Inviting Success When Implementing Social Emotional Learning into Secondary Suburban Classrooms

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Abstract

Through the lenses of Invitational Education (Purkey & Novak, 2008, 2016) and social emotional learning (SEL) advocated by Elias et al., (2016), the researchers sought to answer an overarching question: 'How can schools create an environment that invites SEL into the suburban classroom?' The analyzed data identified challenges exist when suburban high schools invite social emotional learning into classrooms. Based on the need to mitigate these findings, the authors suggest proper training, consistent communication, and the use of intentionally inviting processes for successful implementation of SEL.

Keywords: Invitational Theory and Practice, Social-Emotional Learning, Suburban Education, Professional Development

Introduction

The ability to navigate through academic material is necessary to be successful in school. However, one's desire for constant improvement and overcoming challenging situations can help students access and traverse the pitfalls of working within the parameters created by society (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). On top of an ever-changing landscape of standards and increased accountability, teachers are the ones who are working with students to not only be academically proficient but also to be socially and emotionally proficient (Adelman & Taylor, 2011). Many districts and states have implemented programs or policies that added Social/Emotional Learning (SEL) to the current academic standards (Adelman & Taylor, 2011; Dymnicki et al., 2013). For this inquiry, the researchers used the definition of SEL offered by one of the leaders in the promotion of SEL in Schools, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Domitrovich et al., (2015) defined 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. (p. 5)

Using this definition, many researchers have argued that focusing only on academic tasks will not bring about the success of a child but might inhibit their ability to engage fully in the

school experience (Dymnicki et al., 2013; Zins, 2004). The successful integration of both academics and SEL through coordinated instruction coupled with a staff equipped to address such skills are necessary for students to generalize required life skills past high school (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2007). Accomplishing these skills occurs by teaching academics along with social and emotional skills (Durlak et al., 2011).

Upon further examination of SEL, and time required implementing a valid program, and the change necessary for an impactful SEL program, these researchers relied on a conceptual framework that not only possesses many facets but also has a model for both change and leadership embedded within it. Invitational education (IE) theory is not only a theory based on the leadership of an organization but has a model allowing an organization to change by being inclusive of people, processes, places, policies, and programs (Egley, 2003; Haigh, 2011; Purkey & Novak, 1996, 2008).

"In many communities, there is less support for and involvement in institutions that foster children's social-emotional development and character" (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013; pg. 3). It was the purpose of these researchers to examine critical challenges in inviting and implementing comprehensive SEL standards into a suburban high school setting using an invitational theory approach. The following research questions guided this inquiry with the intent to answer the over-arching question: How can schools create an environment that invites SEL into the suburban classroom? Explained further through two sub-questions. *How do schools leverage People, Places, Policies, Programs, and Processes to overcome barriers to embed SEL within the suburban secondary school? How can administrators support SEL in high school settings through changes in policy, processes, and people?*

Conceptual Framework

The basic element that serves as the backbone of the invitational organization is being intentional about the use of all resources (Young & Schoenlein, 2017). The invitational organization relies on the judicious use of resources, so the elements of intentionality, care, optimism, respect, and trust (I-CORT) are evident throughout the system's domains known as the 5-Ps: People, Places, Policies, Programs, and Processes. The acronym I-CORT is used by Purkey and Novak (2016) to emphasize the need to be intentionally inviting, further stating, "an invitation is an intentional choice someone makes and an intentional chance someone takes" (p. 15). Characterized by the matching of personal needs with the required outcomes is care. When paired with optimism, caring is about believing a person will transcend their current position to increase their ability to make a positive difference (Purkey & Novak, 2008). Respect for others and their decision to accept or reject the invitation is paramount to being invitational. To counteract the notion of rejecting the invitation, follow-up comes in the form of trust and holding high expectations to share the workload and trusting others to do their part and is typically displayed with intentionality in the middle with wheel-like spokes to the other four elements (Haigh, 2011; Young & Schoenlein, 2017). In an invitational organization, the use of these elements become evident as the leadership works to deploy the five domains of IE.

Moreover, invitational education utilizes a starfish symbol as an analogy for the emphasis placed on the all-encompassing approach expected of invitational organizations. Known as the five P's, the five domains: People, Places, Policies, Programs, and Processes were also discussed in research by Anderson (2019), Mattison (2015), Mattison and Blader (2013), and Weissberg and Cascarino (2013), which described the effective implementation of learning and social interventions in schools. Domitrovich, et al., (2015) revealed successful SEL requires support

from family and community partnerships, school-wide practice and policies, and curriculum and instruction. Those supports, coupled with teachers and others responsible for delivering instruction, solidify the people and places domains of IE, thereby reinforcing the connection between SEL and IE.

Background

Through a foundational understanding of SEL and IE, one can begin to have a full understanding of this inquiry. There are three foundations of IE and five basic domains to SEL. These components aligned together so organizations can further build toward having a successful integration of SEL (Domitrovich et al., 2015; Purkey & Novak, 2008). Illustrated in Figure 1 are the explanations of the foundations of IE and components of SEL, as the components of SEL are juxtaposed to its matching foundation of IE. Presented are three foundations of IE and five essential domains to SEL. These components aligned so organizations can further build toward having a successful integration of SEL (Domitrovich et al., 2015; Purkey & Novak, 2008).

