

THE EFFECTS OF A FOUR-WEEK PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INFUSED SOCIAL
EMOTIONAL AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTION ON STUDENTS'
SOCIAL EMOTIONAL AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT SELF-PERCEPTIONS

by

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(Under the Direction of Bryan McCullick)

ABSTRACT

As the need for students to develop socially increases, so does the need for social-emotional learning in all classrooms both during and after school, including physical education and physical activity settings. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to analyze the influence of a four-week, physical activity-infused social-emotional and character development (SECD) intervention on students' SECD self-perceptions. A total of 29 students participated from the after-school program, the *PAL Program*. The students were placed in control and intervention groups based on their attended school. All participants completed the Social-Emotional Learning Scale (SELS) and the Social-Emotional and Character Development Scale (SECDs), and the intervention group participated in 12 SECD lessons. The results of this study found significance in scores when compared to grades. However, further research is needed using a larger sample size and increased intervention time to better understand the effects of an SECD physical activity intervention on students' self-perceptions.

INDEX WORDS: Social-emotional and character development, social-emotional learning, after-school programs, self-perceptions

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Today, the need for the development of life skills in children through sport is evident, with most organized programs pushing for social-emotional development as an outcome (Gould & Carson, 2008). This effort to teach youth life skills in sport is clearly seen in the emergence of sports organizations such as *The First Tee* which teaches life skills through golf (Weiss, 2006) and *Pop Warner Little Scholars* which aims to instill academic and athletic values in boys and girls through football, cheerleading, and dance. Furthermore, scholars have given this idea moderate attention. Some organizations, such as after-school programs (ASPs), have selected the instructional model Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR), which uses sport and physical activity as a vehicle for helping underserved youth develop personal skills that are useful in navigating society (Hellison, 2003, Hellison & Walsh, 2002). A recent study focused on physical education (PE) and other classrooms using the TPSR model. The results of the study indicated that little professional development for teachers was needed to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to teach the TPSR model. Also, the TPSR model could be used in a school-wide curriculum to develop responsibility in students (Escartí, Llopis-Goig, & Wright, 2018). The model serves as a framework for programs around the country and is often conducted in after-school programs.

ASPs have been around since the 19th century; however, they have become more popular in the last two decades due to the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (Hurd & Deutsch, 2017; Roth, Malone, & Brooks-Gunn, 2010). ASPs offer a wide variety of activities from homework

help to academic enrichment to physical activity (PA) (Shemoff & Vandell, 2007). Some ASPs even focus on social and emotional learning (SEL). Due to most ASPs being tied to a local school, they often align with school systems' academic calendars, meaning they are operating when school is in session. This consistent schedule, along with an open curriculum, make ASPs the prime location for targeting and developing SEL skills.

According to Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), the leading organization in striving to enact evidence-based SEL in all schools from pre-kindergarten to high school, the primary focus of SEL skills are the following: understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (2012). SEL skills are considered necessary life skills, which is why some schools have implemented school-wide SEL programs. This means that SEL skills are integrated into lessons in each subject throughout the entire school day, including PE. At first, PE may not seem like the ideal place to teach students SEL skills; however, as evidence indicates, sports and physical activity can be a gateway to developing life skills, including SEL skills (Ciotto & Gagnon, 2018).

One important distinction to consider is that PE and PA in ASPs are not the same. PE is usually reserved for in-school time only, but other forms of physical activity often occur after school, such as sport practices and ASPs. PE is instructional time that involves pre-planning, instruction to develop a skill, activities to practice the skill, a closure to review, and post-planning reflection. PA is play time with no planning or instruction. In school, recess could be described as PA. In ASPs, PA usually look like "free time" or "open play", which means students are not playing an organized game, but instead, find a piece of equipment to keep themselves entertained. However, if PA is organized into more of a PE-like setting with planned

and instructed games for students, it could become a place for learning and developing SEL skills through game play. In fact, Hellison developed the TPSR model to teach students to be responsible to the point that they would then implement responsibility autonomously into every aspect of their lives (Hellison, 2003). This model has mostly been used in ASPs due to the smaller number of students per lesson (Hellison, 2011; Pozo et al., 2016). Although studies have used models like TPSR, which is closely tied to SEL skills, there is a need for research that focuses on measuring the development of SEL skills in PA of ASPs.

There are few ways to measure SEL and social-emotional and character development (SECD), especially for elementary-aged students. Although similar to SEL, SECD is slightly different in that it focuses on character skills, such as management of emotions and truthfulness towards self and others (Berkowitz & Grych, 2000; Eisenberg, Champion, & Ma, 2004; King et al., 2005; Lerner et al., 2005; Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004). It can be difficult to measure SEL and SECD without first testing the knowledge of the students. Students must first be made aware of their behaviors, motivations and attitudes (Ji, DuBois, & Flay, 2013). This can be accomplished using self-assessment; self-assessment is a type of measurement that identifies strengths and weaknesses in comparison to a standard (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, & Wright, 2006). A type of self-assessment is a scale, like the social-emotional and character development scale (SECDS). SECDS measures the social-emotional learning and character development of elementary students.

With the realization that students spend a majority of their day in school, it is important that they are being taught more than just academics, such as SECD skills. Not only can these skills be taught in the classroom, they can also be taught in other settings such as ASPs. ASPs provide extra opportunities for learning through a variation of activities, such as PA. PA can be

used to teach SECD skills through the use of sports and games (Ciotto & Gagnon, 2018).

