

Socially and Emotionally Competent Leadership: School-based Leadership Practices That Shape Adult Collaboration

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BOSTON COLLEGE

Lynch School of Education and Human Development

Department of Educational Administration and Higher Education

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SOCIALLY AND EMOTIONALLY COMPETENT LEADERSHIP:
SCHOOL-BASED LEADERSHIP PRACTICES THAT SHAPE ADULT COLLABORATION

Dissertation in Practice by

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with Michele M. Conners, Adam Renda, Geoffrey Rose, and Donna Tobin

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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School-based Leadership Practices that Shape Adult Collaboration

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ABSTRACT

Due to opportunity and achievement gaps in schools, leaders face the challenge of monitoring student expectations related to academic rigor and emotional health. As a result, social and emotional learning (SEL) has gained traction for students in the field of education. However, SEL competencies are rarely developed with the adults who work with these students. In this dissertation in practice, interviews, observations and questionnaires were used to collect data about the practices of school-based leaders in a qualitative case study at the elementary and middle school levels. Research revealed what leadership practices modeled SEL competencies, practices such as those involving time and resources, relationship building and sharing of expertise; and how they shaped the ways in which adults collaborate, including honest and authentic dialogue, adult learning, and the improvement of practices. This is important due to the many leadership practices employed in schools that influence adult behaviors. The findings suggest that socially and emotionally competent leadership considers both an awareness of *self* and *other*, as it cultivates individual capabilities, collaborative relationships, and a greater capacity in the schools in which it exists.

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I have been very fortunate to have many people in my life who have supported my educational journey. From my early school days to this doctoral experience, my parents, Roy and Shirley Ito have supported me in all possible ways. Their love and encouragement have made me feel that I could obtain any goal that I set out to reach. They taught me that education was the most important means to a happier and more fulfilled life. They showed me that perseverance and laughter would be the tools to get there. They have loved me unconditionally since I can remember, and it is through their love that I have become who I am today. They are the reason I completed this dissertation, and I dedicate this experience and degree to them.

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intellectually stronger when I develop along with another, and I am particularly thankful to Geoff for giving me the opportunity to do so.

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CHAPTER ONE¹

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

Opportunity and achievement gaps continue to challenge the educational system in the United States, as it struggles to balance a student's academic, social, and emotional skills. District and school-based leaders face the difficulties of monitoring expectations related to increased academic rigor while developing emotionally stable and healthy students. To address student and systemic educational challenges, social and emotional learning (SEL), as a conceptual framework, has gained traction in the field of education. Dusenbury et al. (2015) define SEL as:

the process through which children and adults acquire 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. Social and emotional skills are critical to being a good student and citizen. (p. 2)

The ever-expanding body of research available supports the benefits of students having strong SEL competencies (Durlak et al., 2011; Jones et al., 2017; Zins et al., 2007). Research shows that SEL has positive effects on a student's physical health, academic achievement, and lifelong success (Jones & Kahn, 2017; Taylor et al., 2017; Zins et al., 2007). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) highlights five competencies, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2017) necessary for students to develop college and career readiness. Numerous studies suggest that high-quality SEL programs in schools do matter, and that students with SEL competencies are better able to manage their emotions and problem-solving skills as

¹ This chapter was jointly written by the authors listed and reflects the team approach to this project: Michele Conners, Mark Ito, Adam Renda, Geoff Rose, and Donna Tobin.

well as engage in more positive behaviors with fewer conduct and internalizing problems (Durlak et al., 2011; Jones, D. et al., 2017; Hagood, 2015; Zins et al., 2007). Due to the development of SEL competencies that promote health and wellbeing, student learning improves.

Knowing the benefits for students, district and school-based leaders work to put SEL initiatives into place. Adelman and Taylor (2000) argue that if schools and leaders focus only on instruction to help students obtain academic success, they will not effectively educate the whole child. Many states, like Massachusetts, encourage the inclusion of SEL competencies as part of their core curriculum expectations. Additionally, the federal law, *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), requires educational leaders to provide the necessary support in developing a student's SEL competencies that prepare them for success in college and career. These mandates call for schools to implement SEL; however, federal and state mandates focus primarily on developing student skills only and not the adults who influence them daily, including their social and emotional development.

Limited in the research is a focus on SEL competencies for adult staff. Long (2019) reminds us that, “unless they [districts] also address the SEL needs of teachers, especially those experiencing stress, poor working conditions, and classes with many historically underserved students—long-term, systemwide gains for students are less likely” (p. 1). Further complicating the matter, research shows that teacher stress, burnout, and low job satisfaction are formidable challenges in our nation (Beltman et al., 2011; Bobek, 2002; Greenberg, et al., 2016). Educators feel increasing pressure to strengthen relationships with all students, especially those that are marginalized, disenfranchised or disengaged. It is unclear, however, the degree of training and

support available to educators, as well as how much care is being given to their own social and emotional health in the process.

Few studies have investigated the extent to which leaders in schools promote SEL through their own actions and behaviors (Bridgeland et al., 2013; Buchanan et al., 2009; DePaoli et al., 2017). While some staff, including teachers and mental health staff, recognize that children benefit from developing their SEL competencies and skills, educators are generally not intentionally shown or explicitly told by leaders how to develop these competencies in their own practices. Due to this lack of knowledge, staff feel the overall stress, as they are expected to foster an environment in which they possess and model SEL competencies themselves. However, leaders play an important role in influencing the behaviors of their staff (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Minckler, 2014; Spillane & Lee, 2014). We explore this further in our literature review.

The impact of SEL is widespread; thus, we argue that it is critical and essential that district and school leaders model the SEL competencies that shape varied aspects of their schools and/or promote opportunities that develop the SEL competencies of all members of their community. The following overarching research questions guided our work: 1) What leadership practices model SEL competencies, or promote SEL opportunities for staff? and 2) How do these leadership practices shape a district and its schools? For the purpose of our study, we identified practices that modeled (i.e. displayed and demonstrated) SEL competencies. Additionally, we also identified practices that promoted (i.e. actively encouraged) opportunities for staff to develop their SEL skills. Table 1.1 summarizes our focus areas of study by researchers.

Table 1.1

Researcher and their individual focus area of study.

Researcher	Conceptual Frameworks	Focus of study
Conners	Sensemaking (Weick, 2009)	District-wide leadership practices that supported sensemaking on SEL for school-based leaders, and how its focus shaped school-based leadership practices.
Ito	Distributed Leadership (Spillane et al. 2004)	School-based leadership practices that modeled SEL competencies, as they shaped adult collaboration.
Renda	CASEL (Casel, 2017)	School-based leadership practices that promoted SEL opportunities, as they shaped mental health staff.
Rose	Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1977)	School-based leadership practices that modeled SEL competencies, as they shaped collective efficacy.
Tobin	Prosocial Classroom (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009)	School-based leadership practices that promoted SEL opportunities, as they shaped staff resilience and well being.

Literature Review

The following literature informed our study by supporting our argument to integrate the SEL competencies into leadership practices. We present our review in two sections. In the first section, we focus on SEL competencies for students and adults that include the social and emotional intelligences, SEL competencies in schools, the identification of key SEL competencies and skills (CASEL, 2017), and SEL for district and school-based staff. In the second section, we explore the literature that further supports our research questions, focusing on leadership in districts and schools that include emotional intelligence, theories and practices such as transformational, distributed and social capital; and finally, social and emotional leadership. This final topic bridges the gap between what we know is good for students and adults, and discusses social and emotional competent leadership.

SEL Competencies for Students and Adults

This section describes a brief history of the social and emotional intelligences and how it set the foundation for developing CASEL's core competencies framework. We also discuss the benefits of SEL competencies for students. It is important to lay this groundwork, as our group and individual studies use the CASEL competencies and skills to analyze the identified leadership practices. The work of CASEL furthers our emphasis on the importance of SEL for students' academic learning and personal health, and also provides insight into the limited research on the adults, including the leaders and staff who work with those students.

Social and Emotional Intelligences

The history of SEL dates back at least a century, as seen in the work of researchers on emotional intelligence and social intelligence. Thorndike introduced social intelligence in the 1920's and framed this concept as the ability to act wisely in human relations (Thorndike & Stein, 1937). Salovey and Mayer (1990) extended this research on social intelligences to focus more specifically on individual self-awareness and self-management skills related to one's emotions. They explicitly defined emotional intelligence (EI) as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189). Goleman (1996) increased the prevalence of this concept by providing a research-based argument for the importance of EI, how it can be developed throughout life, and the need for our society to increase our focus on emotional literacy.

Additionally, Goleman (2006) stated that the initial intent of EI was to "focus on a crucial set of human capacities within us as individuals, our ability to manage our own emotions and our inner potential for positive relationships" (p. 5). From these theories of social and emotional

intelligences, the four domains of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management emerged (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008). These four domains laid the groundwork for the five core competencies defined by CASEL. Traditionally, these competencies have been applied to the emotional health and wellbeing of all people.

SEL Competencies and Schools

CASEL, an organization developed in 1994 to specifically consider the needs of social and emotional development programming in districts and schools, created a framework for SEL in educational settings. Each piece of the framework addresses the mental health needs of children and the fractured response to those needs in schools (Elias et al., 1997). Research affirms the positive influence this approach has on students and schools. It makes sense that when schools have structures and supports in place to meet the needs of the whole child, students perform better academically, relationships are stronger, and behavioral issues decrease. It follows then that the purpose of CASEL's framework is to "establish high-quality, evidence-based SEL as an essential part of preschool through high school education" (Elbertson et al., 2010, p. 1017). Increasingly, schools became responsible for more than just a student's academic performance.

More specifically, CASEL defined five core competencies within its framework that provided educators a common understanding about the knowledge and skills students and adults needed (Table 1.2). In addition to the four competencies originally established by Goleman (1996), CASEL added "responsible decision-making" as a fifth. With this additional competency, CASEL showed us that SEL is needed to "enhance students' capacity to integrate skills, attitudes, and behaviors to deal effectively and ethically with daily tasks and challenges. Like many similar ones, CASEL's integrated framework promoted intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive competence." (CASEL, 2017). Table 1.2 defines the core competencies in detail.

Table 1.2

A Definition of CASEL's Core SEL Competencies

SEL competencies	Definition of competency
Self-awareness	Recognizing one's emotions and identifying and cultivating one's strengths and positive qualities
Self-management	Monitoring and regulating one's emotions and establishing and working toward achieving positive goals
Social awareness	Understanding the thoughts and feelings of others and appreciating the value of human differences
Relationship skills	Establishing and maintaining healthy, rewarding relationships based on cooperation, effective communication, conflict resolution, and an ability to resist inappropriate social pressure
Responsible decision-making	Assessing situational influences and generating, implementing, and evaluating ethical solutions to problems that promote one's own and others' well-being

Source: CASEL, 2017

Research supports the need for districts and schools to focus on developing competencies as part of their students' overall academic, social, and emotional growth (Taylor, et al., 2017; Elias, 2009). Zins et al. (2007) stated, "[SEL competencies] are particularly important for children to develop because they are linked to a variety of behaviors with long-term implications" (p. 192). These behaviors include anxiety disorders such as depression, eating disorders, attention-deficit/hyperactivity, substance use disorders, truancy, dropping out of school, teen pregnancy, bullying, and violence (Elias et al., 1997). When these behaviors go unaddressed and their effects not considered, they compromise a student's academic learning.

Zins et al. (2007) maintains that our educational system must support students holistically in order to address the SEL challenges that obstruct students' abilities and capacities to connect to and perform in schools. Research over the past decade claims that students *with* SEL competencies have increased academic achievement, enhanced problem-solving skills, and higher levels of engagement in more prosocial behaviors with fewer conduct and interpersonal problems (Durlak et al., 2011; Jones, et al., 2017; Hagood, 2015). In summary, research shows that students' academic learning strongly benefit from the development of SEL skills, as healthy, attentive children focus more on classroom content.

Dusenbury and Weissberg (2017) support these findings. A meta-analysis of follow-up studies of 82 SEL interventions found the benefits of SEL to be durable over time and across diverse samples. Specifically, SEL programs and interventions implemented at the elementary school level effectively promoted academic achievement, improved positive behaviors, and reduced conduct issues. As evidenced by follow-up interviews, students continued to show positive achievement, and that they used SEL competencies after graduating from high school. Learning SEL competencies benefited students not only in the classroom, but also in their ability to be college and career ready for the future.

An additional study of 753 children from low-socioeconomic neighborhoods showed that, "perceived early social competence at least serves as a marker for important long-term outcomes and at most is instrumental in influencing other development factors that collectively affect the life course" (Jones et al., 2015, p. 2289). These outcomes included a greater likelihood of graduating from college, more positive work and family relationships, better mental and physical health, and reduced criminal activity (Jones, et al., 2015; Jones & Kahn, 2017).

Our review of these empirical studies strongly suggests that educating our students on SEL competencies, supporting students to practice them, and allowing students to experience the long-term benefits of their impact are essential to success in today's schools. However, SEL development in adults, as it relates to improved relationships, productivity, and feelings of satisfaction in the workplace, is not a priority in leadership practices or research (Patti et al., 2015; Brackett & Salovey, 2006). We assert that adults can benefit from the acquisition of these competencies, especially knowing that if leaders and staff model and/or promote them, then students are ultimately more likely to internalize their importance, and use them to their advantage, too.

SEL for Staff

Further bolstering our argument for the systemic integration of SEL for adults in districts and schools, research conducted through CASEL maintains that district and school-based staff must develop their own SEL competencies. In support of these competencies as necessary in the workplace, CASEL (2017) stated that individuals need "...the ability to use SEL practices in life and on the job" (p. 1). With an increased focus on SEL in schools, the field of education needs all stakeholders, specifically leaders, teachers, and mental health staff, to continue to develop their own SEL competencies as well as be given the professional training to do so.

Brackett et al. (2010) conducted a quantitative study in England that measured 123 teachers' emotion-regulation ability (ERA). Specifically, these researchers found a positive relationship between the emotion-regulation abilities of teachers and their job satisfaction as well as their sense of personal accomplishment. Moreover, they found that teachers with higher ERA experienced greater levels of principal support and had better relationships with colleagues. Additionally, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) acknowledge that research (Goleman, 1996) over

the past few decades has informed the education profession to promote teachers' SEL competencies. However, Sutton and Wheatley (2003) point out that, "researchers also know little about how teachers regulate their emotions, the relationship between teachers' emotions and motivation, and how integral emotional experiences are in teacher development" (p. 328). Although current studies stress the importance of SEL for teachers, our study examines the need for SEL competencies to be displayed, demonstrated and actively promoted by district and school-based leaders, as they influenced the members of their organizations, including mental health staff.

In consideration of the impact teacher SEL training has on students, Reyes et al. (2012) conducted a study that involved 812 sixth grade students and their teachers from 28 elementary schools in a large urban school district in the northeastern United States. This study categorized teachers by their degree of resistance or acceptance to teaching SEL programs and named them low-, medium- and high-quality implementers. Analyses revealed that teachers who received more training and delivered more lessons, or were high-quality implementers, had more positive outcomes and felt more efficacious in their work. These findings showed that teacher beliefs, along with training and program fidelity, impacted SEL interventions and the students who received them. Leaders played an important role in ensuring that all staff received the training that they needed.

We argue that leaders need to engage in practices that model SEL competencies and/or promote opportunities for staff to develop their own skills, which ultimately impact student achievement. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) remind us that "teachers influence their students not only by how and what they teach but also by how they relate, teach, and model social and emotional constructs, and manage the classroom" (p. 449). That being said, limited research

provides evidence of effective pre-service and professional development opportunities focused on staff competencies (Brackett & Salovey, 2006). Due to the importance of SEL in schools, and the need for professional training, our study examined leadership practices and how they shaped adults' work in a district and its schools.