Foundations of Invitational Education (Purkey & Novak, 2016)	Components of Social Emotional Learning from CASEL
Democratic Ethos: the idea that people count and grow through self-governance.	Relationship Skills: the ability to communicate, problem solve, and work with others
	Self-Management: regulation by the individual in a variety of settings and to work toward self-improvement.
Perceptual Tradition: behavior is based on the perception of the individual and their place in the larger community	Responsible Decision Making: making appropriate choices about behavior in a variety of circumstance.
	Social Awareness: examination from a variety of viewpoints and to understand the social and ethical norms
Self–Concept Theory: perception of one's identity.	Self – Awareness: recognition of thoughts and how they impact emotions so that the individual can respond appropriately in a variety of situations.

Figure 1. The alignment of IE and the components of SEL

Significance of the Study

In the adoption of a new program within an organization, there should be a valid model for change used to make the new program successful (Taplin & Clark, 2012). Purkey and Novak (2016) created a double-helix format for graphically exhibiting change within the IE framework. This double helix depicts the cyclical twelve-step process that illustrates how change occurs within an organization. This clear description of the change process reinforced the researchers' selection of IE as the conceptual framework for this study.

The double helix of organizational change has three significant components, occasional interest, systematic application, and pervasive adoption (Purkey & Novak, 2008). Each of the phases has four sub-steps to make the transition to being fully invitational (Purkey & Novak, 2008;

Young & Schoenlein, 2017). The phases are what Purkey and Novak (2016) referred to as knowledge points, which repeatedly follow the order of awareness, understanding, application, and adoption in an ever-spiraling, evolving process that builds upon the previous step.

During Phase One adoption as illustrated by the double helix: Occasional interest, are Steps 1-4: Initial exposure, Structured dialog, General agreement to try, and Uncoordinated use and sharing (Purkey & Novak, 2008, p.44; Young & Schoenlein, 2017). During the Initial exposure step, faculty and school personnel understand what it means to become invitational, as related to the actual goals of working with students. Step two: Structured dialog, includes reviewing plans from other schools, studying how IE has influenced other schools, or hearing a speaker with IE experience and then debriefing that activity with a structured dialog as to how this idea of being invitational improves or builds upon existing systems (Purkey & Novak, 2008). During the Step three of the first phase of IE adoption, stakeholders agree to become inviting and willingly begin testing out ideas or assessing if current practices align with being invitational. Finally, stakeholders begin using some of the views or tactics of IE within their classroom or work area (Young & Schoenlein, 2017). While these Step four activities may appear uncoordinated, the results provide feedback on what systems are working compared to which cause problems in the goal of bring intentionally inviting (Purkey & Novak, 2008).

In its desire to adopt IE principles and assumptions, as the organization's stakeholders progress beyond Phase One: Occasional interest, participants move into Phase Two: "Systematic Application" (Purkey & Novak, 2008, p. 46). Phase Two, Steps 5-8, include Intensive Study, Applied Comprehension, Strand organization, and Systematic incorporation. It is during this phase where the organization begins to organize its five Ps: People, places, policies, processes, and practices to align with the three foundations of IE: democratic ethos, perceptual tradition, and self-concept theory, and the five elements: intentional, caring, optimism, respect, and trust (Purkey & Novak, 2008). Educators accomplish this by studying how groups and scholars apply IE and how the organization will integrate IE theory and practices based on the identified areas of needs (Purkey & Novak, 2008; Young & Schoenlein, 2017).

Once the organization is organized and beginning to incorporate IE theory and practices, stakeholders progress to Phase three: Pervasive Adoption. The organization's stakeholders proceed to Steps 9-12: Developing leaders, In-depth analysis and extension, Confronting significant concerns, and Transforming (Purkey & Novak, 2008, pp. 47-48; Young & Schoenlein, 2017). Each subsequent action requires a deeper understanding of IE and its application to the broader organization (Haigh, 2011). Groups become adept at discerning if a new practice fits into the IE model and confronts significant issues impeding their progress (Purkey & Novak, 2008). Ultimately, the organization is intentionally inviting with caring, optimistic, respectful, and trusting professionals working together to be successful (Purkey & Novak, 2008; Young & Schoenlein, 2017). The illustrative double helix of change ultimately guides an organization's stakeholders toward achieving full transformation and becoming invitational.

Similarly, Elias, Ferrito, and Moceri (2016) detailed a cyclical timetable for adopting social emotional learning (SEL) into a school setting. In theirs seven-step process, the authors outlined the process for adopting SEL as a measured skill on a school's progress reports. The authors of the research at hand believed it to be advantageous to align the three-phase helix model described by Purkey and Novak (2016) with the seven-step timetable advocated by Elias et al. (2016). The result would reinforce the adoption of IE theory and practices when implementing SEL and thereby eliminating barriers for its inclusion in classrooms. The authors believe evaluating an organization's people, places, policies, processes, and practices with an I-CORT mindset will

ensure sustainable implementation and continuation of SEL. By synthesizing change models of IE (Purkey & Novak, 2016) and SEL (Elias et al,2016), school personnel and related stakeholders will have an effective tool for educating the whole child and allowing everyone to reach her or his human potential.