However, if SECD skills are not measured, there is no way to know if the SECD skills are being learned. SECD skills have been measured in other classroom settings, but they have not yet been measured using PA or PE. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to analyze the influence of a four-week, physical activity-infused SECD intervention on students' SECD self-perceptions.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to analyze the influence of a four-week, physical activity-infused SECD intervention on students' SECD self-perceptions. In order to do this, it was first important to understand the history of social and emotional learning (SEL) and social-emotional and character development (SECD) in education. It was also important to identify how SEL and SECD have been measured in the classroom and specifically, in physical education (PE) or physical activity (PA). Literature was found on the most recent (last five years) studies of ASPs, especially those focusing on SEL. This chapter highlights this literature and is structured into three sections: (a) history and measurement of social and emotional learning, (b) recent history of after-school programs, and (c) social and emotional learning in physical activity.

History and Measurement of Social and Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning (SEL) has become a hot topic in education today due to the need for students to develop skills for life both inside and outside of the classroom. It is believed that the term 'social and emotional learning' was first introduced to society during the early meetings of the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) in 1993 (CASEL, 2004; Humphrey, 2013). As defined by CASEL, SEL means:

The processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skill necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationship, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2012, p. 4)

Although CASEL first to coin the term SEL, they were not the first to believe that social and emotional components should be included in education. For instance, during the progressive education movement, people began searching for new ways to assess students and moved away from traditional methods (Hayes, 2006). This movement led to experiential learning and the beginnings of teaching social skills such as cooperation, which is also a SEL skill (Humphrey, 2013).

The purpose of SEL is to develop students' social-emotional comprehension, which in turn allows them to encode, interpret, and reason social-emotional information (Lipton & Nowicki, 2009). Literature shows that strengthening social skills increases the likelihood that students will form and keep friendships, establish positive relations with teachers, engage in class activities, and participate in learning (Denham, 2006). Thus, SEL programs have been developed and implemented into schools at all age levels. As new programs in education are developed, accurate assessments of these programs are needed to ensure that the intended improvements are occurring. When reviewing SEL literature, it appears that questionnaires are the most commonly used method for assessment; however, some questionnaires come in other formats, such as scales. This section will further elaborate on how these assessments have been used in education, specifically with elementary children.

Questionnaires. “Questionnaires are sets of questions printed on paper or created through an online tool, which are used for both qualitative and quantitative research” (Hahn, 2016). Questionnaires are a common measurement tool for research due to their easy accessibility, ability to be created to fit the study, and low financial cost. In SEL, questionnaires are often used because they can be adapted to focus on one content area, such as self-awareness, to elicit more accurate responses from participants. Both open-ended and close-ended

questionnaires have been used in SEL; however, it is common to only choose one method during a study to keep it consistent. Open-ended questions are best when trying to elicit genuine responses. This is not used as often as close-ended questions with elementary students due to young students often becoming confused or misunderstanding the question. Although confusion may still occur, close-ended questions are easier for elementary students because they are given choices, such as yes or no, true or false. An example of a SEL close-ended questionnaire used with elementary students is the Relationship Questionnaire (Rel-Q). Rel-Q is a self-reported questionnaire which assesses students' self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making (Denham, Ji, Hamre, Collaborative for Academic, & Emotional, 2010). Within close-ended questionnaires there are several types; however, one stands out as being used with elementary students to measure SEL—scales.

Scales. Scales are an ideal option for evaluating elementary students' SEL because they can be adapted to fit the content and the age of the students. A scale that has been used to measure SEL is the Social-Emotional and Character Development Scale (SECDS) (Ji, DuBois, & Flay, 2013). By simplifying the answers to only yes or no with one of each emphasized, the students are better able to express their response to the question rather than just yes or no without also becoming confused by lengthy response options. For early elementary students, some scales use pictures rather than words. For instance, the Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Social Acceptance for Young Children (PSPCSAYC). This scale measures self-awareness through the use of 24 picture plates (Harter and Pike, 1984, p. 55). Students are asked which picture of a child they identify most with, and then asked a follow-up question to assess if the child identifies a lot or a little with the child pictured (Denham et al., 2010). However, not all scales are self-reported.

Due to the complexity of SEL concepts, some scales are completed by parents and teachers through their observations of the students. An example of this is the Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS). SSIS has parent, teacher and student forms, which assesses students' self-management, relationship skills, responsible decision-making (lack of risky, disruptive/externalizing behaviors and internalizing symptoms), and academic competence (Denham et al., 2010). Describing the numerous scales which can be used to measure SEL of elementary students is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is important to understand that SEL can be measured in several ways and does not always have to be reported by only the student or teacher. It should also be noted that the need for measuring SEL goes beyond the regular classroom and into other areas such as PE and ASPs, where SEL concepts are also being taught.

Recent History of After School Programs

After-school programs (ASPs) are programs that are managed by adults and provide a wide range of activities, such as socializing activities, academic enrichment, physical activity, crafts, music, homework help, community service, snacks, and scouting (Halpern, 2002; Vandell, Shernoff, Pierce, Bolt, Dadisman, and Brown, 2005; Kremer, Maynard, Polanin, Vaughn, & Sarteschi, 2015). Although ASPs have been around since the 19th century, they have become more popular due to the increase in funding from the U.S. Government, which occurred after the establishment of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (Hurd & Deutsch, 2017; Roth, Malone, and Brooks-Gunn, 2010). This act also brought about the creation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, which were developed to diminish the achievement gap through after-school academic enrichment for high-poverty and low-performing schools (U.S.

Department of Education 2011). As a result, ASPs began targeting both children and youth who were at-risk.