SEL Competencies and Leadership

In our research, we explored the integration of SEL competencies and leadership theory. The following section describes how social and emotional intelligences connect to leadership, how leadership theories and practices lay the groundwork for capability and capacity building (Cohen et al., 2007), and how social and emotional leadership is in its nascent stages. We explored the topic of leadership, as it supports our argument in understanding more deeply how leaders employed socially and emotionally competent practices in a district and its schools.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Leadership

The focus on EI, a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), gained strong momentum from the research of Goleman (2006) on emotional literacy. Since the inception of this concept, numerous studies emerged related to EI, including the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002; Boyatzis et al., 2011; George, 2000; Siegling et al., 2014; Walter et al., 2012). For example, Hur et al., (2011) conducted a quantitative study that exclusively utilized questionnaires to explore how emotional intelligence related to leader effectiveness, team effectiveness, and organizational climate. The findings revealed that followers who rated team leaders as more emotionally intelligent also rated them as more effective at shaping a positive climate in the organization.

Initially, corporate organizations conducted much of this EI research by seeking to align the EI of leaders with their overall performance. Over the past two decades, however, this work has found its way into educational leadership practices. As Moore (2009) cites in her work on school reform, “EI can be the difference between a high performing school and a low performing school, and leaders who possess high levels of EI are more skillful in leading change and cultivating commitment among their staff” (p. 23). Cai (2011) also examined empirical studies published between 1996 and 2011 to explore the relationship between the EI of principals and the turnaround of low performing schools. While Cai acknowledged further investigation was needed, he concluded that the higher the school leader’s EI, the more likely teachers collaborated with each other and the greater prevalence that the leader demonstrated transformational leadership behaviors (e.g., idealized influence and intellectual stimulation). Lastly, evidence also suggested that the higher a principal’s EI the greater likelihood that they utilized positive interpersonal skills including communication, conflict management, and stress management.

Also, several studies described the relationship between leadership and EI (Palmer et al., 2001; Gardner & Stough, 2002). For example, Palmer et al. (2001) concluded that the foundation for competency of transformational leadership is a person’s skill to manage and monitor the emotions of themselves and others. Relatedly, Berkovich and Eyal (2015) conducted a narrative review of 49 peer-reviewed studies published between 1990-2012 that focused exclusively on educational leaders and emotions. In their analysis of quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods studies, the researchers identified three main themes across the literature including leaders’ behaviors and their effects on followers’ emotions; leaders’ emotional abilities; and leaders’ emotional experiences and displays of emotions. While these themes helped researchers

better understand the importance of EI and leadership, we argue that schools and districts are complex systems that require not just the development of an individual leader's skills, but more importantly, the collective skills of many.

Leadership Theories and Practices

Strong educational leadership highly impacts student academic achievement (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Principals are instructional leaders, and through their directive, they set teacher expectations and influence classroom activity that impacts student achievement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Leithwood & Mascal, 2008; Branch et al., 2013). That being said, leaders are not only responsible for individual and collective academic successes but also ensuring the infrastructure to support these successes. Furthermore, leadership practices—what leaders think and do within the social contexts of schools—allow adults and students to grow. By extension, transformational and distributed leadership practices can be critical to the growth, progress, and success of both students and adults, and social capital theory strongly supports the benefits of colleagues interacting, supporting, and strengthening their work. Each of these theories value human relationships and encourage the development of capabilities and capacity building within the organization.

Transformational Leadership. Burns (1978) introduced “transformational leadership,” as a theory based on relationships and meeting the needs of followers to help foster change within an organization. A transformational educational leader delivers a mission-centered emphasis on setting direction and vision, a performance-centered emphasis on developing people, and a culture-centered emphasis on redesigning the organization (Leithwood, 1994; Marks & Printy, 2003). Bass (1998) used transformational leadership as a lens to view organizations, specifically how leaders impacted the behaviors and feelings of other members

within the organization. Furthermore, Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) extended the transformational model to include seven dimensions: (1) build school vision and establish school goals; (2) provide intellectual stimulation; (3) offer individualized support; (4) model best practices and important organizational values; (5) demonstrate high performance expectations; (6) create a productive school culture; and (7) develop structures to foster participation in school decisions.

In their study, Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) examined the practices of leaders in twelve Ontario schools that displayed effective collaboration. They found that principals who utilized transformational leadership such as developing people, and setting vision, better assisted in the development of collaborative school cultures. By extension, Northouse (2016) proclaimed that transformational leaders are “concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long term-goals. It includes assessing followers’ motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings” (p. 161). This focus on understanding the emotions of others and the relationships between leaders and followers reflected the integration of SEL competencies with the dimensions of transformational leadership.

Hackett and Hortman’s research (2008) sought to understand a relationship between SEL competencies and the behaviors associated with effective leadership performance. In this study, researchers analyzed any relationships between the four domains of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management and four transformational leadership behaviors. Specifically, researchers focused on the dimensions of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. With data collected from self-reports of both instruments, they found that emotional competencies were related to these transformational leadership dimensions. Thus, it makes sense for researchers to

explore how leadership practices, such as those identified by the transformational leadership theory, model or promote SEL competencies.

Furthermore, in relation to transformational leadership focused on developing people, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) asserted that “capital has to be shared and circulated” and further state that, “groups, teams, and communities are far more powerful than individuals when it comes to developing human capital” (p. 3). This focus on developing people through collaborative structures relies on leaders utilizing, modeling, and promoting the SEL competencies of social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. In addition to transformational leadership, social capital theory further extends the fundamental importance of colleagues’ relationships to support their work.

Social Capital. Bourdieu (1985) and Coleman (1990) first introduced the social capital theory by acknowledging that the relationships and interactions between people can serve as a resource for them. Leana (2011) conducted a large-scale, quantitative study in New York City that analyzed the work of staff in relation to student achievement. Leana found that “teachers were almost twice as likely to turn to their peers as to the [outside] experts designated by the school district, and four times more likely to seek advice from one another than from the principal” (p. 33). Moreover, when teachers engaged in more frequent conversations and expressed positive relationships with their peers, students showed higher achievement gains. This showed the importance of collegial relationships grounded in trust and sharing of practices to support improvement as well as the understanding that the formal school leader cannot solely bear the responsibility of supporting and coaching staff.

In addition to Leana’s findings, Minckler (2014) enhanced social capital theory by emphasizing that strong relationships provide value to individual members and the collective

organization. In her quantitative study, Minckler (2014) explored the relationship between school leadership and the development of teacher social capital through a convenience sample of thirteen schools in two school districts in the southeastern United States. One major finding of this study suggested that the transformational leader played an essential role “in developing the structures, both physically (e.g., shared scheduling time) and culturally (e.g., norms of collegiality) that create opportunities for groups of teachers to work together to create and use teacher social capital” (p. 672). This shows that formal leaders play an important role in creating essential, supportive contexts for leaders and staff to interact within the school day.

Distributed Leadership. Distributed leadership theory focuses on how multiple leaders in an organization interact with others in a specific context to create leadership practices. Spillane et al. (2004) states, “rather than seeing leadership practice as solely a function of an individual’s ability, skill, charisma, and/or cognition, we argue that it is best understood as a practice distributed over leaders, followers, and their situation” (p. 11). This theory supports the importance of increasing capabilities and capacity for change within the organization by considering the relationship of multiple leaders and followers, and their activities. As defined by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), capabilities are more than just having “adequate ability,” but rather the possession of “attributes required for performance or accomplishment” (p. 55). Additionally, Mullen and Jones (2008) referred to capacity in their work as “enabling the growth of teachers as leaders who are responsible for their actions” (p. 329). In many schools, leadership is not just the job of one person, but rather a “web” that includes district, school, and teacher leaders engaged with a variety of different colleagues and contexts.

In considering a distributed leadership model, we argue for the importance of knowing where the key relationships reside and understanding how leaders emerge from amongst the

staff. When leadership is viewed from a distributed perspective, the analysis of power relationships inevitably changes (West et al., 2000) and distinctions between leaders and followers blur (Gronn, 2003). Staff leaders, who are content experts (e.g., subject-area teachers), do not always hold positional authority such as that of a supervisory administrator. This means that an evaluative approach during interactions is not the driving dynamic between them. Due to this potential dynamic, staff leaders influence the organization's leadership practices by focusing on those skills (e.g. listening) that enhance relationships between colleagues.

In one empirical study, Timperley (2005) observed literacy instruction in seven elementary schools and examined its impact on student achievement. Timperley found that the followers who did not respect their designated positional leaders, sought out their peers as teacher leaders. These teacher leaders were not appointed by the school or district, but organically rose as leaders within the situations in which they worked with colleagues. Followers selected colleagues based on camaraderie and like-mindedness (i.e., not necessarily content expertise) which ultimately led to ineffective leadership practices. We acknowledge that this research showed that peer interactions did not result in positive outcomes that impact productive adult collaboration and student learning.

In much of our research, we identified leaders as both those who were hired and appointed formally and those who assumed the role amongst their colleagues informally. We also considered the leader's level of administrative and/or content expertise in relation to those staff members following them. In a distributed framework, the interdependencies between leaders, followers and a situation, and who the follower sees as a leader, can influence what leadership practices emerge. For leaders to act in ways that support increased staff effectiveness, they must consider their practices, and how they foster situations that build capabilities and

capacity amongst staff (Cohen et al., 2007). We believe that socially and emotionally competent leadership practices will result in stronger collaborative and collegial relationships that yield greater feelings of sensemaking, collective efficacy, resilience and well-being.

Socially and Emotionally Competent Leadership

Due to the importance of SEL competencies in adults, and the role leaders play in building staff capabilities and capacity within their districts and schools, we turn to the current literature on leadership development that integrates SEL into its practices. Goleman's work (2006) deepened our research by naming explicitly that social intelligence should be included when thinking about effective leadership practices. Goleman (2006) observed that "a more relationship-based construct for assessing leadership is social intelligence, which we define as a set of interpersonal competencies" (p. 76). This construct considers how the actions of leaders, and their relationships with staff, impact a school environment.

Relatedly, Berg (2018) distinguished that leaders should "engage in collaborative problem solving around key school-wide issues, using protocols that engage team members in generating multiple perspectives . . . and resolving decisions in a way that allows everyone with relevant knowledge to contribute" (p. 83). This illustrates how leadership practices that modeled SEL competencies enhanced opportunities for collective decision-making amongst staff, and how it allowed for shared responsibility in reaching district and school goals. In response, we explored further how school communities are shaped by district and school-based leadership practices that may, or may not, model and/or promote social and emotional competencies. We seek to deepen knowledge in this field about how these socially and emotionally competent leadership practices existed within various aspects of a district and its schools.

Administrators build their organizations by sharing leadership responsibilities with their staff. Patti et al. (2015), stated, “school leaders have a great opportunity to impact student growth and achievement by shaping a culture that cultivates motivated, engaged, and effective teacher leaders” (p. 438). Additionally, they asserted that districts and schools must invest in high quality leadership development to create and sustain teacher leaders and school success (Patti et al., 2012; Sparks, 2009). As described, transformational leadership, social capital and distributed leadership all argued in favor of building staff capabilities and capacity throughout an organization. Furthermore, we argue that as leadership responsibilities spread, administrators build structures within their schools that allow for staff to work independently of them, and that staff consider both their own personal well-being and that of others.

Conclusion

Prior research on social and emotional intelligences and learning has established the importance of SEL for students, both in terms of personal health and academic learning. Yet little of this research has focused directly on the adults that work with these students. School-based staff face increasing pressure to serve as role models to students in the ways in which they behave and possess the core competencies expected in their practices. In support, district and school-based leaders recognize the need to strengthen the SEL competencies of adults, although further research is needed to understand the most effective practices to move the work forward.

The importance of district and school-based leadership is seen both in theory and practice. Transformational and distributed leadership theories both place an emphasis on leaders developing people and/or practices within the organization, and social capital theory highlights the importance of understanding the working dynamic between them. Leadership practices, as

they are implemented in districts and schools, are important in shaping the ways in which adults feel, act and perceive their work in schools.

As we continue to implement education reforms intended to close achievement gaps, we strongly believe in the need to prioritize a focus on the development of socially and emotionally competent leadership. Cherniss (1998) writes that “to be successful, educational leaders must be able to forge relationships with many people. They need to be mediators and mentors, negotiators and networkers. In short, educational leaders need to be more emotionally intelligent” (p. 26). We argue that leaders need to integrate SEL competencies into their leadership practices that influence staff behaviors. Although research is currently limited, our study contributes to the field by exploring how SEL competencies are integral components of what leaders think and do, and how they understand and shape their staff’s work.

Our research study focused on both social and emotional learning and leadership by identifying key leadership practices, understanding how these practices modeled and/or promoted SEL competencies and skills for adults, and further showing how these practices shaped a district-wide focus on SEL, collective efficacy, adult collaboration, staff resilience and wellbeing, and the work of mental health staff. We aimed to contribute to the SEL field by understanding the actions of leaders and how they shaped a district and its schools. The goal of our study was to encourage leaders to integrate social and emotional learning competencies into their practices in order to support the positive perceptions, sensemaking, productivity, and wellbeing of adults.

The research questions for our individual studies, as outlined in Table 1.3, reflect how each piece of our work contributes to the greater field.

Table 1.3

Overview of research questions by individual researchers

Name	Individual Research Questions
Connors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do district leaders support school-based leaders as they make sense of district-wide focus on SEL? 2. How does a district-wide focus on SEL shape school-based leadership practices? 3. What leadership practices, if any, model social and emotional learning competencies?
Rose	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What school-based leadership practices, if any, model social and emotional learning competencies? 2. How do these school-based leadership practices shape the sources of collective efficacy?
Ito	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What school-based leadership practices, if any, model social and emotional learning competencies? 2. How do these school-based leadership practices shape the ways in which adults collaborate?
Tobin	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What leadership practices develop and support the resilience and well-being of school-based staff? 2. How do these practices relate to promoting SEL opportunities for staff in school settings?
Renda	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do school-based leadership practices promote social and emotional learning opportunities for mental health staff in schools? 2. How do these school-based leadership practices shape the work of mental health staff in schools?

CHAPTER TWO²

Research Design and Methodology

Our study identified leadership practices that modeled social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies, and/or promoted SEL opportunities for adults, while investigating how those leadership practices shaped a district and its schools. While our collective study examined this phenomenon, our individual studies examined leadership practices through a variety of theoretical and conceptual lenses (see Table 1.1).

This chapter outlines the methodology of our larger, collective study. Collaboratively, the team of five researchers designed the protocols for collecting and analyzing semi-structured interview data. Data collection and analysis unique to the individual studies are outlined in those respective chapters. The sections to follow describe our individual researcher positionality, the overall study design and site selection, our common data collection procedures, and an overview of the data analysis the team used.

Researcher Positionality

As a team of researchers conducting a qualitative case study, we recognize that we are the data collection instrument. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that our backgrounds and experiences are important variables that may affect the research process. We are all district or school-based leaders, in public school districts in Massachusetts, with a belief in the importance of socially and emotionally competent leadership practices. It is because of this belief that we seek to understand how leadership practices model and/or promote SEL competencies and skills for adults, and further investigate how those practices shaped a district-wide focus on SEL,

² This chapter was jointly written by the authors listed and reflects the team approach to this project: Michele Conners, Mark Ito, Adam Renda, Geoff Rose, and Donna Tobin.

collective efficacy, adult collaboration, staff resilience and wellbeing, and the work of mental health staff. This reflects the likelihood that our own subjectivity could come to bear on our study and report findings. The data collection and analysis methods described below demonstrate the steps we took to remain objective throughout the process and present trustworthy findings.

Study Design

In order to identify leadership practices that modeled SEL competencies, and/or promoted SEL opportunities for adults, while investigating how those leadership practices shaped a district and its schools, we utilized a qualitative case study methodology. The qualitative case study method suited our research process because our unit of analysis was a single school district in Massachusetts, or a bounded system (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). More specifically, we employed an instrumental case study. Stake (1995) defines an instrumental case study as one in which the issue is dominant, and studying the organization will enable the researchers to gain insight into a particular issue, redraw generalizations, or build theory. Thus, this methodology was appropriate for our study, because investigating the *issue* of leadership practices that modeled SEL competencies, and/or promoted SEL opportunities for adults, was of greater significance than investigating the *case*, or the school district as a whole (Stake, 1995). The instrumental case study method enabled our team to provide a narrative, or “thick description” (Mills & Gay, 2019, p. 8) of the school district in relation to our research questions.