Review of the Literature

The rationale for synthesizing IE and SEL models is apparent as one reviews the literature related to both concepts. Domitrovich et al. (2015) described effective SEL programming as flourishing in environments that have supportive relationships and make learning challenging, engaging, and meaningful. Similarly, Burns and Martin (2010) noted that within the invitational organization, the involvement of people in as many activities requiring cooperation and positive results helps them assimilate into an effective team. The description of involving people in positive groups to cooperate and produce aligns with the overall goals of SEL, whereby children can collaborate and provide despite potential or realized setbacks (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). The parallels reinforce the use of IE in an examination of SEL.

Methodology

For this examination of the challenges to inviting successful implementation of SEL in suburban high schools, the researchers' utilized a mixed-methods case study (Creswell, 2014) to identify what, if any, obstacles existed in the selected sites. Specifically, using a convergent parallel mixed-methods design Creswell (2016) allowed the researchers to gather simultaneously quantitative and qualitative data. Hanson et al. (2005) highlighted a concurrent design of data gathering whereby both qualitative and quantitative data are simultaneously gathered. In this case, the data collected concurrently was in the form of focus groups, interviews, survey results, document analysis, and observations. Moreover, case studies must be bounded (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For this study, the boundaries were the five high schools and specific teachers, counselors, social works, and administrators who worked within these five settings.

Population and Sample

Along with demographic information, Table 1 below shows the enrollments of the high schools. The representative data aligns with what one expects when examining Midwest suburban schools and communities (Baldassare,1992). The case study was limited to five high schools in a suburban district that exhibited multiple levels of SEL implementation. None of the five was comprehensive in implementation of SEL. A survey was distributed to all certified staff members at the five high schools (n=550). The return rate of the survey was 14%. Additionally, the sample for the focus groups were 15 teachers in the district. All of them were teaching students at various grade levels and content-areas. Five counselors and five social workers were also included. The interviews were limited to five administrators: One per building selected by the head principal and a district-level administrator overseeing SEL for the district.

Focus Groups

Each of the five focus groups ranged in size from three- to four- participants. Researchers met with each focus group twice. Reliability and face validity for the focus group questions was established by sharing the questions with 15 secondary education teachers not included in the sample. The pilot resulted in no changes to the initial questions. Merriam and Tisdell (2016)

both suggested piloting and establishing face validity to ensure questions not only make sense but would elicit relevant information.

Table 1
Description of Organization Structure of the Participants

	Student		Teacher			Principal	
School	Enrollment	F/R Lunch	Total Teachers	Avg Exp	Advanced Degrees	Years at Site	Highest Degree
A	1787	7.81%	109	18	84.5%	3	Doctorate
B	1568	47.15%	102	10	56.8%	2	Masters
C	1659	26.86%	112	12	62.3%	8	Doctorate
D	1523	27.06%	97	17	64.9%	6	Doctorate
E	1656	42.62%	110	14	73.2%	5	Masters

Note N = 5 interview building-level principals; focus groups, N=15 teachers from 5 school sites,

Interviews

The researchers conducted individual semi-structured interviews with administrators selected based on their position and responsibility for allocating resources, making and enforcing policy, and reinforcing processes to support SEL in the classroom. For this study, the interview participants were building principals (n=5). Additionally, a district-level administrator (n=1) who oversaw the counselors and social workers was interviewed. That individual also managed SEL for the district. After coding the focus groups, conducted was a follow-up interview (Yin, 2014) so the administrator could offer further clarification of barriers to the allocation of resources as well as the comprehensive implementation of SEL Overall, the goal of conducting interviews was to ascertain the importance placed on SEL by decision-makers.

Survey

For the quantitative portion of the research, the researchers administered a survey to individual staff working at each of the selected high schools. The survey was developed by Panorama, a company working with schools to assess SEL in students. The survey measured the teacher's perceptions of school climate, student mindset, faculty growth mindset, grit, educating all students, and demographic questions about the staff member. The researchers used Qualtrics software, which offered the questions in randomized order. The randomized order of items and the ability to see only a few questions at a time helped the researcher feel assured item responses were individualized, which thereby enhanced the quality of the survey (Fink, 2017). To optimize reliability, the researchers utilized a test-retest model (Fink, 2017). This allowed the researchers to establish the overall and topical Cronbach alpha scores for internal reliability. The Cronbach scale measures how the questions relate to one another with a high score of one showing perfect consistency reliability, >.80 is an excellent reliability .70 is considered adequate, and >.60 would be regarded as moderate (Field, 2013). The Cronbach coefficient for survey responses was determined to be α=.77.

Document Analysis

Another source of data came from school or district-based documents that supported or refuted feedback related to the implementation of a comprehensive SEL process. Researchers designed and utilized a document analysis tool to find the audience of the class, the purpose of the class, and synonyms or phrases found in the descriptions of the SEL competencies. The examined documents included mission statements, course catalogs, lesson plans, and faculty meeting agendas.