According to Lauer, Akiba, Wilkerson, Apthorp, Snow, and Martin-Glenn, at-risk students have more to gain from ASPs (2006). This is because at-risk students need more than just academic help, they also need help in other child development areas. For this reason, some ASPs focus on academics and preventing other problematic behaviors such as crime and substance use. They also focus on increasing school engagement, school attendance and socio-emotional outcomes (Richards, Miller, O'Donnell, Wasserman, and Colder, 2004; Apsler, 2009; Bohnert, Richards, Kohl, and Randall, 2009; Durlak, Weissberg, and Pachan, 2010). When looking for ways to help students outside of academics, some ASPs have turned to SEL.

SEL-focused ASPs. According to Hurd and Deutsch, “out-of-school settings, such as after-school programs and community organizations are natural sites for social and emotional learning (SEL) interventions” (2017). This is because ASPs include goals and activities that focus on developing students’ cognition, socialization and emotional skills. The first step in building SEL into ASPs is creating an environment that is beneficial to the development of SEL. This starts with those who supervise the school/program?. These supervisors should incorporate SEL into the curriculum and communicate the program’s values to the students, school staff, and parents. They should also aim to develop meaningful staff-student relationships (Hurd and Deutsch, 2017). Another important aspect of an ASP focusing on SEL is using evidence-based-skills training, which follows the acronym SAFE. SAFE stands for set of activities, active forms of learning, focused component aimed at improving students’ SEL skills, and explicit learning objectives (Hurd and Deutsch, 2017; Durlak, et al., 2010). According to Durlak et al., when performing a meta-analysis of 75 ASPs that focused on personal and social skills, the SAFE

ASPs had significant effects on standardized test scores, grades, social behaviors and problem behaviors (2010). With these findings emphasize that ASPs which implement SAFE are more effective at improving students' academic and SEL skills.

Much research has been performed on ASPs in the last couple of decades not only due to the increasing number of programs, but also their ability to benefit the development of students. Literature of ASPs has most recently focused on best practice methods, which have led to the findings of SAFE guidelines improving students' academic and SEL skills the most. However, research is still needed on specific outcomes of SEL within ASPs, such as relationship management and social awareness. In order to understand the effects of SEL-focused ASPs, Hurd and Deutsch suggest the implementation of evaluations not only for staff, but also participants, through the use of both formal assessment and open-ended interviews (2017). While ASPs are used to teach SEL concepts to students more research on how SEL concepts are being taught is needed.

Social and Emotional Learning in Physical Activity

Unlike other extracurricular activities, school-based ASPs usually occur every weekday for the entire school year and provide a variety of activities, such as PA, homework time, art and crafts, music, games, drama, and theme-based activities (Shemoff & Vandell, 2007). Due to the frequent occurrence and open curriculum, ASPs are a prime place to implement SEL, specifically ASPs with sport and physical activity programs. Sport and PA are used to promote life skills through concepts such as, skill acquisition, team-building, and the experience of winning and losing, which can also be aligned with SEL concepts (Gould & Carson, 2008; Papacharisis, et al., 2005; Wright, Li, Ding, & Pickering, 2010). Adolescents tend to enjoy PA and sports, which is a factor that may contribute to keeping students engaged in an ASP offering

these types of activities (Kleiber, Larson, & Csikszentmihalyi, 1986; McCarthy, Jones & Clark-Carter, 2008; Gordon, Jacobs, & Wright, 2016). However, little is known about the impact of SEL on PA and sports programs, especially when using an instructional model (Ang, Penney, & Swabey, 2011; Talebzadeh & Jarfari, 2012).

Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) is a pedagogical model that was created to teach students life skills through sports (Escartí, Llopis-Goig, & Wright, 2018). TPSR is believed to be one of the best PE models for promoting values, character, responsibility, and life skills (Pozo, Grao-Cruces, & Pérez-Ordás, 2016). TPSR is made up of five levels: (a) respecting the rights and feelings of others, (b) self-motivation, (c) self-direction, (d) caring, and (e) transfer (Hellison, 2003). Hellison developed TPSR so that students would ultimately become so responsible that they implement it into every facet of their lives (2003). Due to transfer being the most difficult, most studies' results stem from a combination of the first four levels (Hellison and Walsh, 2002). When first looking at TPSR's five levels, it might be difficult to see the connection to SEL core competencies. However, upon further examination, there is a relationship between the two. For instance, in order to respect the rights and feelings of others, one must possess the skill of social awareness. Also, in order to have self-motivation and self-direction, a student must first have self-awareness. According to Jacobs and Wright, "this model empowers students to make choices and self-reflect, and therefore, aligns greatly with the SEL skills of decision making and self-awareness" (2014). It is important to note that TPSR can be used with numerous sports, such as soccer, basketball, ultimate frisbee?, etc., thus making it easy to implement SEL skills into a wide range of PA. TPSR can also be modified based on age and skill, thus making it an easy model to implement with any age group. However, most studies have occurred with small numbers of participants in settings such as ASPs (Hellison, 2011; Pozo

et al., 2016). This may be due to large class sizes in PE with students of fluctuating motivational rates and degrees of interest (Wright, Li, and Ding, 2010). More research is needed on TPSR in PA and ASPs settings with positive results.