Site Selection

Recently, the National Association of State Boards of Education highlighted Massachusetts as a state committed to social emotional learning (SEL) for both students and adults (Long, 2019). Supporting students’ SEL is one of five Core Strategies identified in the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (DESE) Strategic Plan

(2018). While adults are not specifically mentioned in the plan, Massachusetts' standards for High Quality Professional Development require professional learning experiences to be grounded in strong SEL practice (Long, 2019). A recent study on SEL initiatives, which included Massachusetts, found that SEL initiatives must be "championed at the district level and tailored to each local context, in order to build on existing success" (*Opportunities for Massachusetts, Lesson for the Nation*, 2015, p. 16).

Given that SEL is a DESE priority for school districts, the research that supports the importance of developing SEL in education leaders and students alike and our roles as educational leaders in Massachusetts school districts, we felt it was important to examine the link between SEL and leadership in a school district in Massachusetts. This interest led to our goal of investigating leadership practices that modeled SEL competencies, and/or promoted SEL opportunities for adults. Therefore, a key criterion in selecting an instrumental case for our research was that the district demonstrated a focus on SEL, specifically a mission, vision, and/or strategic plan that articulated a focus on SEL across the district. We conducted our study in a mid-sized school district of 10-15 schools with a multi-tiered leadership structure across the district and its schools. Specifically, our instrumental case study took place across six schools within a suburban school district of approximately 6,000 students and 410 teachers.

Data Collection

As a qualitative methods approach, our individual studies relied on data collection from document reviews, a questionnaire, observations, and semi-structured interviews. Table 2.1 outlines the data collection methods utilized by each researcher for their individual study. The variety of data collection formats enabled us to both confirm and triangulate findings during our data analysis, as well as enrich our collective understanding of the research problem within a

specific district context (Creswell, 2014; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Across all studies, we used semi-structured interviews. Sub-study specific data collection and analyses methods for document reviews, observations, and the questionnaire are found in the respective chapters of those researchers who utilized each data source (see Chapter 3).

Table 2.1

Overview of data collection methods by individual researchers

Data Collection Method	Researcher
Semi-structured interviews	Connors, Ito, Renda, Rose, Tobin
Questionnaires	Ito Renda, Rose, Tobin
Document Review	Connors, Renda, Tobin
Observations	Ito, Rose

Semi-structured interviews

We conducted semi-structured, face-to-face individual interviews from September 2019 to December 2019. Table 2.2 lists interview participants by position, and the studies that utilized each data source. The use of our semi-structured interview protocol allowed flexibility to respond to the interviewee with additional probing questions as the dialogue occurred (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The interviews helped us gain an understanding of the extent to which a district-wide focus on SEL influenced leadership practices across multiple domains. The focus of the interviews enabled interviewees to highlight their experiences around leadership practices, and their perceptions of how leadership practices shape a district and its schools, specifically around a district-wide focus on SEL, collective efficacy, adult collaboration, teacher resilience, and the work of mental health staff. The interview protocol ensured consistency in the process,

and our research team utilized the protocol with all interview participants and ensured that we asked the same questions of each participant.

Table 2.2

Interview Subjects

Participant by Role	Number	Researchers who Utilized Each Data Source
Superintendent of Schools	1	Conners
Director of Social Emotional Learning	1	Conners
School-based Leaders	9	Conners, Ito, Renda, Rose, Tobin
Teaching and Learning Directors	5	Conners
Teachers	20	Ito, Renda, Rose, Tobin
Mental Health Staff	11	Ito, Renda, Rose, Tobin

Semi-structured interview protocol. We developed semi-structured interview protocols for district leaders (see Appendix A), school based-leaders (see Appendix B), and teachers and mental health staff (see Appendix C) to explore the extent to which a district-wide focus on SEL influenced leadership practices from the perspectives of both school-based leaders and other school staff, specifically teachers and mental health staff. We developed the protocols collaboratively by including specific questions to address our individual studies as well as the broader focus of the larger study. We piloted our interview protocol with district leaders, school-based leaders, and teachers outside our case study district. This process ensured that our interview items were clearly and respectfully worded in an effort to elicit relevant responses.

Additionally, piloting the protocol helped us identify and correct potential problems and ensure we stayed within a one-hour time frame (Singleton & Straits, 2018).

Participant Selection. To select participants, we used purposeful sampling, which is “based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 96). This method of sampling is most effective when a limited number of people can serve as primary data sources due to the nature of study. Utilizing purposeful sampling, we selected our interview participants from four categories: district leaders, school-based leaders, teachers, and mental health staff. Purposeful sampling helped us discover, understand, and gain insight from a sample of participants from whom we felt the most could be learned relative to our research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Because we focused on leadership practices, it was important to not only interview district and school-based leaders, but also teachers and mental health staff who work with those leaders. The interview participants reflected a typical sample of district and school-based leaders, as well as teachers and mental health staff, that were common to public school districts in Massachusetts.

Participant Recruitment. In August, we met with the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Director of Special Education, and the Director of Social Emotional Learning and School Counseling. This afforded us the opportunity to discuss the scope of both our collective and individual studies, as well as who they felt should be interviewed at the district level. After meeting with the Superintendent’s leadership council to explain our study needs and gather information on the various populations of each school, we selected four of the six elementary schools, and both middle schools, for the study. We focused on the four elementary schools based on district programs housed within the schools, as well as student demographics,

providing us a diverse student population. Research team members coordinated their independent school visits with the principal in each building. We contacted each of the six school-based leaders through email, explained the scope of our collective and individual studies, and invited them to participate in a series of interviews. All six school-based leaders agreed to participate. All interview participants received a confidentiality statement and signed an informed consent, at the time of the interview.

Interview Process. Given the nature of our individual studies, each school-based leader was interviewed twice, once by a pair of researchers and once by an individual researcher. This ensured all of our individual questions were addressed in addition to our collective questions, as well as a means to ensure consistency in our interview process. On average, the interviews lasted 40-60 minutes. We recorded and transcribed all interviews and reviewed transcriptions for accuracy. Since only one researcher collected data specific to district leaders, that round of interviews was completed prior to interviewing school-based leaders. This enabled the other four researchers to complete their interviews with school-based leaders first, share the transcripts from those interviews with the individual researcher, and provide that researcher an opportunity to focus on questions related to her individual study. Throughout the interview process, we shared our interview transcripts and checked in as a group to ensure our use of questioning and prompting was eliciting the data necessary to explore our research questions.

Data Analysis

Creating meaning and making sense of the data is the main purpose of qualitative data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). According to Creswell (2014), data analysis consists of “... ‘taking the data apart’ to determine the individual responses, and then ‘putting it together to summarize it’” (p. 10). Data analysis guided our identification of leadership practices that

modeled social and emotional learning competencies, and/or promoted social emotional learning opportunities for adults. Further analysis supported our work to investigate how those leadership practices shape a district and its schools. Ongoing data analysis required us to continually revisit and reflect upon the data we collected (Creswell, 2014). Further, data analysis involved assigning meaning through codes, themes, or other categorization processes, as we moved through the data and towards the answers to our research questions (Saldaña, 2016). Individually, researchers kept analytic memos to document the coding process, field notes, and reflections to aid in a thorough understanding and analysis of our data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Creswell (2014) suggests including the following steps in the process of qualitative data analysis “...(a) organizing and preparing the data for analysis, (b) gaining an overall sense of the information by reading through data, (c) coding the material into categories, using a descriptive term to label the topics, and (d) using the coding process to produce an explanation of the background or people as well as categories or themes for analysis” (p. 193). Following these steps, or variations thereof as appropriate for each individual study, provided us with a structured process of analyzing the textual data we collected. Specific data analysis processes, connected to our individual studies, can be found in the corresponding chapters, as each researcher employed a variety of methods and coding processes to analyze their data based on the research questions and conceptual framework of their study (see Chapter 3).

The CASEL framework (Figure 2.1) provided a model for our unit of analysis, and conceptually grounded our individual studies. The five CASEL competencies (see Table 1.2) served as the lens for identifying leadership practices that modeled or promoted SEL competencies, guided and facilitated our understanding of the data, and established our initial categories for data analysis. After transcribing the interview data, each researcher read through

the transcripts and identified leadership practices, defined as what leaders think and do. Once the leadership practices were identified, we applied our *a priori* codes to those practices for our initial cycle of coding. Our *a priori* codes, or the codes we identified before examining our data (Saldana, 2016), are based on the skills and competencies within the CASEL framework: self-awareness (SA), self-management (SM), social awareness (SOA), relationship skills (RS), and responsible decision-making (RDM). We re-examined the initial categories to further focus our data to reveal subsequent patterns or categories. Re-examining the initial categories helped us understand if the identified leadership practice modeled (i.e., displayed or demonstrated) or promoted (i.e., actively encouraged) SEL competencies. Our coding manual can be found in Appendix D.

Since each researcher identified their individual conceptual framework and research questions, additional coding was completed specific to the individual study (see Chapter 3).

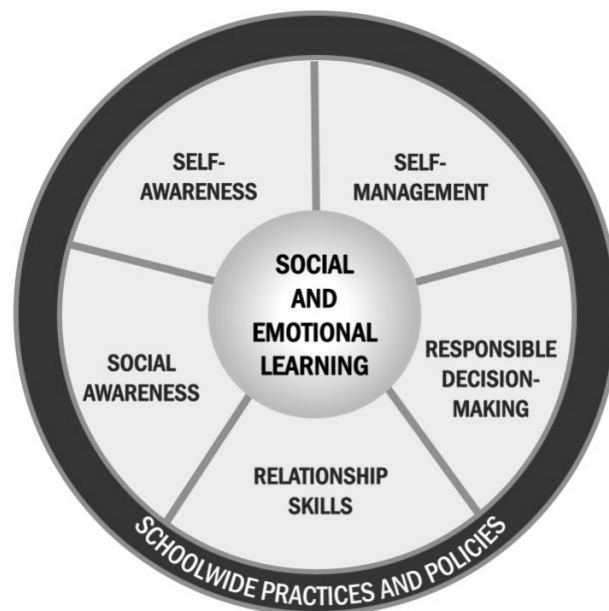


Figure 2.1. CASEL Social Emotional Learning Framework, 2017

Triangulation. Across the five individual studies, data collection methods involved semi-structured interviews, document review, observations, and a questionnaire. Given the variety of data collection methods, we were able to compare and cross-check our data with one another, providing both investigator and data triangulation (Merriam, 2009). Triangulation involves researchers' (investigators') cross-checking information and conclusions with one another through the use of multiple procedures and sources (data) (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The use of multiple methods of data collection within and across our individual studies enabled us to confirm information we heard in interviews alongside information we read in documents, witnessed in observations, or gathered through questionnaires during the course of our individual data analysis. The ability to triangulate our data and findings was one way we addressed the trustworthiness of our findings.

Trustworthiness. As a team of researchers, we took several steps to ensure our findings were trustworthy. Merriam (2009) and Mills & Gay (2019) suggest multiple strategies to support trustworthiness. Among those strategies, we identified triangulation, adequate engagement in the data collection, researcher's position (reflexivity), peer review, and rich, thick descriptions as those strategies that support the trustworthiness of our study.

As discussed previously, we triangulated our data through the use of multiple investigators and data collection methods. We engaged deeply in data collection from September through December 2019 through the semi-structured interviews, document review, observations, and questionnaires to ensure our data was saturated. We recognized data saturation when we began to see and hear the same information repeatedly and were not uncovering any new information (Merriam & Tisdell 2016).

Lincoln and Guba (2000) define reflexivity as “the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher” (p. 183). As a team of district and school-based leaders, we recognized that we hold assumptions about educational leadership, and that those assumptions could have an impact on our role as a human instrument in the research process, so it was important that we engaged in ongoing discussions central to our assumptions and biases.

Because this study was conducted by a team of researchers, peer review was ongoing. Throughout the course of data collection and analysis, we discussed the processes we were following, compared our emerging findings against the raw data, and developed tentative interpretations of those findings. These ongoing, evolving discussions enabled us to identify gaps in our understanding of the data as well as confirm our common findings across studies.

Finally, our study created a “rich, thick description” (Merriam, 2009) of how a school district’s leadership practices modeled social emotional learning competencies, or promoted social emotional learning opportunities for adults, and how those practices shaped the district and its schools. This description of the study’s setting, participants, and findings support the possibility of the study “transferring” to other settings (Merriam, 2009).

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIALLY AND EMOTIONALLY COMPETENT LEADERSHIP:

SCHOOL-BASED LEADERSHIP PRACTICES THAT SHAPE ADULT COLLABORATION

Summary of Individual Dissertation in Practice

In this individual dissertation in practice, I researched how leadership practices that modeled social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies shaped adult collaboration in schools. This is important due to the many possible ways in which educational leaders influence adult behaviors in their buildings. More specifically, if school-based leaders model competencies that consider both an awareness of *self* and *other*, then they can foster environments where educators become more skillful at building relationships and making responsible decisions while working with their colleagues. Findings of this research may suggest how educational leaders can improve school reform by prioritizing those practices most directly related to adult interactions, ultimately increasing capabilities and capacity (Cohen, et al., 2007) schoolwide.

Problem and Purpose, and Research Questions

School leaders face the challenge of balancing the expectations of strong academic rigor and achievement, along with producing emotionally stable, healthy students. Over the last several decades, social and emotional learning (SEL) has been accepted as a necessary emphasis in schools (Zins et al., 2007). As defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship-building and responsible decision-making are proving to be linked to academic success (Hirsch, 2017). There is increasing evidence that academic learning and SEL competencies are integral to student's ability to achieve academic, college, and career readiness

(Durlak et al., 2015). In my research, I establish that these SEL competencies are important for students to learn in preparation for adulthood.

Although research emphasizes the importance of SEL competencies in students, some adults believe that there is still a “one-size fits all” approach to teaching their disciplines, and that their job is to deliver the standards (Robinson, 2015). Other research indicates, however, that adults do accept the notion that SEL should be promoted in classrooms and that there is a need for them to possess, model and implement SEL themselves (Bridgeland et al., 2013). Schonert-Reichl (2017) state, “teachers are the engine that drives SEL programs and practices in schools and classrooms, and their own social-emotional competence and wellbeing strongly influence their students” (p. 137). As a result, educators who understand the importance of SEL are more apt to foster environments that exhibit competencies and skills such as self-reflection, relationship building, meaningful conversations and systemic thinking (Patti, et al., 2015). I contend that many educators have accepted the importance of SEL competencies in schools, but they do not fully practice these competencies when interacting with each other.

Furthermore, I argue that there is a lack of understanding about how school-based leaders incorporate SEL competencies into their own practices, as they shape adult behaviors. Leadership practices that model SEL competencies, related to the work of the adults that directly impact student achievement should be considered within the school’s organization. One such activity is the way in which adults collaborate. Adult collaboration leads to greater teacher and student success, leadership, school change and institutional improvement (Damore & Wiggins, 2006). When adults meet to discuss students, the possibility for greater consistency of strategies, subject lesson planning, and/or interdisciplinary work, can occur (Hargreaves & O’Connor, 2018). But what happens when teachers do not use their time together productively? Are adults

that possess SEL competencies better collaborators? What happens when leaders construct the protocols and agendas that are used during meetings? Who models these skills for them? Leaders need to answer these questions to understand how their own thoughts and actions lead to more productive collaboration among staff.

This study explored how leadership practices that modeled SEL competencies shaped the ways in which adults collaborate. Accordingly, this study addressed the following two research questions: 1) What school-based leadership practices, if any, modeled SEL competencies? and 2) How did these school-based leadership practices shape the ways in which adults collaborate?