Observations

The researchers completed a series of formal and informal observations (Creswell, 2016) to gain further insight into how SEL occurred within the classroom setting. Over three weeks the researchers observed randomly selected classrooms. The researchers identified phrases or words similar to or synonyms of the words found in CASEL's five competencies of SEL posted within the setting. A second structured observation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) allowed the researchers to listen to how students and staff interacted. These observations aided the researchers in viewing the phenomenon in its natural setting (Creswell, 2016), possibly revealing SEL being addressed in isolated incidents without one common theme or message aligning to the schools' vision, which further reinforces the case for a comprehensive approach (Adelman &Taylor, 2011).

Data Analysis

To gain perspective related to the barriers of SEL implementation within suburban high school settings, it was necessary to analyze collected qualitative data based on the research questions. It is essential to individually code all collected data collected, then overlay the results to find the patterns or commonalities within the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The qualitative data from the focus group and interviews followed the simultaneous review process advocated by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). Therefore, the researchers progressed through the layers of interviews and focus groups' feedback so the reviewed transcriptions could be reliably codified and themes validly identified.

For the collected quantitative data, reported were the percentages of responses and the underlying statistical calculation of mean and standard deviation. This provided insight into how teachers rated their school in relation to various SEL competencies as well as how connected these were to the school and its activities.

Additionally, document analysis of the vision statement, mission statement, and course descriptions connected the SEL standards with evidence how SEL could be occurring. The researchers coded the documents for synonyms of the ideals of SEL from CASEL, responsibility, efficacy, advocacy, teamwork, collaboration, etc. Following suggestions by Krueger and Casey (2015), the researchers coded the observational notes based on the language found in the vision and mission statement for each school as related to the stated SEL competencies.

Findings

Research Question One

How do schools leverage people, places, policies, programs, and processes to overcome barriers to embed SEL within the suburban secondary school?

People

To examine people inviting SEL into the classroom, the researchers observed randomly selected classrooms. They identified how the classes were organized, and the extent the teacher

was modeling the application of SEL skills to their students. After visiting ten classrooms across the district, the researcher witnessed many teachers, who unbeknownst to them, used SEL in a manner consistent with the document but with no evidence of impact assessment or generalization of skills. At the same time, as evidenced in Table 2 below, the teachers were also not intentionally inviting the application of SEL standards into the classroom through direct actions.

Table 2
Results from the Classroom Observations of the Application of SEL

	N	Witnessed Application of behavior by the adult in the room
Greeting Students	10	5
Interaction at Eye Level	10	3
Red Flag Behavior	10	7
Use of positive praise	10	6
Using students' names	10	8

Note: N=ten observed classrooms

As documented within Table 2, Red Flag Behaviors defined as lack of transitions, use of cynical tone, lack of verbal cues or visual cues, and using group directions or absence of individual connection, were of particular concern. These Red Flag Behaviors occurred in most of the observed classrooms. This clearly indicates a lack of I-CORT mindsets or IE practices in relation to implementation of SEL standards.

Furthering the examination of the intentional invitation of people using and being involved in the integration of SEL standards, the researchers examined the data from interviews and focus groups to help answer who should be included in the planning of the program. Each of the focus group participants, agreed students, teachers, administrators, counselors, and social workers should be involved in the planning. On the other hand, respondents were perplexed when asked about how businesses or other community members could fit in the preparation. During the interview, Principal Five stated, "I don't know how they fit in." Then followed up with "businesses would be good as resources or filling gaps in needs." Only Principal One indicated they would solicit feedback from businesses in relation to student behaviors or habits based on the SEL standards. Principal Two stated, "Parents who might say well you can't tell my kid how to respond to this who then themselves might not appropriately respond professionally to a teacher." Conversely, another stated, "we want parents involved." Overall, there was disagreement among the participants as to who from outside of the school should be involved in the invitation or implementation of SEL.

Places

Observed places included the hallways and central offices of the individual schools and ten randomly selected classrooms. Each of the buildings had its mission statement posted visibly for incoming people, and the staff in the main office were welcoming and helpful. The hallways were bright with light, considering the few windows in most of the buildings. Schools B, C, and D had

mission statement posters and incentive programs for students displayed. There were communication boards in all the high schools, which communicated events and organizations that could involve students.

Classroom poster messaging was similar to the hallways. While the physical organization of furniture may not have been inviting due to arrangement, there was evidence of posters with positive slogans on them. Only four of the classrooms had student models or exemplars hanging on the walls. Most of the walls were decorated with school-based material about procedures for emergencies or posters relating to curriculum or perseverance. Overall, the schools and classrooms' messages related to invitation of SEL were neutral with no obvious intention to disinvite people. However, as to engaging students between the two spaces, not much was observed. Compared to the classrooms, the hallways and main offices generally appeared to present a more invitational approach.

From the analysis of the data regarding the use of People, Places, Policies, Programs, and Processes, no overall effort of intentionality to make an inviting environment occurred. However, there were individuals within each school setting that appeared to demonstrate intentionality to this effort within their own environment. Next, we will discuss policy documents and their explicit impact upon SEL initiatives.