Instructional models like TPSR may be the solution to integrating SEL concepts into PA settings like those offered in ASPs; however, other models such as the sport education model (SEM) and the cooperative learning (CL) model also focus on SEL concepts. For instance, SEM was created by Daryl Siedentop with one of the intents for students to learn social development and sportsmanship (Lambdin, 1995). The students are given or assigned roles such as coach, equipment manager, etc. and are responsible for filling these roles for the duration of the season. Through the autonomy of these roles, SEM can simultaneously develop students' SEL concepts of relationship management and social awareness (Carlson & Hastie, 1997). As for the CL model, it is a pedagogical model that combines the learning of new knowledge with social interaction (Cohen, 1994; Johnson & Johnson, 1989, 2009; Kagen & Kagen, 2009; Metzler, 2011; Slavin, 2010). A component of CL model is positive interdependence, which relies upon every person in the group fulfilling his role, and self-awareness requires each person to be conscious of his character and feelings, thus making self-awareness a necessary component of positive interdependence (CASEL, 2016). Instructional models may not be necessary in order to implement SEL into PA in ASPs; however, if taught correctly, these models are validated in teaching the content that is closely aligned with SEL core concepts.

Summary

It appears evident from the literature that teaching students SEL can improve their academic and social skills and decrease emotional distress and conduct problems (Durlak, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Gullotta, 2015; Durlack, Weissberg, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011;

Sklad, Dieksta, Ritter, Ben, & Gravestain, 2012). This evidence is impetus for why SEL is being implemented both within the classroom and even in ASPs. As the need to prepare students for life beyond the classroom increases, so does the need for SEL to be included in the classroom, specials (like PE), and ASP. SEL has already been implemented in both the classroom and ASP; however, it has not made its way to into PE or PA yet.

When implementing SEL into PA, teachers are not required to develop new teaching strategies or models because there are some that already focus on one or more of the five SEL core competencies. Models like cooperative learning (CL), sport education model (SEM), and teaching personal and social responsibility (TPSR) are all models currently being used in PE that support SEL concepts (Jacobs and Wright, 2014). However, in order to ensure that SEL skills are being learned in ASP's PA programs, it is important to be able to assess them. Currently there are several questionnaires and scales being used in other classroom settings to measure SEL, but none have examined SEL for PA levels in ASPs. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to analyze the influence of a four-week, physical activity-infused SECD intervention on students' SECD self-perceptions.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to analyze the influence of a four-week, physical activity-infused SECD intervention on students' SECD self-perceptions. This chapter describes the methods used for the study. Specifically, the chapter includes the: (a) outline of the research design, (b) participants used, (c) data collection techniques, and (d) data analysis procedures.

Research Design

The research design of this study involves the use of an ASP called the *Physical Activity and Learning (PAL) Program*. This program is funded through a five-year grant by 21st Century Community Learning Centers and is currently in its fifth year. The *PAL Program* was designed to help students identified by the school as being at-risk. The criteria for "at-risk" included the following: single parent families, lack of parent contact, large family size, limited transportation options, and parents with low education. The *PAL Program* has two sites located at two elementary schools in the Clarke County School District. One site is located at Chase Street Elementary School (CSES) and the other at Fowler Drive Elementary School (FDES).

For this quasi-experimental design study, CSES was used as the control group and FDES as the experimental group. Both groups received the social-emotional scale prior to the intervention and the social-emotional and character development scale (SECDS) pre and post intervention. Only the students at FDES received the intervention. The intervention was four weeks and consisted of a total of 12 lesson plan, each focused on two to three topics from the

scale, such as “I apologize when I have done something wrong” and “I make myself a better person.” At the conclusion of 12 lessons, the SECDS was again administered to both groups.

Intervention. The intervention took place during the physical activity and games (PAGs) portion of the *PAL Program*. The *PAL Program* is a federally-funded after-school program conducted at both CSES and FDES. The daily schedule was as follows: the students began their day at 2:35 P.M. with snack and homework time. The second and third graders were in one classroom and the fourth and fifth graders were in another. At 3:30 P.M., all students moved to the gymnasium for PAGs. The final portion of the day, 4:30 to 5:30 P.M., was reading for the fourth and fifth graders and math for the second and third graders. The intervention took place during PAGs portion of the day.

Due to limited time, the PAGs lesson followed a modified version of Hellison’s TPSR model. Hellison’s TPSR model lesson includes the following: relational time, awareness talk, physical activity, group meeting, and self-reflection time (Hellison, 2011). However, the SECD intervention lesson was as follows: awareness talk, SECD Activity One, SECD Activity Two (if time allows), and a group meeting. The purpose of the SECD activities were to provide opportunities for the students to practice using the SECD concepts presented during the awareness talk at the beginning of the lesson and again during the group meeting at the conclusion of the lesson. There were two teachers facilitating the PAGs portion of the *PAL Program* with one teacher at each of the sites. Both teachers had a teaching license in physical education and were second-year teachers in the *PAL Program*. Since the students, other *PAL Program* staff, and school staff were familiar with the two teachers, each teacher remained at their designated site. At CSES, all routines and lesson plans remained the same for PAGs.

Fidelity Measures. To ensure intervention fidelity, observers came once a week and used a checklist (as seen in APPENDIX D) to ensure that all aspects of the SECD lesson were being met. There were two observers, both of whom work for the *PAL Program*. Both observers were trained on how to use the checklist and rubric prior to data collection. Only one observer was present at a time. Each observer? observed a total of 4 lessons (33%).

Participants

The participants of this study were 30 2nd-5th grade students enrolled in the *PAL Program*. These students were identified and recruited for the program because they were considered at-risk by the previously mentioned factors and were academically behind in reading, mathematics, or both. Some students have been in the program for multiple years; however, the majority entered the program the year of the study.