The literature shows that SEL is valued in classrooms, as the competencies outlined are important skills for students to have for college, career and life success (Dymnicki et al., 2013; Elias, 2009; Greenberg, M. et al., 2003; Hirsch, 2017). Conversely, literature also shows that these competencies are rarely developed with staff or supported with quality implementation in schools. Although adults provide instruction that supports these skills, leaders are not necessarily supporting and instructing teachers on how to practice them (Weissberg et al., 2015). By modeling SEL competencies, a school-based leader (SBL) displays and demonstrates for their staff, through example, how specific skills can be enacted. I argue that it is important for leaders to exhibit these competencies in their practices for more effective adult collaboration to occur.

Literature Review

In this literature review, I explain a brief history of SEL for students, and how it has led to a need in schools to develop these competencies in adults. Additionally, I discuss a trend towards adult collaboration as an important strategy in schools that leads to greater capabilities and capacity within the organization. Finally, I expand the definition of “leadership” through a

distributed leadership framework, as it emphasizes the collective activity of leaders as more important in influencing adult behaviors than those of any one person.

SEL Competencies and Students

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) developed a conceptual model of SEL in educational settings that describes the systematic supports necessary to develop specific competencies, including schoolwide SEL that is embedded within district, state, and federal policies (Weissberg et al., 2015). Each layer of the system works to support short-term and long-term student outcomes. See Figure 1 below of the CASEL district-level conceptual model (CASEL, 2017).

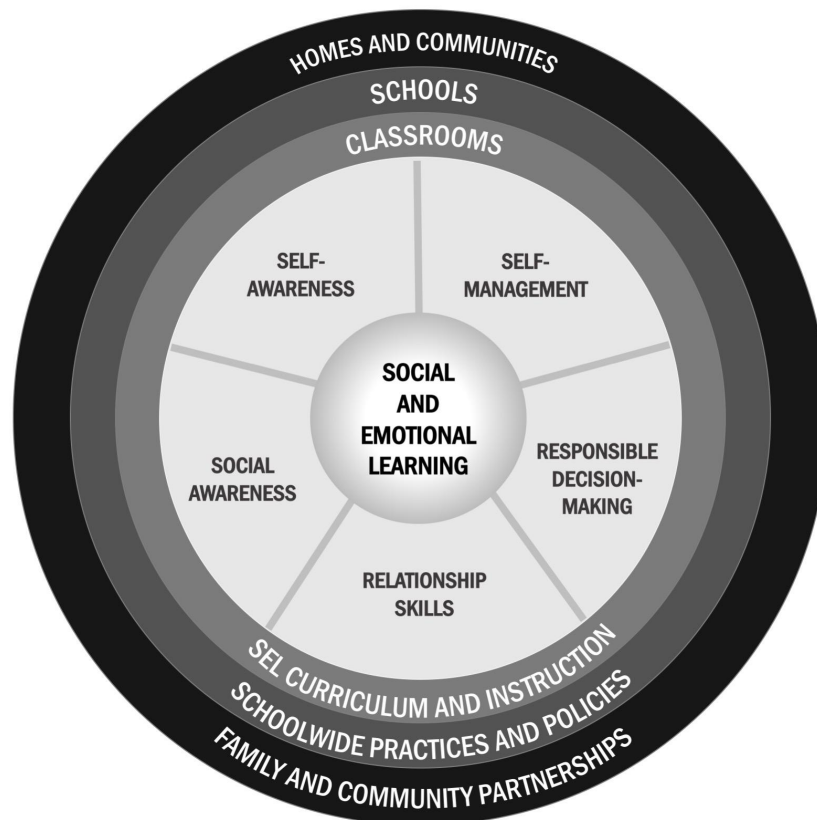


Figure 3.1. CASEL District-level Conceptual Model. Copyright the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2017.

CASEL emphasizes across the curriculum the acquisition of the key competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2017). These SEL competencies are fostered through explicit instruction and student-centered learning approaches that help students engage in the learning process and develop analytical, communication, and collaborative skills (Friedlaender et al., 2014). SEL when modeled and practiced by educators in their daily routines, impact classroom and school climate, engage families and the community, and serve as an early intervention program for those identified as needing social and/or emotional support (Weissberg et al., 2015). Integrating SEL into schools *in relationship to student learning* is viewed as a necessary factor in impacting academic achievement.

Although adults have learned that children benefit from social and emotional skill development, as adults, they are rarely taught explicitly how these competencies can impact their own professional work. Currently, there is a gap between what is being emphasized as important for students to know and do, and how adult professionals can also more effectively practice these skills in their own activities. SEL competencies such as social awareness, relationship building, and responsible decision-making, can impact the interaction and working dynamics between adults in their attempt to improve stronger collaborative relationships. In schools, the attention still remains on student SEL, while adult competencies appear to be a lower priority, inconsistent and/or underdeveloped (Patti et al., 2015). This study contributes to closing the gap by conducting research on what school-based leadership practices model SEL competencies, and how and to what degree, if any, these practices impact the ways in which adults collaborate. I used the five CASEL competencies and 29 skills they support, as a lens to analyze the data I collected.

The Benefits of Clear and Strongly Executed Adult Collaboration

For this research I employ Damore and Wiggins' (2006) definition of collaboration: "the various adult activities in schools: governance, leadership, co-teaching, collegiality, shared vision, and sharing expertise and experience" (p. 20). They concluded that there are six critical elements of effective adult collaboration for educators to use when defining, implementing, organizing, and assessing collaboration in schools (Damore & Wiggins, 2006). These elements include: 1) positive attitudes, 2) team processes, 3) professional development, 4) leadership, 5) resources, and 6) benefits. I refer to these elements later in my research when coding responses to Research Questions #2 (RQ2), which specifically addresses leadership practices, SEL competencies, and adult collaboration.

Adult collaboration is a focus of discussion in the literature (Conoley & Conoley, 2010; Damore & Wiggins, 2006; Fullan, 1993; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Leonard, 2002). As one teacher per classroom persists, student demands increase and teacher isolation is more common. Trimble and Miller (1996) believe that "forming small groups, which help to provide identity and a sense of belonging as a vehicle to process new information and experiences, and to address communications among stakeholders, can provide an essential foundation for school reform" (p. 1). Additionally, Fullan (1993) believes that "in order for organizations to be generative, those that embrace collaboration do a better job solving issues than those who cling to isolationist traditions" (p. 135). Schools are becoming webs of learning communities as "teams" are formed to enhance teacher productivity. Adult collaboration improves idea sharing and problem solving.

Goddard et al. (2007) investigated the potential empirical link between teacher collaboration for school improvement and student achievement in fourth graders in a large urban

school district in the United States and concluded that teacher collaboration was positively associated with increased achievement in math and reading scores. Goddard et al. (2007) stated, “The most important outcome of teacher collaboration may be that teachers learn how to improve their instructional practice” (p. 892). During a time when school structures still lean toward single teacher classrooms, adult learning is most effective when adults have time to work together. Greater exposure to colleagues’ planning, lessons and practices, and sharing skills, can improve the effectiveness of what and how teachers deliver instruction in their own classrooms. In this research, I focus primarily on collaboration as it relates to improved instructional and classroom practices.

Avalos-Bevan and Bascope (2017) studied teachers’ views, beliefs, and experiences related to school-based, informal collaboration for professional learning. Results from a survey of 1,025 primary and secondary teachers in Chile indicated that teachers viewed collaborative tasks such as teacher observation and team teaching as diminishing their autonomy and therefore placed lesser value on this type of collaboration. They did view collaboration that included preparing lessons with colleagues and discussing teacher problems, as a source of professional learning, however. Avalos-Bevan and Bascope (2017) state, “[an] increase in valuation and opportunity to collaborate in demanding teacher-related tasks requires teachers to grow in awareness of the benefits of these forms of collaboration and capacity to manage contextual limitations” (p. 11). Although this research concludes that informal and/or contrived collaboration was more commonly practiced and supported than more formal collaborative tasks, it supports leaders’ efforts to bring forth professional learning that teaches staff about the value of engaging in more rigorous forms of informal adult collaboration.

Corey (2015), studied New York middle schools to determine to what extent, if any, the presence of three school supports were in existence: 1) instructional scheduling; 2) teaming; and 3) common planning. They argued that these variables positively impacted student learning; specifically, in the ability to provide time for teachers to plan and prepare together. However, principals revealed that they did not have confidence in teacher leaders' ability to facilitate the use of collaborative time. This finding revealed how important it was that leaders supported the development of *leadership* among staff by providing greater professional learning opportunities on how to lead, and that leaders showed teachers in their ongoing practices, the SEL competencies that displayed more effective ways for adults to interact.

The Link Between Adult Collaboration and Student Achievement: Collective Efficacy

Although student achievement is not measured in this study, the value of a collaborative adult network in schools should be related to student growth. Thus, the link between adult collaboration and student achievement needs to be further reviewed. The following paragraphs discuss collective efficacy as the necessary link between the two.

Moolenaar et al. (2012) researched the connections between collaborative networks, collective efficacy, and student achievement in a quantitative study of 53 elementary schools in a large Dutch district. They studied adult collaboration in regards to social networks as social networks allow for greater connections between teachers and the expansion of instructional skill sets. Collaboration is accomplished through highly dense networks in which teachers have strong ties to colleagues in relation to the maximum number of ties possible. The means of communicating that formed the networks were not described, nor whether or not they were organic or contrived. However, researchers explained that the exchange of advice that was practiced, whether instrumental (e.g., work related) or expressive (personal), increased efficacy.

They observed that, “densely connected networks that reflect the exchange of expertise and personal guidance may increase teachers’ beliefs about their collective capacity to solve collective problems, achieve desired goals, and improve school-wide performance” (p. 253). The researchers concluded that collective efficacy was higher when advice was exchanged by many on the team, rather than when it was isolated to one focal figure.

Adult interaction and collaboration are critical to the success of the organization as a whole. The collective nature of a school environment means that if a team of individuals share common beliefs, understandings and responsibilities – and show a unified effort for achievement – then groups are more effective (Donohoo, 2018). If adults possess and practice SEL competencies during collaboration, then a social context emerges that supports higher collective efficacy through trust, collective decision-making, and the perception of attaining future goals. Teachers’ perceptions of their collective efficacy as collaborators impact how they feel about their ability to succeed in their collective work.

According to Hattie (2018), collective efficacy has the greatest impact on student achievement. Based on more than 1,500 meta-analyses, “collective teacher efficacy is greater than three times more powerful and predictive of student achievement than socioeconomic status” (p. 41). This finding implies that school leaders must be purposeful about their practices that build collective efficacy. Social and emotional competencies practiced by adults may contribute to more positive dynamics between colleagues and their perceptions of their collective work, which can positively impact student achievement and in turn, shape the development of these leadership practices (Hattie, 2018).

Adult collaboration in schools contributes to collective efficacy. Donohoo et al. (2018) state that, “leaders can also influence collective efficacy by setting expectations for formal,

frequent, and productive teacher collaboration and by creating a high level of trust for this collaboration to take place” (p. 43). Adults who are given collaborative time in their schedules have the potential to strengthen their relationships with colleagues. I assert that leadership practices in schools that model SEL competencies (i.e., social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making) related to the ways in which adults interact, can positively influence adult relationships, and thus collaboration. These interactions can result in attributes such as trust, empathy, and psychological safety.

A Distributed Leadership Theoretical Framework

For my study, I examined leadership practices through a Distributed Leadership theoretical framework. These leadership practices, spread across an organization, form a web of practices that shape the climate and culture of a school. According to Spillane et al. (2004), “a conceptual framework for leadership practice is likely to yield more insight into the relations between leadership and innovation in schools than theories that focus exclusively on organizational structures and leadership roles, because leadership practice is a more proximate cause of that innovation” (pg. 5). As seen in Figure 2, it is not the skills of the individual leader that are most important, but rather the interdependencies of these factors that impact what leaders think and do.

Spillane (2004) states, “rather than seeing leadership practice as solely a function of an individual’s ability, skill, charisma, and/or cognition, we argue that it is best understood as a practice distributed over leaders, followers, and their situation” (p. 11). It is not the qualities of a single leader, but rather how the leaders interact and their interdependencies with other leaders and followers *in situ*, that define leadership practices. My study considered the aspects of a

distributed leadership model across a school that exposed the practices most widely used by more school-based leaders than just the “principal.”

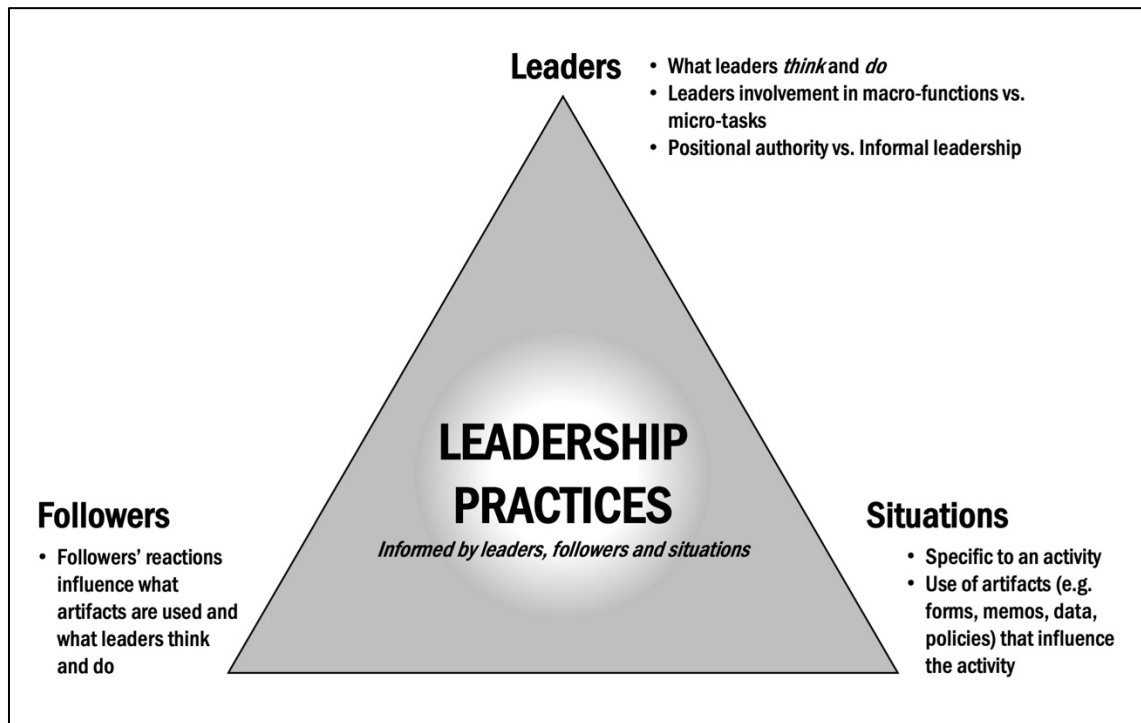


Figure 3.2. A distributed leadership model with descriptions. Adapted from “Towards a theory of leadership practice: a distributed perspective,” by Spillane et al., 2004, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 36, p. 11. Copyright 2004 by Taylor and Francis Ltd.

Spillane et al. (2004) defines school leadership as “the identification, acquisition, allocation co-ordination and use of the social, material, and cultural resources necessary to establish the condition for the possibility of teaching and learning” (p.11). Therefore, I argue that *leaders* can be those in formal roles of authority such as the district’s superintendent or a school’s principal, or those in supervisory roles such as curriculum coaches, department heads or directors. They can also be staff who take on informal leadership activities when working with a group of colleagues. Note: Although, teacher leaders can also be those who form strong relationships with students, families and their communities – and, might influence an organization that models distributed leadership -- their practices were not the focus of this

research. For any of the described leaders, their tasks can be considered in terms of “micro-tasks” and “macro-functions.” Micro-tasks include smaller, routine, daily practices; whereas, macro-functions support of higher-level strategic goals. For example, a micro-task might be observing teachers for evaluation, with the macro-function being improved instructional practices in classrooms. In using this lens, what leaders think and do were considered, as they related to the effectiveness of the greater whole. In my research, I considered and analyzed both types of tasks, as discovered in the data, in order to understand their impact on school environments.