Policies

As noted above, data analysis included exploring and examining documents. The first examined document was the strategic plan of the school district, which individual participating high schools referenced to create their mission statement. Within the strategic plans, the researchers found a district-wide mission statement and expected outcomes of policies or programs. Analysis began with the mission statement:

> The mission of the School District, the bridge to unlimited possibilities yet to be
> discovered, is to ensure students construct their foundation for success in life's endeavors
> through relevant, personalized learning experiences orchestrated by talented,
> compassionate educators and distinguished by an inclusive culture, an engaged
> community, and robust opportunities that challenge learners to achieve their full
> potential.

The examination of the mission indicates two objectives align to skills mentioned in the SEL Standards. One objective stated, "Every student will develop and utilize personal resilience while mastering essential competencies that lead to college and career readiness." Another objective stated, "Every student will develop interpersonal skills to be an engaged, empathetic member of the local and global community" (School District Plan, 2019). Utilizing the synonyms of keywords from the CASEL, the researchers examined portions of the mission and objectives, which coincided with the tenants of SEL. From analysis of the mission statements, construct, success, compassionate, inclusive, engaged, and potential, are words synonymous with those found in literature from CASEL and the state standards. From the objectives, resilience, masters, competencies, readiness, interpersonal, engaged, empathetic, and community are words related to the SEL standards. It seemed the high schools obviously constructed their mission statements from these foundations and thus reinforced the basis for how the researchers codified them to verify alignment and consistency in message. Table 3 displays the analysis of the mission statements.

Table 3
Each of the high school's mission statement

School	Published Mission Statement
A	The *School* community works closely together to guide student learning. We have high expectations, provide outstanding instruction, encourage positive relationships, and allow students to build life skills to prepare them for their future.
B	As the staff at *school*, our goal is to provide a world-class education that will develop life-long learners and responsible, globally-conscious citizens through high expectations for student achievement within a caring school environment. *Our school* is a uniquely amazing place where students can be themselves and yet be part of something much larger than themselves - The Tribe. Always remember - "Where Tradition Began…. Excellence Continues" - *SCHOOL* PRIDE!
C	Our *School* CORE serves as a foundation to guide our students' efforts in the classroom & community. We Are… Conscious: Growth-oriented, Curious, Enthusiastic, Intentional Decision Makers On Point Accountable, Present, Punctual, Responsible Respectful of Self, Peers, Adults, Property *School* Kindness Zone Engaged Focused, Aware, Ready to Learn, Actively Involved
D	Our mission is to personalize learning to ensure that ALL students are socially responsible, informed, and productive life-long learners.
E	*The school* establishes and upholds high standards that all students are expected to achieve through the creation of partnerships among teachers, students, parents, and the community that support student achievement in a safe and caring environment.

Note: The italics represent the portion replaced to protect the school/district in the study; also, formatting altered for readability.

As revealed by Table 3, there were different approaches espoused in each of the mission statements. School A differed from the district mission statement in a sense there is permission being granted to students to build lifelong song skills but only on the terms of the school. Whereas schools B, C, and D offered a much more student-centered approach stating the mission of the staff is to act on behalf of students in some manner to promote growth, learning, accountability, caring, productivity, and other values more closely aligned to the values found in the district mission statement. School E attempted to have a student-centered mission statement by leading with the school establishing and upholding values in which to hold students accountable. Overall, as displayed by each of these mission statements, alignment to both IE and SEL components was fragmented as to how the school personnel would seek to develop their students' life skills.

Programs

Building from the district and high schools' mission statements, the researchers sought to learn what programs or classes are offering SEL as a component of their learning outcomes. The researchers examined the course offerings for phrases and words from CASEL's components of SEL. The terms found in the left column of Table 4. Column 2 of Table 3 indicates the number of occurrences of the particular word or phrase, while column three indicates if related to SEL. In addition, column four revealed which class the concept occurred.

Table 4
Analysis of course offerings and their tie to mission statements and SEL

Word/Phrase	Occurrence in Plan	Based in SEL	Category/Class name
Self-Awareness	1	0	
Self-Management	0	0	
Relation Skills	0	0	
Responsible/ity Decision Making	0	0	
Relationship Skills	0	0	
Social	67	8	Debate, Social Skills, Cadet Teacher
Emotional	2	2	
Viewpoints	0	0	
Ethics	1	0	Sports Med 3
Self-improvement	0	0	
Teamwork	5	5	Debate, theatre, explore med science
Risk	3	0	
Leadership	40	13	ROTC, Teacher Ed, Debate
Empathy	0	0	
Ethos	0	0	
Community	33	13	ROTC, Marketing, Community Service offered only at one school
Relation	26	7	Debate and Journalism

Note: Data from five high schools

As revealed in Table 4, there is evidence of SEL aligned to some courses. Some of the areas appeared more than once for a specific word or phrase. Classes associated with the debate category exhibited the most frequent tie to SEL skills.