At FDES, there were 10 females and 8 males for a total of 18 students. CSES had 12 students participate with 8 females and 4 males. With regards to the demographic information (refer to APPENDIX A), the age range of the students was 7 to 12. A majority of the participants were either African-American or Hispanic, with one student being Native American/Alaskan Native. It should be noted that this information was collected from the parents prior to the students enrolling into the *PAL Program*.

Data Collection

The students completed the SELS and the SECDs at the beginning of the four-weeks. It took the students on average five minutes to complete either survey. At FDES, the students received an intervention of 12 lessons over the four-weeks. These lessons were validated by an observer who ensured that the required elements of the SECD lessons were implemented by the instructor as seen in APPENDIX D. The observer evaluated at minimum 25% of the lessons,

included in the results of this study. CSES students did not receive the intervention of SECD lessons but continued with lessons as normal. At the conclusion of the four-weeks, the students completed the SECDS again.

Survey Instruments. Students were administered the *Social-Emotional Learning Scale (SELS)* prior to the intervention and the *Social-Emotional and Character Development Scale (SECDS)* prior to and after the intervention. The SELS consists of 20 items with the following three subscales: task articulation, peer relationships, and self-regulation (see APPENDIX E). The participants had five Likert response options for each item: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. This questionnaire was used to identify the participants SEL baseline knowledge prior to the intervention of the SECDS. The SELS was validated in a study that used 633 4th through 6th grade students. A correlated three-factor model was found to be adequate (provide stats here) when fit for maximum likelihood (Coryn, Spybrook, Evergreen, & Blinkiewicz, 2009). The SECDS is “a useful instrument for collecting data from a sample of respondents who can naturally be brought together for the purpose” (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003, p.10). This questionnaire includes 28 items that focus on character and social-emotional concepts (see APPENDIX C). The participants answered the questionnaire using a 4-point scale with the following responses: *NO!*, *no*, *yes*, *YES!*. The participants chose a response based on their agreement with the statements listed in the SECDS (Ji, DuBois, & Flay, 2013). The SECDS was chosen by the researcher due to it being previously validated in a study using elementary-aged students enrolled in the Positive Action program. Positive Action is a school-wide intervention that focuses on social-emotional and character development. This study used cluster-focused-intent-to-treat with a group of students and followed them from grades 3 to 5 with five waves of data collection. The results of this study found that the multidimensional and

hierarchical factor structure of the scale remained consistent across the five waves with reliability and validity to both gender and race. The validity analysis of the SECDS found that “it had relationships with factors that represent potential influences on SECD as well as outcomes of which SECD may contribute,” (Ji, DuBois, & Flay, 2013, p.142).

During the *PAL Program*, the SELS and the SECDS were distributed to the students through the software program *Qualtrics*. This software program was used due to the students having easy access to computers through their elementary schools and the author having support within the institution if a problem arose.

Data Analysis

Data were recorded in *Qualtrics* and exported to Excel. The responses were analyzed using *Qualtrics*. All statistical analyses were performed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Descriptive statistics of the groups were recorded, such as Groups 1 and 2 scores on the SELS, SECDS (pre and post-test), and grade (Vetter, 2017). A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the two groups to one independent factor, which was grade, to determine if there were any statistically significant mean differences (Holt, 2018). The one-way ANOVA was repeated to assess the differences in SECD between the students at FDES and CSES based on difference from pre-SECDS to post-SECDS, grade, attendance, and gender. Fisher’s Least Significant Difference (LSD) post hoc test with statistical difference accepted as $p < 0.05$, was run to determine any significant findings.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the intervention on the students' social-emotional and character development (SECD) self-perceptions. Specifically, the descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA results are provided in the first section. The remainder of results are presented in the following order: (a) descriptive statistics, (b) fidelity to lessons and student engagement, and (c) grade level differences, (d) gender differences, (e) group comparisons, and (f) attendance.

Descriptive Statistics

The results of this study reported a total of 29 students completed the Social Emotional Learning Scale (SELS) and the Social Emotional and Character Development Scale (SECDS) (pre and post). Among the 29 students, there were two groups: intervention (n=17) and control (n=12). Table 1 indicates the average score on the SELS for the control group (Group 1) was 69.92 with an average of 41.17 on the pre-test SECDS and 40.42 on the post-test SECDS. As for the intervention group (Group 2), they scored an average of 79.76 on the SELS and 42.53 on the pre-test SECDS and an average of 41.82 on the post SECDS. Thus, the difference from pre-test to post-test scores for Group 2 from pre to post-test was less at -0.71 than Group 1 at -0.75. The results of this study reported that the four-week, physical activity infused SECD intervention had no significance on the impact on the students' SECD self-perceptions.

Table 1.
Significance between Scores on SELS and SECDS

| Survey Type | <i>N</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>SE</i> | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean | |
|-------------------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| | | | | | <i>Lower Bound</i> | <i>Upper Bound</i> |
| SELS | | | | | | |
| Group 1 | 12 | 69.92 | 7.66 | 2.21 | 65.05 | 74.78 |
| Group 2 | 17 | 79.76 | 5.40 | 1.31 | 76.99 | 82.54 |
| Total | 29 | 75.69 | 8.00 | 1.49 | 72.64 | 78.73 |
| Pre-SECDS | | | | | | |
| Group 1 | 12 | 41.17 | 9.43 | 2.72 | 35.18 | 47.16 |
| Group 2 | 17 | 42.53 | 9.34 | 2.27 | 37.73 | 47.33 |
| Total | 29 | 41.97 | 9.23 | 1.72 | 38.45 | 45.48 |
| Post-SECDS | | | | | | |
| Group 1 | 12 | 40.42 | 10.87 | 3.14 | 33.51 | 47.32 |
| Group 2 | 17 | 41.82 | 12.32 | 2.99 | 35.49 | 48.16 |
| Total | 29 | 41.24 | 11.56 | 2.15 | 36.85 | 45.64 |

