTES</b>  1 2 3 4 5 6 7



## Observation Cycle 5

<b>Basic Info</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Content</b>
Teacher ID: _____ Observer: _____ Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____ Adult Present (list all) _____ Total # _____ # Children _____ Notes: _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routines/Transition</li> <li>• Meals/Snacks</li> <li>• Whole Group</li> <li>• Small Group (teacher led)</li> <li>• Free Choice/Centers (child led)</li> <li>• Individual</li> <li>• Other: _____</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> ELA (oral, writing, reading) <input type="checkbox"/> Math (counting, geometry, calendar, measurement) <input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies (history, culture, maps, economics) <input type="checkbox"/> Science (health, living things, scientific thinking, weather, tech) <input type="checkbox"/> Art/Dramatic Play <input type="checkbox"/> Social-Emotional <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

<b>Positive Climate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Positive Affect</li> <li>• Positive Communication</li> <li>• Respect</li> </ul>	<b>NOTES</b>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>1</span> <span>2</span> <span>3</span> <span>4</span> <span>5</span> <span>6</span> <span>7</span> </div>
<b>Negative Climate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative Affect</li> <li>• Punitive Control</li> <li>• Sarcasm/Disrespect</li> <li>• Sever Negativity</li> </ul>	<b>NOTES</b>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>1</span> <span>2</span> <span>3</span> <span>4</span> <span>5</span> <span>6</span> <span>7</span> </div>
<b>Teacher Sensitivity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness</li> <li>• Responsiveness</li> <li>• Addresses Problems</li> <li>• Student Control</li> </ul>	<b>NOTES</b>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>1</span> <span>2</span> <span>3</span> <span>4</span> <span>5</span> <span>6</span> <span>7</span> </div>
<b>Regard for Student Perspectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility and Student Focus</li> <li>• Support for Autonomy &amp; Leadership</li> <li>• Student Expression</li> <li>• Restriction of Movement</li> </ul>	<b>NOTES</b>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>1</span> <span>2</span> <span>3</span> <span>4</span> <span>5</span> <span>6</span> <span>7</span> </div>

Appendix N: Survey Items

Educator Survey Items

Survey Items	Item Type	Subscales	Variable Type	Source
Q1	Qualitative	na		Self-written
Q2-Q12	Quantitative	Comfort (Q2-Q5) Commitment (Q6-Q9) School Culture (Q10-Q12)	Continuous	Brackett et. al., (2012)
Q13-Q16	Quantitative	Knowledge & Attitude	Categorical	Buchanan et al. ,(2009)
Q17-Q19	Qualitative	na		Self-written
Q20-Q36	Quantitative	Self Efficacy	Continuous	Siwatu, 2006
Q37	Qualitative	na		Self-written

Parent Survey Items

Survey Items	Item Type	Subscales	Variable Type	Source
Q1	Qualitative	na		Self-written
Q2-Q12	Quantitative	Comfort (Q2-Q5) Commitment (Q6-Q9) School Culture (Q10-Q12)	Continuous	Brackett et. al., (2012)
Q13-Q16	Quantitative	Knowledge & Attitude	Categorical	Buchanan et al. ,(2009)
Q17-Q18	Qualitative	na		Self-written
Q19-Q35	Quantitative	Self Efficacy	Continuous	Siwatu, 2006
Q36	Qualitative	na		Self-written

## Student Survey Items

Survey Items	Item Type	Subscales	Variable Type	Source
Q1-15	Quantitative	Student Connectedness	Categorical	CHKS, (2018)
Q16-17	Quantitative	na	na	Self-written

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