Being consistent with the interpretation of programs in the school setting offered by Young and Schoenlein (2017), the researchers also examined other programs in the buildings whereby students were encouraged to participate. For school D, they have a program labeled *RISE*. Through this program, any student is eligible for recognition as long as he or she meets the quantitative requirements of one or less tardy or unexcused absence, zero discipline referrals, and no failing grades. Beyond those measurable requirements, the student should also be respectful to others, initiate change, show school pride, and be an empowered learner. Those characteristics

make up the mnemonic: *RISE*. Similarly, at School C, there is a program called *CORE*. These students are nominated for monthly recognition by being conscientious, on point, respectful, and engaged in school.

Schools A, C, and D participated in Link Crew. This national program was started in California to enhance the transition experience for ninth-grade students (Boomerang Project, 2011). Through this program, all ninth graders' work is tied to SEL skill development, while selected upper-level students lead them in small group activities. Programs in schools B and E also focused upon implementing elements of the national program called Top 20. Although school E is the only one to have had teachers complete the national training, school B was completing a book study on the program as well as working with faculty from School E.

Processes

Documents including newsletters, enrollment cards, and handbooks for students were assessed to examine how they intentionally invited involvement from stakeholders, parents, students, or teachers. Newsletters and handbooks are sent electronically to parents while the enrollment cards are sent home with the students as well as being available in other formats. However, none of the principals could verify how many parents read the newsletter or handbook so specific data analysis was on the presentation rather than receipt of the intentional invitations. Another aspect of inviting stakeholders to engage in the school was the presence of a site council. The site council is composed of parents, business leaders, and school staff. However, at the current time of this study, the site councils were seen as adding to the direction or development SEL initiatives of SEL within the schools. No agenda items addressed SEL.

Processes examined by the researchers also included classroom and school-based procedures that allowed or encouraged students and other stakeholders to access content, people, or specific places. The invitational environment dictates they should enhance the experience and make engagement inviting and expected (Purkey & Novak, 2016). During the observation of classrooms, based on the organization of the furniture in the room the researchers witnessed some classes that were more inviting. The observational analysis of the classroom was codified through the physical placement of desks, chairs, and tables or by evidence of the clear schedules and routines. Of the ten observed classes, three had desks or tables arranged in a way that invited peer-to-peer interaction. This included desks being clustered for groups of three to four students or that number of students being allocated to one table.   One teacher had a full schedule on the board while others had running lists of tasks or upcoming assessments to be completed. Observed teachers mainly relied on the completion of the listed task displayed on the white board to dictate transitions. They then utilized verbal cues for transition to the next item.

Research Question Two

How can administrators support SEL in high school settings through changes in policy, processes, and people?

The researchers relied on results from the questions posed by the S*chool Climate Survey* as a quantitative measure of perceptions of the overall social and learning climate of the school. Reflected in Table 5 is the overall range and standard deviation of staffs' perceptions of school climate. The range of scores were 19 through 43 with a means of 31.06 and standard deviation (SD) of 4.51.

Table 5
Results from Questions Assessing School Climate

	N	Min.	Max	Mean	SD
School Climate	67	19	43	31.06	4.51

Illustrated within Table 6 below are the means and standard deviations of the nine questions that measured school climate. Given the nine questions had response values ranging from 1 – 5, the total possible score for any single responder was 45. The potential average or mean is 22.5. Based on the staff responses, the overall mean score was 31.06, indicating to the researchers an overall positive view of the school climate.

Table 6
Results from Individual Questions Assessing School Climate

	Min.	Max	Mean	SD
1. On most days, how enthusiastic are the students about being at school?	1	4	2.99	0.6
2. To what extent are teachers trusted to teach in the way they think is best?	1	5	3.75	0.86
3. How positive are the attitudes of your colleagues?	1	5	3.62	0.76
4. How supportive are students in their interactions with each other?	2	5	3.43	0.71
5. How respectful are the relationships between teachers and students?	2	5	3.81	0.69
6. How optimistic are you that your school will improve in the future?	1	5	3.62	0.95
7. How often do you see students helping each other without being prompted?	2	4	2.75	0.6
8. When new initiatives to improve teaching are presented at your school, how supportive are your colleagues?	2	5	3.32	0.74
9. Overall, how positive is the working environment at your school?	1	5	3.8	0.83

Note: N=67

Upon further examination, there were only two respondents below both the calculated mean and the possible mean. These presented total scores of 22 and 21. Even though these were two standard deviations below the computed mean, the answers are only less than 1.5 below the potential mean of the category, indicating a slightly cynical view of school culture for these individuals, but overall a positive view of the school culture for the majority (see Table 6). Questions 2, 3, and 8 focused upon the teachers' sense of trust for making appropriate pedagogical choices in their class and their perception of collegial support to change. These questions align to the idea that trust is required to be have an inviting school climate. The response mean of these three questions was 2- standard deviations above the potential mean, indicating teachers feel empowered to make independent decisions and expect to be supported by their colleagues when implementing these related changes. Analysis of responses indicate the teachers felt, empowered and supported to make intentional pedagogical choices that implemented elements of a Invitational Education theory and practices.

Further extracted from Table 6, two questions, 1 and 7, received no scores of five and a means of less than three, indicating that students were not as enthusiastic about school nor prone to helping others. Conversely, question 4, "How supportive are students in their interactions with each other?" received no scores of one and a means of 3.43. This juxtaposition is interesting because teachers perceived a student more likely to support their peers, but not on academic endeavors, without direction from instructors. Again, this raises the issue of intentionality not consistently demonstrated to the degree that students view their role as one of peer helper with other students.