Note. *M* = mean, *SD* = standard deviation, *SE*=standard error,

Fidelity to Lessons & Student Engagement

This study was focused on the influence of a four-week, physical activity infused SECD intervention on students' SECD self-perceptions. There were 12 SECD lessons in the intervention group with four of these lessons being checked for fidelity using the *Social-Emotional and Character Development Scale Fidelity Checklist & Rubric* (see Appendix D). Results indicated that fidelity to the intervention was strong. The instructor completed the SECD lesson items on average 96.42%. For 75% of observed lessons, the instructor only used one SECD activity and therefore could only complete a total of seven items. However, in lesson seven, the instructor used a second SECD activity and completed all eight items. As for the student engagement levels, student engagement was rated using a "1", "2", or "3", with level "1" meaning few students are engaged; "2", some students engaged; and "3", most students engaged. In lessons 10 and 12, student engagement was scored out of 21; however, lesson five was scored out of 18 due to the instructor missing an item (*Questions Asked about Item*), and lesson seven was scored out of 24 due to adding the second SECD activity. Overall, the student engagement was high with an average of 90.08%.

Table 2.

Significance of Fidelity Measures & Student Engagement

| Lesson Number | % of Items Completed | % of Student Engagement Levels |
|---------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Lesson 5 | 85.71% | 88.89% |
| Lesson 7 | 100% | 91.67% |
| Lesson 10 | 100% | 85.71% |
| Lesson 12 | 100% | 95.24% |
| Average | 96.42% | 90.08% |

Grade Level Differences

A one-way ANOVA was used to compare the students' pre and post-test SECDS scores depending on student grade level. Further analysis using Fisher's LSD post hoc analysis, with a significance level set at $p < 0.05$, reported no statistically significance between the second graders and fifth graders ($p > 0.061$). For other grades, no statistically significant results were found between second graders and third graders ($p > 0.488$), second and fourth graders ($p > 0.303$), third and fourth graders ($p > 0.650$), third and fifth graders ($p > 0.135$), and fourth and fifth graders ($p > 0.348$). Additionally, when looking at comparisons between other grades, an analysis of the *Test of Homogeneity of Variances* found a significance of 0.001 for the pre-test SECDS and no significance ($p > 0.086$) for the post-test SECDS.

Gender Differences

In total there were 29 participants, with 12 males and 17 females, who completed all surveys (SELS and SECDS). A one-way ANOVA was used to compare the students' pre and post-test SECDS with their gender. The analysis showed no significance between groups in the pre-test SECDS ($p > 0.830$) and post-test ($p > 0.608$). A further analysis using the *Test of Homogeneity of Variances* found no significance of 0.818 for the pre-test SECDS and no significance for the post-test SECDS of 0.302.

Group Comparisons

The 29 participants were divided into two groups: Group 1 (control) and Group 2 (intervention). The groups' scores for the SELS and pre-test and post-test SECDS were recorded and compared between and within groups. The range for SELS scores from Group 1 was 55 - 83 and Group 2 ranged from 68 - 91. A significant main effect was reported for the control group and the intervention group when analyzing the scores for the SELS ($p = 0.000$). This means that

significance was found between the two groups when comparing their SELS scores. However, no significance was found for the analysis of the pre-test SECDS ($p>0.703$) and post-test SECDS ($p>0.753$).

Intervention Dosage

Attendance was recorded for the intervention group pertaining to the 12 SECD lessons. A one-way ANOVA was used to compare all participants' pre-test and post-test SECDS scores and difference in change to the students' attendance. Students' attendance for the intervention group ranged from 5 - 12, with a mean of 9.35 lessons. The control group's attendance was recorded as zero, due to them not attending any SECD lessons. This analysis found no significance between groups for pre-test SECDS ($p>0.576$), post-test SECDS ($p>0.815$), and change ($p>0.415$).

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to analyze the influence of a four-week, physical activity-infused Social Emotional and Character Development (SECD) intervention on students' Social Emotional and Character Development (SECD) self-perceptions. Previous literature has shown that SEL concepts can be learned in school settings through implemented programs, such as the school-wide Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) program established by Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2012). Scholars have also found that sports and physical activity can be used as gateways to teach important concepts such as responsibility (Hellison, 2003; Ciotto & Gagnon, 2018). However, these programs usually focus on learning SEL skills in classrooms that teach concepts in reading or math, not physical education and PA. Therefore, this study offers valuable insight into how a concise, physical-activity infused SECD intervention can influence students' SECD self-perceptions.

The most marked finding from the study was the significance between Group 1 and Group 2 when comparing their SELS scores. This supports previous literature, which validated this scale as a measure of elementary students' social and emotional learning (Coryn et. al., 2009). The students' SELS scores established a baseline of students' social and emotional learning self-perceptions. Based on these scores, the researcher was able to determine the potential growth of each participant, when taking the pre and post-test SECDs. These baseline scores along with the pre and post-test SECDs scores for students were used to compare the growth of each student. It should be noted that several students scored the same or similar scores

for the pre and post-test at both sites. This could be due to these students having high awareness of their self-perceptions and are able to more accurately assess themselves (Denham, Wyatt, Bassett, Echeverria, & Knox, 2009).