Followers are often influenced by a number of adults with whom they interact, especially in schools where leadership subsumes varying roles. However, research suggests that, while leaders can often draw on their positional authority to support the beliefs and actions that they advocate, followers can influence leaders by drawing on personal characteristics, access to information, or special knowledge or expertise (Bacharach & Lawlor, 1981). Followers have the ability to influence situations by the ways in which they respond to their leaders. They can engage in meaningful ways with the group by following norms established for productive behaviors, or they can choose to have conversations outside of the meeting with selected participants that typically influences negatively the overall working dynamic of the whole group. Followers play an active role in the effectiveness of a group by the leadership practices in which they choose to engage. Their role critically impacts successful leadership practices within an organization. This research included the understanding of the perceptions of the followers and what they think.

Another factor in the distributed leadership model is the *situation* in which leaders and followers reside and interact. Situations are the context in which the work is done and the

artifacts that help support and/or define the leadership practices. Norms, protocols and agendas are all ways that leaders impact how adults work together. These tools can be *constitutive of* or *constituted by*, meaning that they have the power to control a process or compose the process, respectively (Spillane et al., 2004). Observation and understanding of these tools are an important piece in understanding what a school does during their time together.

A distributed leadership theoretical framework emphasizes the importance of relationships between multiple leaders and their activities, rather than just the traits of one individual leader. Hulpia (2011) claimed that much of the research supports a “single-person literature approach in which leadership is a quality that exists in one person, the school leader, and the effect of this one ‘superhero’” (p. 729). In his study of 1,522 teachers from 46 large secondary schools in Belgium, he concluded, “teachers’ commitment to the organization is mainly related to supportive leadership, cooperation with the leadership team, and participation in decision-making” (p. 728). Leadership is increasingly being perceived as an emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals (Gronn, 2002). In many schools, leadership is not just the responsibility of one person, but rather a collective process that includes positional authority such as district administrators, principals, department heads, and curriculum coaches as well as informal teacher leaders within the school’s staff.

My study recognizes that many leaders, followers, and situations define leadership practices in an organization (see Figure 3.3). I hypothesize that school-based practices across multiple leaders that consciously and explicitly incorporate SEL competencies systemically shape adult interactions in schools and the consequent nature and quality of collaboration in an effort to improve instruction and classroom practices.

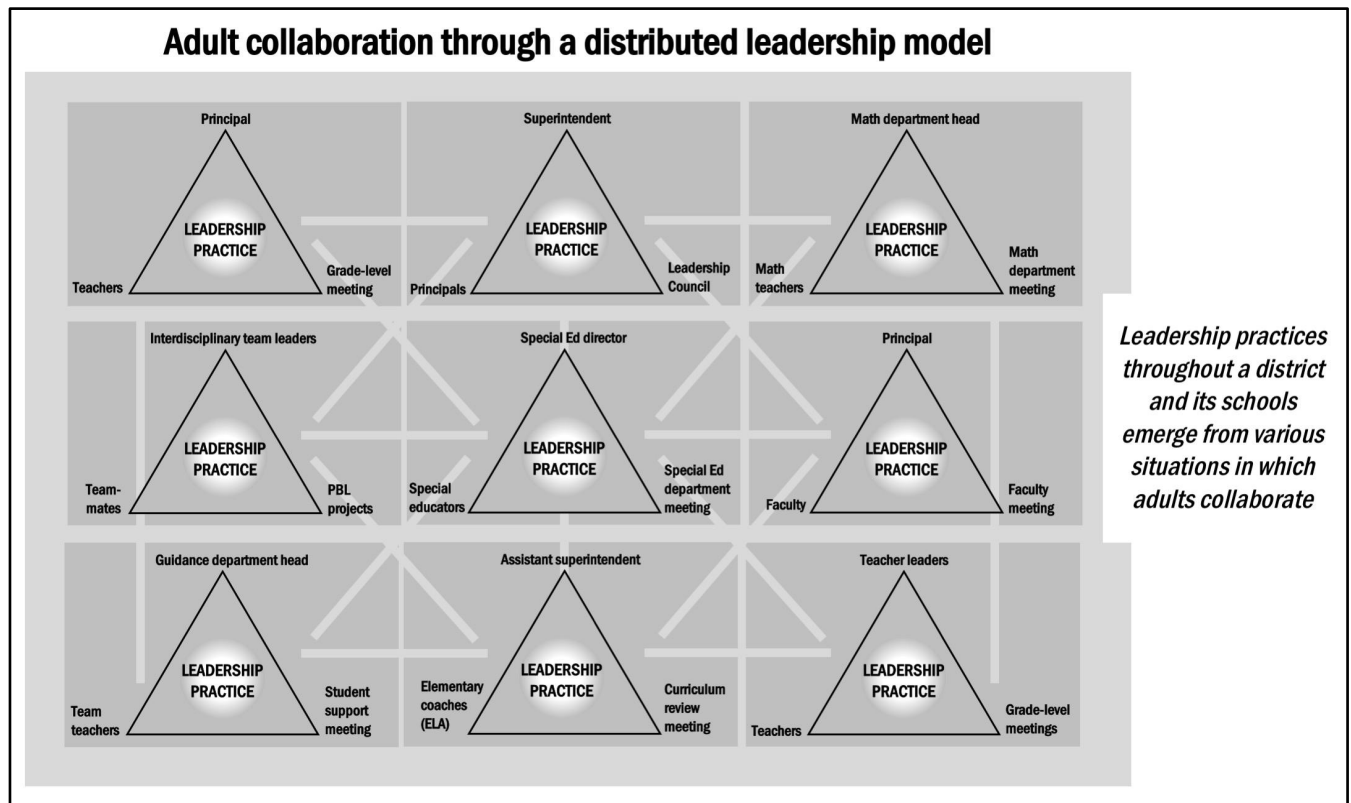


Figure 3.3. Adult collaboration through a distributed leadership model. Adapted from “Towards a theory of leadership practice: a distributed perspective,” by Spillane et al., 2004, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 36, p. 11. Copyright 2004 by Taylor and Francis Ltd.

Research Design

Study Design

My study employed a single-case, qualitative approach to research. Creswell (2013) defines a case study as, “a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audio visual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes” (p. 97). In this case, we focused on one public school district in Massachusetts, fictitiously named Westlake Public Schools (WPS), its schools, administrators and staff. The town of Westlake was selected because of its mission to implement SEL throughout the district as manifested in its

hiring of a central office administrator dedicated to implementing SEL. It also had an organizational structure that had varying levels of leadership at school sites, namely a principal, assistant principal, coaches and/or department heads. A distributed leadership framework allowed me to observe how leadership assumed by those in positional authority or others such as teacher leaders influenced the direction of work undertaken in a particular situation.

Yin (2009) argues for the development of a “research plan” that guides the work. He states that, “the main purpose of the design is to help to avoid the situation in which the evidence does not address the initial research question” (p. 27). He further concludes that a research plan needed to include the identification of a “unit of analysis” that defined what is being studied (p. 27). The unit of analysis is different than the identification of the case itself. My research plan is described in the methods section that follows and includes more specifically the study’s unit of analysis as *staff teams of two or more participants that have common collaborative purpose*. My research constructed meaning by explaining what school leaders *think and do* and how their leadership practices shaped the interaction of adults within their schools. In my research, I addressed the following: 1) identification of the leadership practices modeled in the schools by the school-based leaders, and the perceptions of their staff; 2) identification of the SEL competencies and skills modeled in the enactment of leadership practices; and 3) determination of how leadership practices shaped adult collaboration.

Data Collection Methods

Using purposeful sampling, I collected data at two levels: elementary and middle. I focused on four elementary (i.e., grades K-5) and two middle schools (i.e., one grade 6 and one grades 7-8). With my teammate, Geoff Rose, I conducted 19 semi-structured interviews at each level, with six school-based leaders and 13 school-based staff. Additionally, I collected 29

responses to an online questionnaire, and in partnership with Geoff Rose, I observed five school-based meetings and one alone.

Semi-structured Interviews

I used semi-structured interviews as the primary source of my data collection. I created an interview protocol and questions consistently asked in each interview. In order to gather more data, group members worked in pairs: 1) Donna Tobin and Adam Renda; and 2) Geoff Rose and myself. Each pair focused on three schools each and asked questions pertaining to each other's research questions. There were 10 questions out of 16 that specifically answered my research question, "What leadership practices model SEL competencies," and "How do those leadership practices shape the ways in which adults collaborate?" Three of the ten were specifically related to collaboration in the schools.

Within my pairing, I alternated with my partner in asking questions to a single participant allowing for an equitable distribution of the task as well as the ability to take more focused notes. During the interview, we reordered the questions dependent on the pairing, in an effort to avoid any impact of fatigue by the interviewee. We conducted interviews in person at the school sites between September and December 2019 and each lasted approximately 30-40 minutes. Although a common protocol for each interview was used, I asked additional questions, as needed. Upon permission from the interviewee, all interviews were audio-recorded via Otter application software and transcribed for further reliability of accuracy. Within each pairing, we explained the purpose of the interviews having to do with our Boston College doctoral research and explained to participants that all interview content would be confidential. Consent forms were signed by all interviewees before the interviews took place. Upon completion, regardless of who conducted

the interview, all interview content was shared among the team members for further analysis via Google Drive.

Prior to starting, I piloted our interview protocol and questions on one school-based leader in the district. This allowed for us to test the relevancy of our questions in advance and revise them, if needed, to fit better our research needs. As a result, we modified some of the original questions so that they did not ask about district leadership practices affecting school-based leaders, but more directly, thoughts about how school-based leaders saw their own practices within their schools. As a result, my questions were more focused on the school leaders and their environments. I reconducted the piloted interview with revised questions at the end of the data collection cycle in December 2019.

Onsite Observations

I observed six team meetings or collaborative time to analyze the working dynamics of leaders and staff, and the ways in which they collaborate. I documented the observations through my researcher's field notes of the meetings on the Observation Protocol (see Appendix E). I reviewed my notes for the content discussed and practices used. School-based principals chose the meetings, and three were "ACE" time meetings at the elementary level and two were interdisciplinary team meetings at the middle school level. ACE is an acronym referring to the district's work using Harvard's Data Wise Program, with a team's specific focus on: 1) action; 2) collaboration; and 3) evidence. We speculated that the principals chose these meetings for us to observe because they were perceived to show the greatest interaction among their teachers. The meetings lasted approximately 40 minutes each.

Participants in the meetings were not necessarily the same as the ones that were interviewed. My analysis of meeting observations identified the practices employed and/or topics

discussed in relationship to SEL competencies, and the overall school goals (e.g. student and/or instructional focus vs. scheduling and/or student updates) that they were designed to achieve. All but one group agreed to be recorded via the Otter audio application due to fears about maintaining student confidentiality; I manually transcribed the one that did not. I reviewed all meeting transcripts for analysis purposes.

Online Questionnaire

My final source of data was a 25-question, Likert-scale measured questionnaire adapted by Damore and Wiggins' (2006) *Elements of Collaboration Rubric*; Goddard et al.'s (2004) *Collective Efficacy Scale*; Huntington's (2016) *Resiliency Quiz*; Sinclair and Wallston's (2004) *The Brief Resilient Coping Scale*; and Smith et al.'s (2008) *Brief Resilience Scale*. Four team members used and administered this questionnaire to 34 of the 39 school-based leaders and/or staff that we interviewed (see Appendices F and G). This tool measured teacher perceptions about adult collaboration, collective efficacy, and teacher resilience and wellbeing. Each interviewee was asked to complete the questionnaire, created in Qualtrics, via a provided, handheld device (i.e., iPad) online. I stored the responses in Qualtrics. Although the questionnaire was anonymous, leaders and staff were given an "identification number" that allowed for comparisons between the interviews and Likert-scale selected responses from the questionnaire, if needed.

Employing Triangulation of Data

In order to ensure research validity, reliability and trustworthiness, I employed the triangulation of the aforementioned data sources as part of my process of analysis. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) define triangulation as, "using multiple investigators, sources of data or data collection methods to confirm emerging findings" (p. 259). As discussed, I used interviews,

observations, and a questionnaire to compare and cross check findings from the schools.

Additionally, I used interviews (i.e., a qualitative approach) to interpret the perspective of the interviewees without the interjection of an additional instrument between me and my research subjects. Finally, our research was peer reviewed and examined throughout data collection. I scheduled meetings multiple times weekly to share and/or code findings throughout the process. Our ongoing dialogue led to revisions and new approaches to take, as the research progressed. Our team used a deductive (Cycle 1) and inductive (Cycle 2) approach to analysis, eliminating any preconceived biases based on our historical experiences working in schools that employ SEL practices. A summary of my data collection methods that supported each of my research questions is outlined in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Research Questions and Data Collection Methods

Research questions	School-based Leader (SBL) Interviews N=9	School-based Staff (SBS) Interviews N=30	School-based Questionnaire N=8 (SBL) N=26 (SBS)	School-based Collaborative Observations N=6
RQ#1: What school-based leadership practices, if any, model social and emotional learning competencies?	x	x		x
RQ#2: (2) How do these leadership practices shape the ways in which adult collaboration?	x	x	x	x

Data Analysis

The data used for analysis consisted of primarily semi-structured, transcribed interviews, field notes from observations, and results from an online questionnaire. A combination of a

deductive and inductive approach allowed for some themes or patterns to emerge from the collected data (in some cases, using a priori codes) along the course of the research, as it was happening. Due to the integrated nature of adult collaboration and collective efficacy, as described in my literature review, I met with one research partner, Geoff Rose, at least once per week to review the data, evaluate, and revise our approach, as needed. We continually checked that our data collected was answering our overarching questions as well as individual research studies during the course of the research.

The constant comparative method of data analysis was used in an effort to compare data collected across researchers, the district, and its schools. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that, “these comparisons lead to tentative categories that are then compared to each other and to other instances. Comparisons are constantly made within and between levels of conceptualization until a theory can be formulated” (p. 228). I employed an open, axial and selective coding approach in order to take the array of data collected and narrow it to core categories. I further analyzed these categories, as revealed in my findings.

I used coding software, Dedoose, to code the data I collected, and shared it with fellow group members for discussion and analysis. According to Saldana (2013), “a code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3). Our team used descriptive and process codes to summarize, distill and condense the data. Saldana “advocates that quality codes are essence-capturing and essential elements of the research story that, when clustered together according to similarity and regularity (a pattern) they actively facilitate the development of categories and thus analysis of their connections” (p.8). By

using the sequential process of applying codes, categories, and themes, our team was able to analyze the data collected in order to make assertions about our intended research goals.

For our collective research, coding included, but was not limited to, the CASEL core competencies as *a priori* codes, as they apply to the identified leadership practices. As a way to structure my analysis, I used the CASEL competencies and skills to initially categorize the actions and thoughts of the Westlake leaders. Examples of *a priori* codes are: “social awareness,” “relationship skills,” and “responsible decision-making.” My coding process helped me to organize the leadership practices I found by SEL competencies and skills. I further analyzed the practices in the context of answering my second research question by coding their impact on adult collaboration. See Appendix D for my full coding manual.

Coding cycles

Saldana (2013) viewed coding as a cyclical process in which the cycles of coding and recoding highlights the salient features of the data by “generating categories, themes and concepts, grasping meaning, and/or building theory” (p. 8). Additionally, he goes on to state, “writers of joint research projects advocate that coding in these cases can and should be a collaborative process” (pg. 34). In an effort to build greater cohesion and interpretation of findings, I completed the three coding cycles in a research partnership with dissertation teammate, Geoff Rose.

Cycle 1. The researchers transcribed all semi-structured interviews and uploaded them to Dedoose. We then organized them by participant and school identification numbers. In order to answer Research Question #1, I then extracted excerpts that reflected leadership practices, and coded each excerpt to either *a priori* codes and/or other additional codes created in our coding manual. Note: *a priori* codes are the CASEL competencies and skills (See Appendix

D). Although we included the a priori codes of “self-awareness” and “self-management” in Dedoose, we recognized that we were not coding them; therefore, we consciously decided not to continue the use of these codes, as we continued the process. As a result, “social awareness,” “relationship skills,” and “responsible decision-making” became the identified codes used within our research. In order to answer Research Question #2, I also coded, when applicable, each excerpt to my individual key focus areas of the six elements of adult collaboration.