From the standpoint of having an overall positive culture, the mean score was 3.8, second to the highest mean of 8.1 regarding the respect level shown between staff and students. This reveals that the element of respect is high within the school environments and perhaps lends itself to creating a positive culture. However, a caveat exists regarding the support of colleagues or their positive attitudes that were two of the lower scores, at means of 3.32 and 3.62, respectively. Again, this could denote another area of a lack of consistent intentionality.

Another clear indication of support as perceived from teachers was the support from their administrative teams. Question 2 indicated, with a mean of 3.75, teachers felt trusted to do what is best when it comes to instruction. The overall average of 31.06 out of 45, which is two standard deviations above the mathematical mean of 22.5, suggests that the participating teachers expressed a tendency to view the school culture as generally positive in relation to perceptions of their students versus their negative opinions of colleagues. However, this inconsistency based on perceptions of individuals within the school reveals a tendency for the school environment to be unintentional disinviting at times, depending on who was interacting with whom.

The interview with the district administrator revealed a demonstrated lack of support for SEL by administrators as exhibited by his perception that SEL growth is intangible and thereby not measured. He explicitly stated, "Administrators may think, 'is there some way we measure the value-added to doing this [SEL initiatives]'?" The district administrator further expressed, "It is up to the building leaders to support teachers." He did note, "We recognize the value of every student and work to have places where the student can connect." Additionally, the District level administrator shared the district's work related to exploration of SEL standards with a cadre teachers, social workers, and counselors as to the initiative's' effectiveness. The cadre had been meeting for the last two years. While the cadre members have been examining practices that support SEL inclusion, the cadre's work related to implementation of or support for SEL practices had not been formally shared with the instructional staff. The district administrator's perspective

regarding building level administration level of support seemed to conflict with to the building administrative level, which expressed enthusiasm and support for further embedding SEL initiatives. Specifically, all the participating building administrators were examining ways to include additional SEL initiatives.

Discussion of Findings

Analysis of the data resulted in identification of three significant themes involving utilization of invitational education practices for SEL implementation. The resulting themes were an *unintentional invitation, a lack of dissemination and training on SEL Standards, and the disparity of familiar routines and processes.* By increasing understanding of these themes, the first steps in creating an invitational atmosphere will begin. An intentionally inviting environment will not only encourage SEL initiatives but will also seamlessly integrate them within classrooms seeking to improve students' social and emotional outcomes.

Theme One: The Organization is Unintentionally Inviting

Purkey and Novak (2016) established four levels of invitations whereby an organization can be either intentionally inviting or disinviting compared to unintentionally inviting or disinviting. As expressed in the findings from interviews, observations, document analysis, and surveys, the schools and district at large involved with this study showed no evidence of being fully aware of how inviting they are being related to elements of the organization. As described by Purkey and Novak (2016), professionals being unintentionally inviting relates to natural leadership whereby teachers are unable to explain why they have positive outcomes. Typically, organizations consistently exhibiting unintentional invitations experience success on their best days and struggle when the results become more difficult to attain, while also becoming disorganized, unpredictable, and disoriented (Purkey & Novak, 2016). Adelman and Taylor (2006), Creemers and Kyriakides (2011), and Zins (2004) all found when SEL is examined and implemented; it is offered inconsistently across buildings, cohorts, and classrooms. Previous findings are supported herein based on the expressed level of trust indicated by teachers to do what they believe to be best confounded by the teachers' continued tpessimism related to how students treat each other with care or respect. This analysis indicates the need for the organization to be proficient, consistent, and organized with their approach to implementing SEL. When implementing a new program, an organization operating as unintentionally inviting creates lag due to a lack of proficient organizational processes that emphasis I-CORT. Unfortunately, all five high schools involved in this study continue to use different tools and approaches for teaching SELwhile the district continues to monitor level of success without considering the need for explicit and overt support for the clear SEL goals or an overall approach.

Further analysis of researcher observations and teacher feedback in surveys or through focus groups demonstrated staff's willingness to learn to engage students in SEL material. Still, the lack of intentional invitation for students to be a part of their learning resounds in the teachers' perception of their students' *grit* and *growth mindset*. The researchers believe students and teachers' lack fidelity with the SEL offerings, which serves as an obstacle that needs resolution. The lack of fidelity has to do with the lack of intentional invitation to join in the process as opposed to the students and teachers' apparent willingness to learn more about it.

Further reinforcing this theme of being unintentionally inviting, the data supports teachers and administrators are willing to invite parents and stakeholders into the process of SEL implementation but lack the knowledge or ability to be intentional. This is exacerbated by the disorganization around a focused effort to instruct SEL Standards and the disjointed programs and

policies implemented across the district. Overall, this lack of an intentional invitation concerning SEL across the district leaves schools with a fragmented approach to implementing, teaching, and measuring SEL.