Additionally, it was found that a statistically significant portion of the students in Group 2 had a decline or similar score in the post-test as they did in the pre-test. This decline in SECDS self-perceptions aligns with previous literature, which found that older elementary students, like fourth and fifth graders, had a decrease in SECDS due to an increase in problem behavior items. It should be noted that this could be due to older students' abilities to discern between the components being measured with the SECDS (Ji, DuBois, & Flay, 2013). It may also imply that students face more SECD challenges as they get older (Washburn et al., 2011). Also, the SECD intervention could have allowed these students to have an increased understanding of their self-perceptions; therefore, it is possible that they answered the post-test SECDS more accurately based on their new found knowledge.

Limitations

Within this quasi-experimental study, some limitations do exist. As Ji, DuBois, and Flay (2013) noted, the impact of self-report on the validity is a concern. The SECDS is a self-reported survey, which means the results reflect the students' self-perceptions, but not necessarily how they behave. It should also be noted that the SECDS has a reading grade level of 3.4, which may have resulted in inaccurate scores due to participants not fully understanding the items. In an attempt to mitigate this issue, the researchers read the items out loud to students and explained terms if students did not understand; however, it is still possible that some students misunderstood the items.

The participants for this study included 2nd-5th grade students from one ASP, the *PAL Program*. This was a limitation because the *PAL Program* only permits selected underserved students. It also has a maximum roster of 60 enrollees. This is partially due to trying to maintain the required staff-to-student ratio between 1:10 and 1:15 on a grant budget (Chung, 2000). However, other ASPs offered within the elementary schools used for this study are open to all students, pre-kindergarten through 5th grade, and no roster limit.

Another limitation is the small sample size of 29 students from only two elementary schools. It would be optimal to have an equal and larger number of students for each treatment, as well as mix the students, rather than having them remain at their same school. However, due to lack of transportation and time, the students remained at the elementary school that they attend. It should also be noted that differences found between the two groups may not be due to the intervention alone, as other factors such as school settings and teachers may influence results.

Implications for Practice & Future Research Directions

The results of this study have implications for change in implementing SECD into structured physical activity and physical education (PE). At first it may seem like a daunting task; however, PE has three domains already included in the national standards, and one of them is the affective domain (Ciotto & Gagnon, 2018; SHAPE, 2013). The affective domain covers social topics like the ones found in the SELS and SECDS. Adding SECD into PE is not a matter of adding curriculum, but instead, changing the way physical educators introduce and teach these social topics to students. In doing so, PE will join in the efforts to improve students' social-emotional skills, which are already being taught and researched in other settings, such as the classroom and ASPs, through school-wide, or organization wide, programs. Therefore, PE and structured PA are behind in implementing SECD and SEL programs into their classroom, and

further research should focus on the influence of these physical activity classroom settings on students' social-emotional skills.

This study was limited by time and the use of students from one after-school program (ASP). However, in the future, studies should focus on implementing a physical activity infused, SECD intervention with a larger sample size, possibly a PE class or larger ASP. The larger sample size should include more than 30 students in each condition, so as to have more data to compare. This may result in more statistically significant findings. As for the instrument used, the SECDS had some items on it that were difficult for students to understand, even when the items read out loud. Therefore, it may also be necessary to use or create an instrument that is more easily understood by children. Another suggestion is to increase the physical activity infused SECD intervention. This study used 12 lessons, spread out over 4-weeks. However, it may be necessary to have more lessons for several weeks in order for students' SECD self-perceptions to change.

Conclusion

Although the results of this study found small significance with a short intervention of 12 SECD lessons, it leaves room for speculation on the impacts of longer interventions in structured physical activity on students' SECD self-perceptions. It is important to note that physical activity has long been a place for teaching others about more than physical skills, it is a place to learn responsibility (Hellison, 2003), sportpersonship (Lambdin, 1995), and the like. Therefore, promoting and teaching SECD and SEL concepts in structured physical activity settings is not adding to the work load of educators, but instead is bringing awareness of students' self-perceptions through the changing of teachers' language and methods used.

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APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

| Demographics | <i>N</i> | Fowler Drive (%) | Chase Street (%) |
|-----------------------------------|------------|------------------|------------------|
| Grade | | | |
| Second | 5 (16.7%) | 4 (13.3%) | 1 (3.3%) |
| Third | 8 (26.7%) | 7 (23.3%) | 1 (3.3%) |
| Fourth | 7 (23.3%) | 2 (6.7%) | 5 (16.7%) |
| Fifth | 10 (33.3%) | 4 (13.3%) | 5 (16.7%) |
| Gender | | | |
| Male | 13 (43.3%) | 9 (30%) | 4 (12.9%) |
| Female | 17 (56.7%) | 9 (30%) | 8 (26.7%) |
| Ethnicity | | | |
| Black (not Hispanic) | 19 (63.3%) | 8 (26.7%) | 11 (36.7%) |
| Hispanic | 10 (33.3%) | 10 (32.2%) | 0 (0%) |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | 1 (3.3%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (3.3%) |

APPENDIX B

EXAMPLE OF A SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTION

LESSON PLAN

Game for Day: Cooperative Games

Date: Monday, February 4, 2018

Objective(s): Focus on Item 1 of SECDS: “I play nicely with others”

Equipment Needed: Gopher balls, cones, hula hoops, poly spots

Space Requirements: Gymnasium

TEACHER ESSENTIALS & EXPLANATION POINTS

Awareness Talk:

Today’s lesson will focus on item one of the SECDS, “I will play nicely with others”. The teacher will call on students to answer the following questions:

1. What does it mean to play nicely with others?
2. How do I know if I am being nice?
3. Why is it important to play nicely with others?