Cycle 2. In Dedoose’s *Analyze* tab, we reviewed *Code Chart* options, and selected the *Code Co-Occurrence* chart, to find the highest frequency of two intersecting codes (e.g. “relationship skills” and “leaders DO”). In order to further analyze Research Question #1, we clicked on the highest numbers found at the intersecting points of what leaders DO and SEL skills within each competency. We then did the same for Research Question #2 using the categories of what leaders DO and our respective focus areas, mine being adult collaboration. We were then able to export excerpts from our interview transcripts.

After exporting the highest occurring excerpts using MS Excel, a Microsoft spreadsheet application, onto separate tabs by competency and skill, we then read each of the excerpts and identified who was displaying or demonstrating the action as either a school-based leader (SBL) or a school-based staff (SBS) member; we then inductively coded the excerpts by theme. Following that exercise, we identified the themes by frequency (e.g. SBL Individual Praise, SBS Sharing Expertise). After identifying these themes, we reviewed the excerpts to establish theme definitions and big ideas related to specific leadership practices. After defining these themes and connecting them to a big idea about leadership practices, we then grouped by similar practice and created four general categories that represented the most prominent leadership practices that modeled the SEL competencies and skills. At this point, because our research was focused on the

actions of leaders, we chose to explore further those practices that leaders demonstrated as opposed to staff.

This identification confirmed that leadership practices in our district did model SEL competencies. I then took these leadership practices and applied them to my specific focus areas in order to analyze the ways in which adult collaboration was shaped. This was done by identifying frequency, patterns and themes in accordance with the six elements of collaboration. Through this process, I mapped these focus areas onto the identified leadership practices that modeled SEL competencies, and answered Research Question #2.

Cycle 3. *Semi-structured interviews.* We then worked to understand the relationship between the four identified leadership practices with the SEL competencies they modeled: 1) Leaders schedule meeting times (social awareness); 2) Leaders support out-of-district PD with potential for large meeting share-outs (social awareness); 3) Leaders give praise with little to no feedback (relationship skills); and 4) Leaders provide feedback with little to no collaborative dialogue (relationship skills). During this process, we created various visual representations displaying the dynamic relationship between SBL and SBS. We recognized that a connection existed between the identified practices and overall theme of adult learning. We also recognized the noticeable pattern that the practices were related to the various ways in which SBL had the opportunity to educate their staff. As a result, we decided to expand from four to six leadership practices in order to more accurately define these practices and the SEL competencies they modeled. These expanded leadership practices now included: meeting time, professional development, praise, feedback, coaching, and sharing expertise. It also expanded the competencies they modeled to social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making.

Questionnaire Analysis. Using the *Qualtrics* application, we exported questionnaire responses from both SBS and SBL. We then quantified the number of participants in each category by grouping the answers by “Strongly Agreed/Agreed,” “Somewhat Agreed,” “Neither Agreed or Disagreed,” “Somewhat Disagreed” and “Strongly Disagreed/Disagreed.” After that, we determined the percentages of each of the responses and analyzed whether the data was a positive or negative perception of that question from both SBS and SBL. We also analyzed the data to find patterns between SBS and SBL perceptions. We then identified important points related to the similarities and differences of those patterns.

Observation Analysis. After each observation, we completed an analytic memo summarizing our key takeaways from the observation. We recorded these memos on the transcriptions and used them as an entry point into the data analysis. Using *Dedoose*, we analyzed data from the observations by coding the competencies, skills and elements outlined in our coding manual. We then used the *Dedoose* application to assess the most frequent SEL competencies. The “responsible decision-making” and “non-SEL” codes were most frequent, but further analysis revealed significant disparities between each of the six observations, primarily due to the participants varying for each meeting observed. As a result, we revisited the observation transcriptions and analytic memos to inductively analyze the transcripts looking for additional patterns and themes. In doing so, we noticed that disparities emerged between leaders and staff within each school according to the six identified leadership practices.

Triangulation of data. Additionally, I triangulated the questionnaire, observation and interview data to determine potential themes between the Likert-scale questionnaire, coded responses from the interviews, and analytic memos and coded responses from the observation. Patterns and themes emerged in the identification of overarching leadership practices.

Findings

In this section, I identify six leadership practices that model SEL competencies. As discussed, this individual study focuses on the three SEL competencies that integrate the skills most associated with the social interactions with and/or understanding of others, namely: 1) social awareness, 2) relationship skills and 3) responsible decision-making. These competencies focus on the interpersonal skills (i.e., that which occur between people) as opposed to the competencies that encompass more of the intrapersonal skills, (i.e., that which exists within one person). This section identifies findings related to Research Question #1, “What school-based leadership practices, if any, model SEL competencies?” I summarize my findings to this question in Table 3.2 and explain them further throughout this section.

Table 3.2

A Summary of Leadership Practices that Model SEL Competencies

Leadership Practices	Definitions	Modeled SEL Competencies
Meeting Time	Leaders provide opportunities for time in the schedule for staff to meet	Social Awareness
Professional Development	Leaders provide opportunities for time and resources for staff to attend trainings, workshops and conferences	Social Awareness
Praise	Leaders notice and recognize positive practices of staff	Relationship Skills
Feedback	Leaders engage in dialogue about the practices of staff	Relationship Skills
Coaching	Leaders interact with staff in order to support their practices	Relationship Skills

Sharing Expertise	Leaders promote opportunities for staff to interact in adult learning that leads to changes in practices and beliefs	Responsible Decision-making
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School-based Leadership Practices that Modeled SEL Competencies

Leaders Provided Opportunities for Time in the Schedule for Staff to Meet

In this identified leadership practice, I discuss the topic of “meeting time” and the importance of leaders providing time within the school schedule. Social awareness is the main SEL competency modeled through this leadership practice because it recognizes that collaborative time is a necessary resource for staff. During the semi-structured interviews, participants frequently stated that there was dedicated time in schedules to participate in meetings. One staff member explained, “we have a new schedule now, and it allows for a lot of team meeting time, which is really important. So, this is the first year I’ve actually been able to meet weekly with all the other specialists, the principal and the social workers.” An important task for leaders was to determine and create intentional time in the school schedule for staff to meet. Table 3.3 represents a summary of formal required and scheduled meetings for both WPS elementary and middle school staff.

Table 3.3

Required and Scheduled Meetings in WPS

Type	Frequency and Time	Focus
Middle Schools Grades 6-8		
School-based LC	1x/4 days; during school; 45 minutes	SBS/SBL - interdisciplinary
School-based Faculty	1x/month; after school; 60 minutes	SBS/SBL - schoolwide
District Department	1x/month; after school; 60 minutes	SBS/SBL - curriculum
School-based Department	1x/4 days; during school; 45 minutes	SBS - curriculum

School-based PLC	1x/month; after school; 60 minutes	SBS - goal development
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Elementary Schools Grades K-5

School-based ACE	1x/week; during school; 40 minutes	SBS/SBL - data
School-based Faculty	1x/month; after school; 60 minutes	SBS/SBL - schoolwide
District Grade Level	1x/month; after school; 60 minutes	SBS/SBL - districtwide
School-based CPT	1x/month; after school; 60 minutes	SBS - grade-level

Table 3.3 shows that multiple days a month were given to meeting times both during and after the school day. Additionally, five of the six meetings I observed were during formally scheduled meeting times that were provided to staff by the leaders. During the observations, I observed two “Learning Community” meetings, one grade-level teacher meeting, and three “ACE” meetings. Although five of the six meetings had a formal leader present, only three leaders followed a formal meeting protocol. The other three (including the one without a formal leader present) followed a list of items and/or students to discuss.

As seen through the questionnaire, both leaders and staff positively perceived that staff were committed to collaborative time; however, more than half of both staff and leaders did not positively perceive that time was used effectively. Leaders understood that their staff valued time with colleagues and that it was their job to provide time in the schedule to ensure it happened; it was a critical responsibility that was expected. In some ways, the leadership practice of providing collaborative time was crucial to the staff’s perception of the leader’s competency to support the school; however, leaders often prioritized the task of scheduling meeting times over creating and providing staff with the facilitation tools needed in order to run the meetings and reach the meeting’s intended goals. This may have led to the staff’s feelings of ineffective collaborative time.

Leaders Provided Opportunities for Time and Resources for Staff to Attend Trainings, Workshops and Conferences

In this leadership practice, I discuss the topic of “professional development” (PD) and how leaders provide the time and resources (e.g., substitute coverage and registration fees) in order for staff to participate in out-of-district learning. Social awareness is the main SEL competency school-based leaders modeled that exhibited an awareness for recognizing the need for resources and support for staff inside and outside of school. Leaders provided and supported opportunities for staff to access outside expertise and attend PD venues. It was not uncommon to hear from staff during the interviews, statements such as, “My building principal has been open, if I asked to do something or attend a PD session. She definitely promotes that and wants us to do it.” As a follow up, some staff were given the time to share publicly their learnings when returning to school in the form of share-outs and/or presentations during faculty meetings. This approach to sharing was accomplished primarily through short, direct instruction rather than collaborative “learning conversations” among colleagues.

Although observations of meetings did not yield much data related to school-based perceptions about PD, one staff member at an elementary school meeting did mention how her participation in a literacy workshop was useful. When discussing Wilson Language Training, she shared, “We had a half day PD one year, just about what it is. That was actually one of the reasons why I got certified; I wanted to learn about it, and to be able to implement it.” It was noted that this staff member found it valuable to pursue outside learning to enhance her work and improve her credentials.

That being said, our questionnaire revealed that over half of school-based leaders and staff perceived that teachers need *more* training for knowing how to deal with their challenging

students. Although the type of training was not specified in the questionnaire, the significance of this finding is that leaders may not have known what PD staff truly needed when seeking outside expertise. Staff still felt that they could learn more in order to meet the needs of their students. Overall, this practice showed that leaders perceived that the PD staff needed was found outside of the district and its schools, and that it was necessary for leaders to support staff in knowing where and how to get it. It appeared less in the data that leaders understood the specific PD needs of staff, nor did they intentionally use internal expertise and scheduled meeting times to deliver the PD that matched any of those potential needs.

Leaders Noticed and Recognized Positive Practices of Staff

In this identified leadership practice, I discuss the topic of “praise” and how leaders noticed the work of their staff and recognized it through positive reinforcements. This was seen through “shout outs” in faculty meetings, hallway conversations or moments of appreciation. Most praise was *reactive* to something that had already taken place and given verbally from leaders to staff in order to build positive connections. Relationship skills was the main SEL competency modeled by school-based leaders because leaders clearly communicated to staff by delivering and sharing information in understandable ways. Leaders provided praise through formal and informal observations. One teacher shared during the interviews, “I think, also, that the administration is supportive. They come in, and they walk around, and they’ll say nice things that they see happening.” These observations provided an opportunity for leaders to work cooperatively and collegially with staff.

In some cases, leaders encouraged staff members to let their colleagues observe them in their classrooms, which served as a form of praise. Leaders also showed appreciation for staff’s

work by thanking them directly. These actions resulted in positive feelings and attitudes from staff, creating supportive relationships between them.

Although I did not ask any questions in my questionnaire that contributed to a greater understanding of this practice, I did notice in one of my meeting observations that a staff member communicated to her principal the thought that it would be useful to share what teams were working on during a faculty meeting. The leader praised the individual by saying the suggestion was a “great idea,” resulting in a positive reaction by the teacher. Overall, this leadership practice showed that providing positive reinforcement to staff members contributed to their feelings of efficacy in their work, resulting in a stronger commitment to their practices.

Leaders Engaged in Dialogue about the Practices of Staff

In this identified leadership practice, I discuss the topic of “feedback” and how leaders engaged in dialogue with staff about their practices. Typically, this was seen through formal, structured time between leaders and staff. Although, at times it was evaluative, it still served as an opportunity for leaders and staff to collaborate on ways to improve practices. Relationship skills was the main SEL competency modeled by school-based leaders because leaders communicated clearly to staff by delivering and sharing information. Additionally, relationship skills were modeled through the act of collaborating with colleagues as leaders and staff worked jointly together.

Like praise, feedback is *reactive* to something that has already taken place, and it can be delivered either in writing or verbally; the latter being appreciated by staff most due to the more personal feelings and effort made by leaders to be face-to-face. During an interview, one elementary staff member shared her thoughts about receiving feedback by saying, “I’m usually face-to-face in conversation. I don’t think I’ve ever gotten any feedback from her in writing, which is

good. I would much rather get feedback directly from her in person. It's just much more valuable and respectful.” Additionally, I observed one meeting in which the leader took time to give constructive feedback. The meeting was designed to review teacher lessons and student written work, and the leader inserted comments that helped to highlight effective practices. One example is when the leader said,

I would read the lessons and think for some of these kids that this will just go right over their heads. But, when you pulled in those different organizers to help support them, I think it made a huge difference because you're giving them something concrete. They know they need to add this type of thing into their story.

These examples illustrate that the conversations between leaders and staff are important in building and/or maintaining relationships, and that feedback can be given that is not just positive praise, but also constructive and specific with the intent of improving practices. Many staff members felt validated when their leaders took the time to talk with them about what in their work was effective, not just a compliment or accolade that they had done it.

Leaders Interacted with Staff in Order to Support their Practices

In this identified leadership practice, I discuss the topic of “coaching” and how leaders interacted with staff in order to support their instructional and classroom practices. Although feedback can be considered part of coaching, I argue that the difference lies in the *proactive* nature of coaching as a practice rather than one that is reactive. Typically, this can be seen through leaders and staff co-teaching, planning lessons, reviewing student work/data, and/or sharing relevant resources. Often, coaching is implemented through a “coach” specific to a certain subject area such as math, literacy or science; in this study, this type of position is categorized as one of leadership. Additionally, coaching can be practiced by a formal administrator such as a principal, assistant principal and/or a department head. Relationship skills was the main SEL competency that was modeled through this leadership practice, as the skills of

collaboration, clear communications and offering support when needed were identified. Leaders provided and utilized collaborative time for coaches and teachers to discuss instructional practices; they provided opportunities for feedback, coaching, and data meetings to support changes in practice; and they provided opportunities for coaches to collaborate with teachers to improve the instructional work happening in classrooms. Many coaching conversations happened in anticipation of an event, such as an upcoming lesson, rather than just a result of one.

Staff highly valued coaching as a resource, and leaders enabled opportunities for subject area coaches to collaborate with teachers in their schools to improve their teacher's classroom practices. Specifically, elementary school teachers scheduled time with coaches to be observed and to discuss instruction.

During interviews, multiple teachers spoke about coaches by saying, "they show support, where they'll come in and co-teach with us," "the literacy coach is coming in and doing lessons with her; and that's really helpful when you can have a back seat and watch somebody else teach," and "they (coaches) come in and offer us support in areas where we feel like we need more help." Additionally, half of the meetings I observed had a school-based leader, the principal, interacting with a team of teachers to support their practices. Overall, by promoting opportunities for coaching, school-based staff, not just leaders, recognized the importance of their collaborative relationships with leadership in an effort to positively shape their daily work.

Leaders Promoted Opportunities for Staff to Interact in Adult Learning that Led to Changes in Practices and Beliefs

In this identified leadership practice, I discuss the topic of "sharing expertise" and how staff interacted in adult learning that led to a change of instructional and classroom practices, and beliefs. Typically, this was exemplified through staff sharing resources and ideas, encouraging

many voices to be heard, and understanding the value of collaboration. Responsible decision-making was the main SEL competency that was modeled through this leadership practice when leaders exhibited the skill of evaluating consequences in consideration of the wellbeing of others, and by understanding what staff needed and finding a way to provide it for them. When leaders gave staff the opportunities to interact and share their expertise, the consequence was improved professional learning and collective knowledge.

Often, staff worked with each other and shared expertise in an effort to improve their school practices for the benefit of their students. One middle school teacher stated,

One of the bigger goals in this school is to build capacity and competency across the building. So, the more we collaborate with teachers, the more they share their understandings about what the student is experiencing in their classrooms. The more those teachers start to think about how their practices are either benefiting or not benefiting (students), then the more they can cater their practices from there. So, I think that's why we collaborate, because it ends up creating change.