Theme Two: Lack of Dissemination and Training on SEL Standards

For the last two years, there has been a cadre of teachers, social workers, and counselors working to identify the standards being taught within the district. To date, this work seems to occur in a vacuum with no time given to presenting findings to secondary, high-school leaders. Following the first theme of being unintentionally inviting, this theme's lack of dissemination and training on SEL Standards is due to other tasks or initiatives taking priority. Other priorities like diversity training for staff, trauma-informed schools, and exploration of minimum proficiency for core classes are seen as all consuming. By using an invitational approach, addressing two or three of the topics occurs. The lack of knowledge around SEL standards should then come as no surprise as to why itself initiatives are not a priority for implementation within the classroom.

Yet, Williamson, Modecki, and Guerra (2015) cited how researchers found SEL programs increase positive youth outcomes, school participation, social adjustment, and academic achievement. Further, they denoted how these SEL skills are pertinent to other models of prevention, promotion, and recovery. Thus, intentionally inviting SEL skills in a systematic process is essential and efficient.

Unfortunately, administrators admitted to little knowledge of the SEL standards. Only one participating principal, claimed to know SEL standards. As a result, his expectations changed how he disciplined and had conversations with parents about their student. Stating his awareness allowed him to concretely show the SEL standard to parents, demonstrate how their child was not meeting the standard, and then create an improvement plan. While his approach is reflective of an invitational mindset, it does not universally occur in the district due to a lack of knowledge or training as to intentionally inviting others to the SEL conversation.

From observations of responses during the focus groups, it was evident teachers were curious about the SEL standards but felt they lacked time to read, review, or implement them. Some of the focus groups discussed teacher buy-in and the consensus therein was SEL implementation was best for students. Beyond rigor teachers further expressed belief that SEL provided a different way to having them engage with their curriculum. These teachers expressed an interest in leveraging themselves, their classrooms, or their lessons more approachable to students but also making them feel more welcomed. Being welcomed into the process of learning is essential to students (Adelman and Taylor (2011).

Theme Three: Disparity of Common Routines and Processes

Many of the participating staff members recounted how other initiatives had not allowed them sufficient opportunity to explore different ways in which students learned. Consequently, the lack of opportunity or emphasis did not allow them to leverage differences in students to increase the capacity to engage in SEL. This lack of opportunity or emphasis has left many teachers unfocused and searching for consistency. Even though the interview with the district-level administrator revealed there are remnants of many programs around the district that teachers still utilize, their implementation is not necessarily because they are the best, but rather because teachers received training to effectively implement them. Consequently, schools often utilize past strategies in a piecemeal fashion. Or the strategies are exhibited by only one or two staff members. While high school B admitted to using the Top 20 program and leaning on the fully trained staff

from high school E, a fragmented approach to professional development is counter to the change model illustrated in the double helix model advocated by Purkey and Novak (2016). The researchers believe becoming an invitational organization as well as implementing the change model for SEL adoption (Elias et al., 2016) is crucial for sustained success. Specifically, in Purkey and Novak's double helix model, there are progressions toward strand organization and systematic incorporation, which aligns with year two of the adoption model for SEL advocated by Elias et al. (2016). Thus, consistent professional development and common high expectations for implementation promotes sustained success.

Conclusion

As noted by one participating teacher, "SEL is the most important work we do and can dictate [impact] so many other successes in schools." This research sought to identify barriers to dedicated professionals seeking to improve students' SEL skills. While we determined the challenges of inviting SEL into the suburban high school to achieve the project's ultimate goal, this work can arguably generalize to other settings.

Leveraging the five P's of IE and the SEL Standards from CASEL, the researchers identified which organizations within the district were unintentionally inviting, especially concerning SEL initiatives. While the researchers were able to document small pockets of success being made by a few teachers, overall, there is a preponderance of unintentional invitations toward district-wide implemntation of SEL initiatives. Purkey and Novak (2016) explicated the lack of success or indifference resulting from guesswork and inconsistent training, beliefs, and expectations of such organizations. Crucially, district-wide and school leaders seeking sustained success for SEL inititives and improved school climate must willingly embrace the need for consistent application, training, and fidelity to scale the instruction to an extensive, school-wide approach (Adleman & Taylor, 2011; Elias et al., 2016; Zins, 2003). Based on this research, the district has clearly been unintentionally disinviting in regard to effective implementation of district-wide SEL implementation.

The lack of knowledge through appropriate training around SEL standards has led to a more disjointed approach in the application of SEL standards. Overall, principals and the district-level administrator were lacking in their knowledge of and implementation plan of SEL standards or the effective utilization of invitational education theory and practice for improving school climate and learning achievement. The lack of understanding of invitational education theory and the explicit support for high schools regarding SEL implementation iss a barrier that must be overcome (Brackett et al., 2015; and Durlak et al,.2015).

The administrators and teachers of the schools that have been implementing SEL standards make clear that a unified, intentionally inviting message is needed. Their beliefs echo thoughts around the positive impact of an intentionally inviting school advocated by Young and Schoenlien (2017) and Anderson (2019). In this regard, the participating district can do better. The tenets and assumptions of Invitational Education theory and practice (Purkey & Novak, 2016) align well with research by Brackett et al., (2015) that documented an effective action plan for successful SEL implementation. An intergrated approach and intentionally inviting mindset should be embraced.

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