After the brief discussion, the teacher will introduce the SECD activity 1.

SECD Activity 1: Dinosaur Tag

- Similar to Wolf’s Den
- Setup poly spots to make horizontal “cave” – dinosaur taggers will stay in cave
- Teams will try to run through the cave to collect a dinosaur egg and bring it back without getting tagged
- The team with the most eggs wins
- Can play as a team relay, increase decrease taggers as needed or increase the # of students to go from each team at once from 1-2

After one or two rounds depending on time, the teacher will bring the students back together to briefly touch on what it meant to play nicely with others during Dinosaur Tag. If time allows, the teacher will then give instructions for SECD Activity 2.

SECD Activity 2: Race to Outer Space

Story: Your team is on a planet that has limited resources and is about to explode. There are volcanoes everywhere and the floor is lava. Luckily, your hula hoops protect you from the lava

while you are standing in them. Your job is to use your hula hoop vehicles to get across the lava to collect all of the resources you need to fix your spaceship and escape before the planet explodes.

Setup:

- “Blast off” site can be middle of gym, around middle circle to see who wins
- House teams (5 – diff. colored cones for them to start from)
- In front of each cone, place 5 matching colored poly spots
- Each team gets 3-4 hula hoops for travel
- Spread matching colored dome cones around the gym for them to collect

Directions:

- If you touch the carpet, your team starts over
- The only part of you protected is within the hula hoop
- You want to do this quickly, but communication, planning and patience is the key to winning (Talk about Cross the River last week)
- Place each of the 5 resources on a matching poly spot at your team’s blast off site

Variations:

- Combine teams
- Increase/decrease resources to match time constraint

Group Meeting:

With a few minutes left in class, the teacher will bring the students back together for a closure. The teacher will again ask students questions about what it means to play nicely with others.

The questions are as follows:

1. During today’s activities, how did you play nicely with others?
2. What could you have done to play more nicely with others?
3. How will you play nicely with others outside of PAL?

APPENDIX C

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT SCALE ITEMS

Question Stem: Do you agree with the following statements about you?

Response options: NO!, no, yes, YES!

| <i>SECDS</i> | <i>Item</i> |
|--------------------|---|
| Prosocial Behavior | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I play nicely with others 2. I do things that are good for the group. 3. I treat my friends the way I like to be treated. 4. I am nice to kids who are different than me. 5. I try to cheer up other kids if they are feeling sad. 6. I am a good friend to others. |
| Honesty | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. I apologize when I have done something wrong. 8. I tell the truth when I have done something wrong. 9. I tell others the truth. 10. I keep promises I make to others. 11. I admit my mistakes. |
| Self-Development | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. I make myself a better person. 13. I keep trying at something until I succeed. 14. I set goals for myself (make plans for the future). 15. I try to be my best. |
| Self-Control | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. I wait my turn in line patiently. 17. I keep my temper when I have an argument with other kids. 18. I follow the rules even when nobody is watching. 19. I ignore other children when they tease me or call me bad names. |

Respect at School

- 20. I speak politely to my teacher and other adults in school.
- 21. I obey my teacher and other adults at schools.
- 22. I follow the directions of my teacher and other adults at school.
- 23. I listen (without interrupting) to my teacher and other adults at school.
- 24. I follow school rules.

Respect at Home

- 25. I speak politely to my parents.
 - 26. I obey my parents.
 - 27. I listen (without interrupting) to my parents.
 - 28. I follow the rules at home.
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(Ji, DuBois, & Flay, 2013).

APPENDIX D

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT SCALE FIDELITY

CHECKLIST & RUBRIC

| Items | <i>Complete (check if complete)</i> | <i>Student Engagement (Levels: 1; 2; or 3)</i> |
|--|---|--|
| Awareness Talk | | |
| Item from SECDS identified | | |
| Item from SECDS explained | | |
| Check for Understanding | | |
| Questions asked about item | | |
| Activities | | |
| PA Game 1 | | |
| PA Game 2 (if used) | | |
| Group Talk | | |
| Item from SECDS identified | | |
| Questions about activities related to the item | | |
| Number of Items Completed | | |

Levels:

Level 1—Few students are engaged (i.e. participating, answering questions, making comments)

Level 2—Some students are engaged (i.e. participating, answering questions, making comments)

Level 3—Most students are engaged (i.e. participating, answering questions, making comments)

APPENDIX E

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING SCALE

Question Stem: Do you agree with the following statements about you?

Response Options: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree

1. Understand situations that cause me to feel happy, sad, angry, or frustrated
2. Can express my emotions without getting mad, excited, or yelling
3. Am able to talk to my parents and teachers about interests I have
4. Understand how my family, school, and others in the community can support my success in school
5. Can explain what I need to do to reach a goal
6. Keep track of my progress toward a goal
7. Understand the feelings expressed by others
8. Can identify differences among cultural groups
9. Work positively in groups with people who are different from me
10. Know different ways to make and keep friends
11. Figure out different ways to make and keep friends
12. Understand what causes problems among my friend in a positive way
13. Can help solve problems among my friends in a positive way
14. Understand that I am responsible for my own actions
15. Understand the need for rules in school
16. Can figure out ahead of time how certain situations may get me into trouble
17. Am able to say no to people or situations that may get me into trouble

18. Figure out different solutions to school problems
19. Figure out different solutions to personal problems
20. Help out at my school