This response indicates that teachers value time together in order to learn from each other, reflect on their learning, and make an effort to do something different for the better. All of the meeting observations provided time for teachers to interact with each other in some capacity, although only three of the six meetings followed protocols, such as those provided from Harvard's DataWise program, for sharing expertise about assessing student work.

Alternatively, the questionnaire revealed that while half of staff positively perceive that their colleagues share their expertise during collaborative time, only some leaders positively perceive that this is actually happening. Also, my research concluded the same as Avalos-Bevan, B., & Bascope, M. (2017) who found that teachers were engaged in collaborative time that focused on the sharing of ideas and problem-solving teacher issues, such as those related to student academic challenges, as opposed to stronger forms of collaboration that included mutual observations and team teaching. I recognized in my data that adult learning during collaborative

time was often not intentional, and with learning goals; hence, it missed an opportunity to serve as a means to influencing staff practices, impacting student outcomes, or changing staff beliefs.

School-based Leadership Practices that Shaped Adult Collaboration

In this section, I describe how the identified leadership practices that modeled SEL competencies, outlined above, shaped adult collaboration in schools. I answer Research Question #2, “How do these school-based leadership practices shape the ways in which adults collaborate?” In some cases, I merged the six identified leadership practices to create a more synergistic review of the data. I summarize my findings to this question in Table 3.4 and further explain them in this section.

Table 3.4

Summary of how leadership practices shaped adult collaboration

Leadership practice	How it shapes adult collaboration
Meeting times employ the use of team processes.	It shapes adult collaboration by emphasizing the importance of providing time together and the team processes that support it. However, structures and processes were emphasized during collaborative time over the content that is most relevant to improving and/or changing teacher practices.
Professional development shared in large group meetings.	It shapes adult collaboration by not positioning meetings as places that regularly and intentionally promote adult learning between colleagues; therefore, diminishing its potential as a means to improved schoolwide practices and perceived collective efficacy.
Praise sets the tone for positive attitudes between leaders and staff.	It shapes adult collaboration by setting the tone for ongoing engagement: therefore, paving the way towards honest and authentic dialogue between staff and leaders as well as a greater commitment and motivation for the generative work that follows.
Coaching of staff in order to change their practices	It shapes adult collaboration by increasing dialogue between staff and their coaches specific to their content curriculum in an effort to bring improvement and change to what happens in classrooms.

Meeting Times Employed the Use of Team Processes

School-based leaders built collaborative time into the daily schedule for groups to meet with each other. In doing so, SBL and SBS supported the use of facilitation strategies such as preset agendas, predetermined norms, and identified roles. Of the six elements of adult collaboration, “team processes,” which includes these strategies to enhance communications between colleagues, was the second code most applied to the data. One school-based teacher stated, “I often am the facilitator in the meetings, but my peer is the timekeeper, and someone else is the notetaker. We have jobs.” During my observations, five of the six meetings followed an agenda of some kind, while one was more informal. Of the five, three followed a protocol to enhance teacher practices, while two were guided by a list of students to be discussed with no prescribed outcomes expected from the meeting.

However, less than half of school-based staff “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that teachers are accountable for their collaborative time together. One school-based staff member stated, “The second special is where the principal comes down and meets with the team. We talk about district level things or classroom goals within the grade, but we have to pull it together to decide when the team is going to meet to just talk about everyday types of things.” Some school-based staff felt that meeting with leaders took away from the time they needed to do their daily, operational tasks. Leaders focused more on district- and school-wide strategic goals and issues, but teachers still felt responsible for their classroom duties with little time to do them. There was limited mention of follow-up by leaders for the meetings they held in any of our data sources. If so, it was primarily about the scheduling of the next meeting. As a result, staff seemed to return from these meeting with limited accountability, to their classroom-driven routines and the priorities that come with them.

By providing opportunities for time to collaborate, this leadership practice shaped adult collaboration by emphasizing the importance of providing intentional time for staff to meet, and the team processes that supported it. Leaders understood the importance of adult collaboration, and the time and facilitation that was necessary to do it. However, structures and processes were emphasized during collaborative time over the content and accountability for it that was most relevant to improving and/or changing staff practices.

Professional Development Shared in Large Group Meetings

Along with providing time and resources for staff to attend PD conferences, trainings and workshops outside of the district, leaders encouraged and provided opportunities for staff to publicly share their learnings during collaborative time. Leadership practices shaped adult collaboration when staff and administrators engaged together in adult learning, and leaders provided time in meetings for staff to share their knowledge obtained from PD. One school-based staff stated, "So she (an administrator) often sends out things that are going on, or if there's something that you're interested in, she might offer to let you go to a training. Another thing is that if there's something you feel like you're an expert on, sometimes there will be times in staff meetings for you to share it." Additionally, another staff member said,

One thing that we started doing last year is that when teachers go to PD, they get about five minutes to present what the PD was about at staff meetings and that was really cool, because wouldn't we all love to go to every PD? So, that was an opportunity to learn about all the cool stuff that we're doing.

Leaders understood the value of knowledge obtained from out-of-district resources, and they tried and found opportunities, even if brief, for participants to share with their colleagues what PD they did and a high-level view of what they learned.

However, teachers felt that sharing expertise during collaborative time among colleagues did not happen regularly enough as a standard practice in order for them to benefit from it. Of the

coded leadership practices having to do with the collaborative element of “professional development,” only five out of 30 participants cited benefits from large group share-out opportunities. It was perceived as effective by some, but only as a “one off” and not a prominent part of the school’s routine collaborative practices. One elementary school-based staff stated, “School wide meetings are usually facilitated by [an administrator] ... and teachers are usually just listening to what's happening or what we're required to do for that meeting.” In support, only half of school-based staff “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that teachers share their philosophies, goals and/or expertise during collaborative time. The significance of this lack of sharing is that the benefits gained from staff attending PD is not fully realized in comparison to the amount of time, energy, and resources given in support of going to them. It shaped adult collaboration by not positioning meetings as places that regularly and intentionally promoted adult learning between colleagues, therefore, diminishing its potential as a means to improved schoolwide practices and perceived collective efficacy.

Praise Set the Tone for Positive Attitudes Between Leaders and Staff

Leaders provided praise to staff by recognizing, noticing, and appreciating positive practices during or after observations. This leadership practice shaped adult collaboration by generating positive attitudes about the work being done, and as a result, fueled the ongoing commitment exhibited by staff about meeting with their leaders. The element of “positive attitudes” was the most coded leadership practice having to do with effective collaboration. When asked, more than half of school-based staff said that they were committed to collaborative time in their schools. One school-based staff member stated,

I think that hearing feedback victories is really helpful, and I get that a lot from the leaders. AP, the principal, the social workers, they're all good at coming back and saying, "Hey, that thing you did, that worked," and really letting me know when I'm making improvements. It's nice.

Additionally, a school-based leader commented about time with a teacher by saying,

Being able to walk into a second-grade classroom in one, you know, part of the building and then going to another second-grade classroom and saying, 'Wow, this is kind of amazing. You guys are doing the same thing. You're on the right track.' And just giving that feedback.

Although not a formal, evaluative activity, these impromptu opportunities between staff and leaders about the work they observed showed how interactions that included praise and affirmation generated positive attitudes between staff and leaders, and ultimately enhanced their relationships.

However, the delivery of honest feedback – positive or negative – and the confidence needed by leaders to do so, was questioned by some. At times, leaders were met with reactions from staff that made them question their approach and impact on them. One teacher stated,

I have sometimes left wondering why there are not more opportunities for school leaders to initiate conversations with staff over positive performance. Staff morale would greatly benefit from more positive feedback. When meeting with [a school-based leader] in meetings, I have not always felt as respected and I have not felt that the school leaders see [us] as doing a good job.

When asked, only half of the middle school staff were committed to collaborative time which diminished positive attitudes among them. When attempting to address such challenges, one SBL said, "That's the kind of thing I've constantly got going on in my head about how to ensure that it is becoming this very collaborative culture that we are being really authentic with each other in what we're doing and not just playing nice." This highlights the dilemma between SBL and SBS where the emphasis is on collegial relationships (i.e., the notion of shared responsibility) that does not look to offend staff, rather than interacting with constructive feedback that positively changes their practices.

Feedback and praise, in the ways of noticing and appreciating strong practices, led to positive attitudes from staff about meeting with their administrators. Conversely, negative feedback, like when administrators criticized staff for their work, decreased morale and the relationship staff had with leaders. By providing opportunities to deliver feedback and praise, this leadership practice shaped adult collaboration by setting the tone for ongoing engagement: therefore, paving the way towards honest and authentic dialogue between staff and leaders as well as a greater commitment and motivation for the generative work that followed.

Coaching of Staff in Order to Change their Practice

Leaders provided staff with opportunities to collaborate about instructional practice through coaching. Instructional coaching was accomplished through principals and/or subject-specific department heads and/or coaches. As a result, teachers and leaders/coaches developed strong relationships, as ongoing dialogue occurred about instructional needs to improve practice. Leaders found and provided opportunities for coaching through observing instruction, meeting and giving feedback, discussing goals, and reviewing data and student work. When asked, more than three quarters of elementary school-based staff “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that teachers have time collaboratively to discuss teaching and/or instructional standards. This leadership practice shaped collaboration by providing adult learning opportunities where teachers and leaders shared expertise, and as a result, discussed and changed classroom instruction. One school-based staff stated,

I think definitely supporting our work would be the coaches, both math and literacy. And we actually now have a science coach as well, which has been really great this year. They show their support, where they'll come in and co-teach with us. We can go over upcoming lessons that are happening, questions that you might have, you know, things that aren't going well, like, how can we look at data? Like, they're not doing well on this? Like, how can we improve? So, I feel like those are the people that I go to within the district.

Staff acknowledge that coaches brought expertise and understanding to the curriculum they teach, and that they valued this collaborative time.

However, in one interview, the role of the coach/department head as opposed to the principal caused some confusion about who was facilitating the meeting. One school-based coach/department head commented in regards to their role, "I don't feel like I've ever been a part of a collective goal process. In other words, that involves an administrator" and "I'm not clear to be honest with you on whether someone wants me to run those meetings or not. I feel like when I walk into the meetings, suddenly the leadership role is given to me." Collaborative time that is used in the context of formal meetings posed challenges about leadership roles, facilitation responsibilities, and agenda setting.

By providing opportunities to collaborate with coaches, this leadership practice shaped adult collaboration by increasing dialogue between staff and their coaches specific to their content curriculum in an effort to bring improvement and change classroom instruction. Leaders understood the importance of subject-specific professional learning among their staff, and they encouraged collaborative opportunities for staff to engage with the resources necessary to support them.

Discussion

In my research, I found that there were six areas that leaders and staff revealed most when providing data about their schools. These practices modeled the SEL competencies of "social awareness" and "relationships skills," and highlighted the importance of modeling "responsible decision-making," showing that school-based leaders in WPS displayed and demonstrated key aspects of socially and emotionally competent leadership in what they did.

These identified practices shaped adult collaboration by setting mainly a positive tone for adult interaction and their work, and by acknowledging the importance of forming small groups to build relationships (Trimble & Miller, 1996). However, I found that adults needed opportunities in their working time together to improve their professional development, adult learning and collegial relationships. As Corey (2015) observed, staff learning improved when they had time to share their expertise and prepare and plan together. Collaboration that included a sole presenter and little sharing of expertise, or meetings without structure, proved less effective to staff than those in which interaction was encouraged.

In the following section, I discuss how leadership practices in schools impact adult learning, and recommend a shift from a unidirectional approach of sharing knowledge to one that is multidirectional. Distributed leadership (Spillane et al., 2004) assumes a multidirectional approach where expertise moves between staff rather than from formal leaders alone. I then revisit the SEL competencies, and how they build on each other, as a hierarchy in the development of leadership skills. Finally, I argue that a model be considered that looks at the existing SEL leadership practices as a progression that leads to a change in staff practices and beliefs, and ultimately positive school reform.

To end this section, I recommend and suggest action steps within a distributed framework model for the district to take when thinking about leadership development and school reform as well as limitations to this study that exist.

A Unidirectional to Multi-directional Approach to Sharing Knowledge

My findings show that five of the six identified leadership practices involved sharing knowledge unidirectionally—school-based leaders to school-based staff—rather than multidirectionally by fostering many relationships within a school (see Figure 3.4). A unidirectional

approach, as seen in WPS, included leaders providing meeting times and resources as well as out-of-district PD with potential opportunities for large meeting share outs. It also included praise, feedback, and coaching with little to no feedback delivered from school-based leaders to staff collectively or individually during informal interactions and/or large group (e.g., faculty) meetings. The flow of knowledge or critique moved from leader to staff member with little collaborative interaction and/or sharing of deeper pedagogical expertise between them. The main objective of leaders was often seen as disseminating information rather than promoting meaningful dialogue and exchanges.

This finding was contrary to the research I found on effective collaborative structures, especially those that highlight benefits such as sharing of expertise between colleagues (Damore & Wiggins, 2006) and the advice that is exchanged (Moolenaar et al., 2012). Research indicated that leaders benefited from collaborating with school-based staff, and school-based staff benefited from collaborating directly with their colleagues (Minckler, 2014). Although the latter relationships did exist in WPS, formal meeting times without a leader appeared to be less focused on creating stronger instructional practice. In building staff-to-staff relationships across a school, collaboration is fostered to improve teacher perceptions about their collective work (Donohoo et al., 2018). Strong relationship-building skills ultimately promote dialogue, inquiry and discussions about practice and beliefs that ultimately benefit students (Leana, 2011).

In support of a distributed model of leadership that encourages adult relationships, I acknowledge that leaders do not alone hold the instructional knowledge needed in schools (Spillane et al., 2004). A distributed model leverages building human capital, capabilities and expertise throughout the organization (Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Marks & Printy, 2003; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Ultimately, responsible decision-making becomes a

shared task among all members of the school community, as staff learn from their leaders and colleagues and leaders learn from staff and colleagues (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). This decision-making process becomes a collective responsibility that incorporates the use of ethical standards when evaluating the consequences that various actions have on the well-being of all constituents, stakeholders, and others.

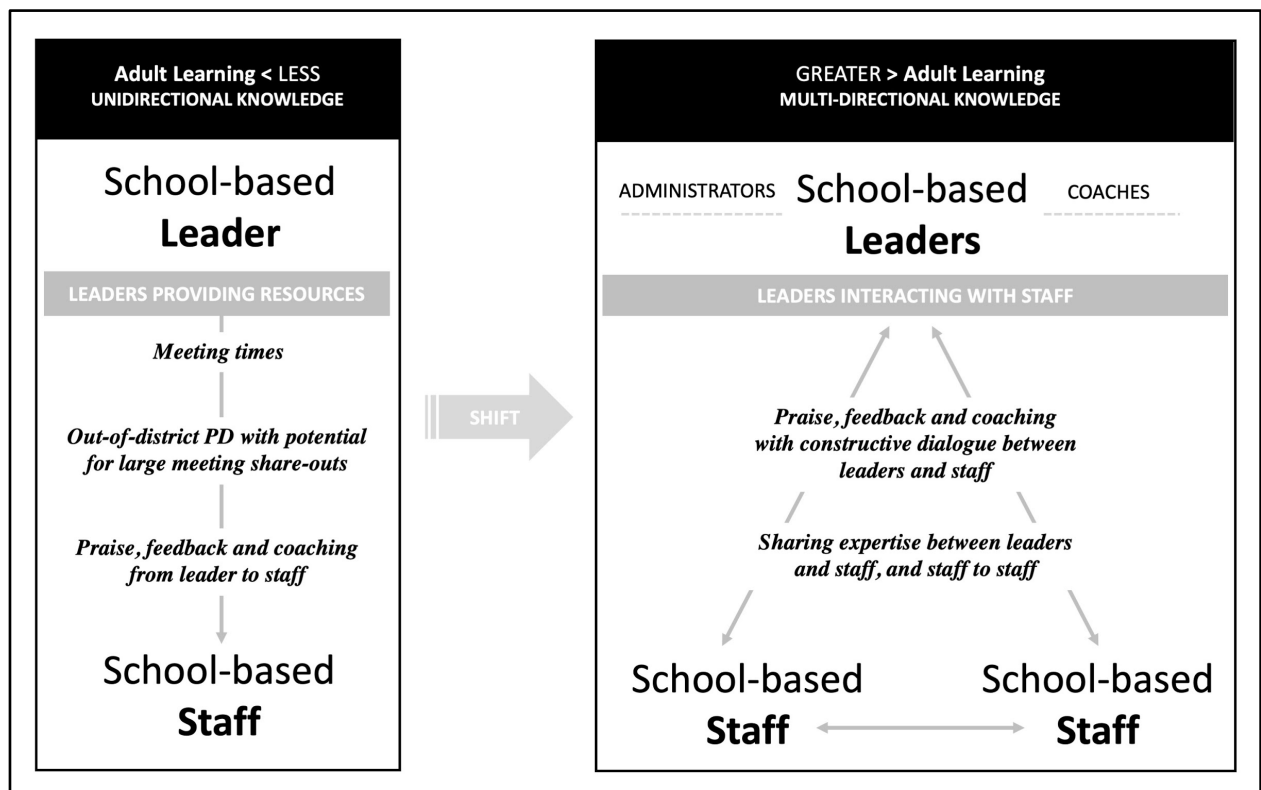


Figure 3.4. Shifting from a unidirectional flow of knowledge to one that is multidirectional. Ito & Rose, 2020.

Responsible Decision-making as a Higher-order Competency

I argue that the SEL competency of responsible decision-making for adults is needed in schools. In order to do so, I found that the interpersonal competencies of social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making require a hierarchical progression where one competency lays the foundation for the next (see Figure 3.5).

First, the competency of social awareness asks that adults understand others through skills such as empathy, active listening, and hearing differing perspectives. Next, relationship skills incorporate the skills of interacting collegially, working with others for improvement, and supporting the needs of others (CASEL, 2017). These skills begin to introduce the presence of another person in order to develop these skills; hence relationships are created. After these two competencies are developed, Patti (2015) defends that “leaders need to build on the foundational skills of social awareness and relationship skills in order to think systemically about their organizations” (p. 444). Thinking systemically means that the individual considers the greater organization and not just the relationships that exist within it. In relationship to my findings, the data did not strongly reflect the skills associated with the competencies of social awareness such as active listening (with the exception of follow-up feedback after evaluation), empathy, or the exchange of differing perspectives. Not having these foundational skills present meant that responsible decision making was not seen as widely practiced.

Finally, adults can practice the competency of responsible decision-making when their actions are grounded in moral principles and thoughtful behaviors designed to create positive outcomes for the larger community. Patti (2015) states, “school leaders adept at understanding the complexity and the interconnected relationships between the independent structures of their organizations make decisions that consider the school as a whole” (p. 444). In my study, I found that leadership practices that modeled responsible decision-making had the ability to be the most impactful in building staff capabilities and changing practices. Leaders increased staff effectiveness when they modeled responsible decision-making within their own practices and fostered contexts that built capabilities and capacity among staff (Cohen et al., 2007). Due to these findings, I assert that when leaders work with staff to grow capabilities and increase trust

between them, that a more distributed model of leadership that includes responsible decision-making by staff will happen. This model will support the organization's overall collective efficacy and capacity to grow.

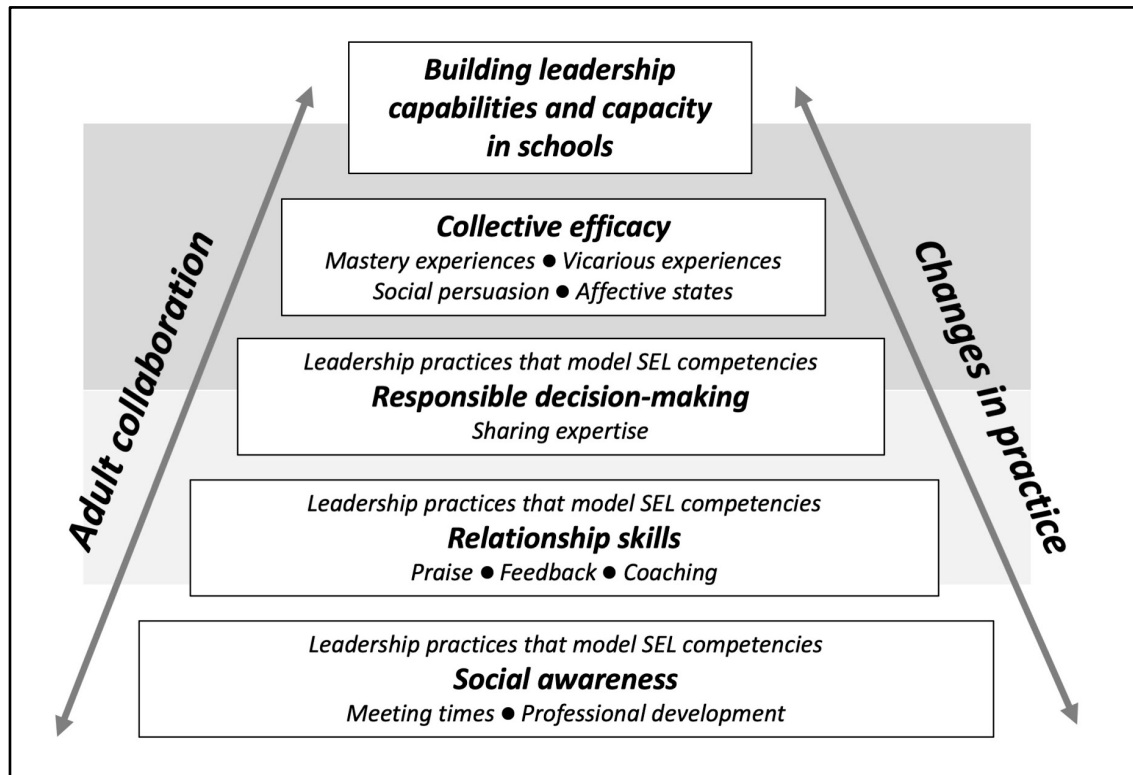


Figure 3.5. Leadership practices that model SEL competencies as a foundation for school reform. Ito & Rose, 2020.

A Framework that Builds on SEL Competencies for School Reform

In order to move towards a framework that grows the capabilities and capacity within the organization, I summarize the implications I have discussed thus far: 1) current leadership practices in the district primarily supported a unidirectional flow of the sharing of knowledge, although a multi-directional approach that shares expertise and responsibility would be more effective; and 2) the SEL competencies modeled in the practices sit within a hierarchy where social awareness and relationship skills serve as foundational for responsible decision-making

when thinking systemically. Figure 5 outlines how those foundational SEL competencies build upon themselves in an effort to improve collective efficacy, capabilities, and capacity.

In WPS, the leadership practice of sharing expertise amongst colleagues (i.e., the one that modeled responsible decision-making) highlighted a focus on student achievement. If more staff were responsible for decision making about student growth, it would build commitment in the organization (Hulpia, 2011). Leaders would still need to support adult meeting time and professional development; however, more time would be spent fostering positive attitudes, and creating tools and team processes that staff could use to effectively run their own collaborative time together (Damore & Wiggins, 2006).

In my findings, meetings that had a strong leader present and stated purpose appeared more intentional about affecting student learning outcomes than those without. Greater expertise was shared between staff, and it was seen as an effective way for adults to learn in relationship to student achievement (Goddard et al., 2007). In support of implementing more effective practices, literature suggests that meaningful collaborative time be spent on coaching from observations, specifically on instructional and/or pedagogical practices (Avalos-Bevan & Bascope, 2017). These activities could happen from peer to peer. As a result, leaders could build greater collective efficacy amongst colleagues through the exchange of advice as well as capacity within their organizations for staff to run student-focused collaborative time themselves (Moolenaar et al., 2012).

Leadership Practices in a Distributed Leadership Framework

Figure 3.6 below outlines how practices can be implemented through a distributed leadership framework. The relationships supported are: 1) school-based leaders to school-based staff; 2) school-based staff to adult collaborative time; and 3) school-based leaders to adult collaborative

time. School-based leaders and staff share responsibility by having specific roles and expectations. The framework identifies leadership practices that can be executed with the goal of overall greater capability and capacity (Cohen et al., 2007) building in the organization.

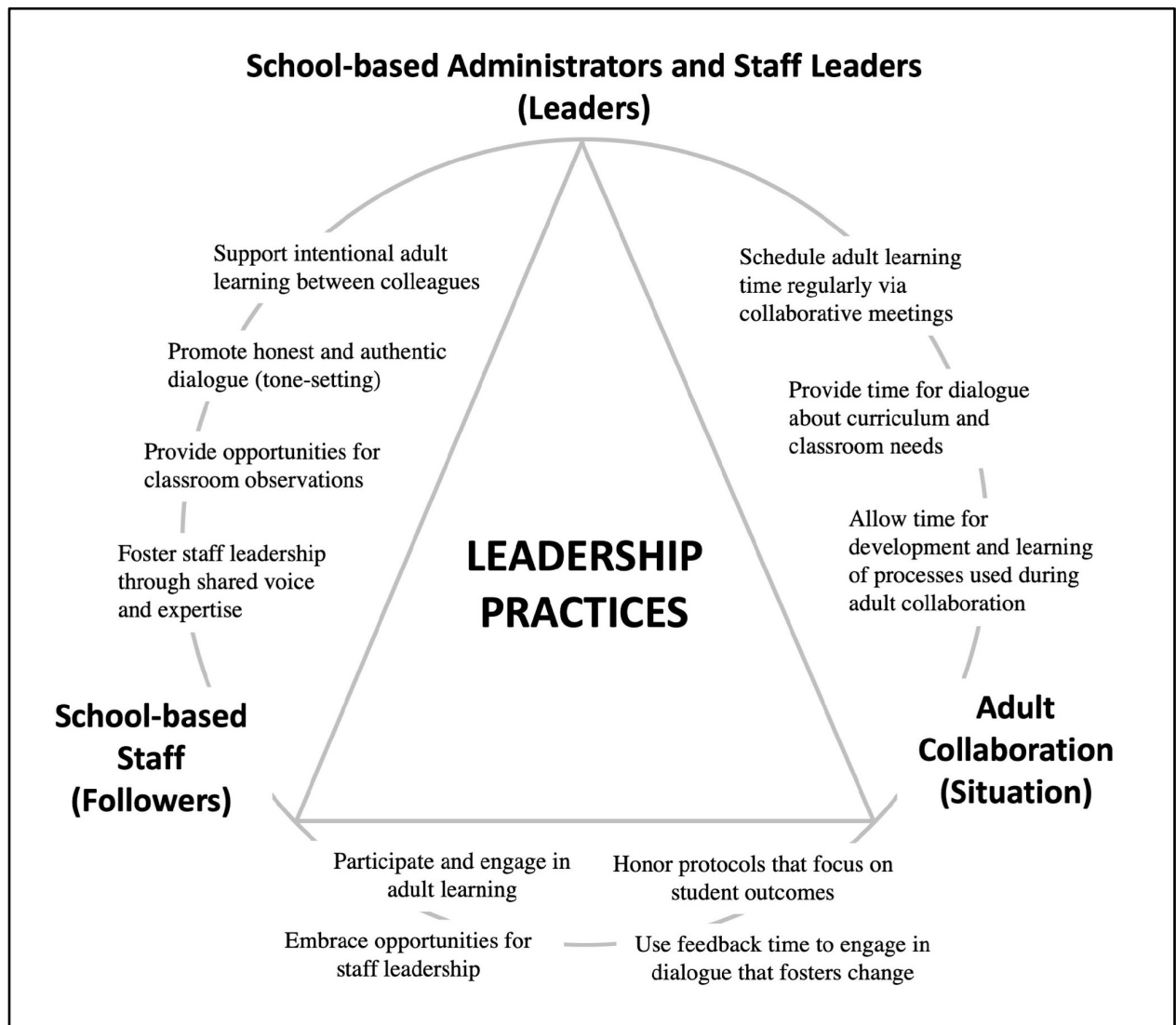


Figure 3.6. Mapping leadership practices that model SEL competencies onto a distributed leadership framework. Ito, 2020.

I attempt in Figure 3.6 to show what actions need to be taken by the leaders and followers within the context, or situation, of adult collaboration. Socially and emotionally competent leadership

sets the tone for honest and authentic dialogue that builds relationships and fosters staff leadership in shared decision-making. Additionally, school-based leaders need to support intentional adult learning between colleagues by providing more opportunities for peer observations. Secondly, school-based leaders ensure that they continue to fulfill their expected task of providing time for collaborative work to happen, but do so by using tools specific to adult learning. This could be seen in providing training about the use of protocols, norms, and shared roles. Finally, school-based staff also play a role in making adult collaborative time effective. School-based staff should see it as their responsibility to participate and honor the tools that focus on adult learning and student achievement, embrace opportunities for leadership, and use collaborative time for open and honest feedback that encourages growth. In a distributed model, if all parties understand their roles and act accordingly, more student-focused achievement can happen in their adult collaborative work. If leaders model SEL competencies in their practices, then they might see a change in staff that builds trust and enables them to do so.

Limitations

As a result of employing methods at a single district in a qualitative case study, there are limitations to this research. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) discuss the approach of using purposeful sampling as, “based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 96). This limits the research to a group of selected, willing participants that may or may not represent the greater whole. Conceivably, they could be those teachers most interested and vested in the implementation of SEL competencies and practices, and adult collaboration within their schools, or just those who are most willing to help with outside research. In a questionnaire, participants were asked about their experiences and views in implementing SEL in their work and/or schools.

This helped the researchers better understand the potential biases of the interviewees, which would have been disclosed in my findings.

Additionally, this research was primarily descriptive, as it revealed what is happening in the environment selected and made meaning of it (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I am prone to believe that SEL competencies implemented by adults do have a *positive* impact on adults and students. This could be seen as a bias during data collection; although, student growth and achievement were not being measured in this study, and thus was not known. The research questions included the words, “or not,” such as “are the leadership practices reflective *or not* of SEL competencies,” which showed that I was aware not to lead findings of my research to assumed, preconceived outcomes. I questioned our potential biases throughout the processes of analysis.

Although limitations existed, this research contributes to the field by studying and analyzing one district’s approach to implementing SEL competencies, and how its leadership incorporated these competencies into their practices when it comes to improving adult collaboration. Amongst limited research about the connections between leadership practices and adult SEL competencies, this study provides greater insight into what is needed when considering these important areas of future school reform.

Conclusion

In this body of research, I emphasized the importance of adult collaboration and suggest that school-based leaders support their staff in learning how to engage in collective adult activities. In addition, I explored the perceptions of leaders and staff about SECL practices in relationship to the elements of effective adult collaboration. I found aspects of positive attitudes, team processes and sharing of PD in schools; however, leaders provided more time and support

for meeting structures and processes rather than prioritizing the practices that foster adult learning.

My research supports the need for leaders to understand the context and relationships of their own practices, as it impacts the behaviors of the adults they lead. Modeling SEL competencies and skills, and promoting the sharing of expertise, can exemplify for staff greater responsible decision-making and build capacity within the organization. Leaders cannot be present in every adult activity in their schools; so, fostering socially and emotionally competent adults, by modeling SEL competencies in leadership practices, is an important step in creating positive school reform.

CHAPTER FOUR³

Summary of Research Questions and Methods

The purpose of this study was to identify leadership practices that modeled social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies for adults and/or promoted opportunities for the SEL of staff. Our intent was to determine how these practices shaped different aspects of a district and its schools. To do so, we examined how district leaders supported sensemaking among school-based leaders around SEL (Connors, 2020) as well as the influences that school-based leaders had on adult collaboration (Ito, 2020), mental health staff (Renda, 2020), collective efficacy (Rose, 2020), and teacher resilience and well-being (Tobin, 2020).

We developed two overarching research questions that guided our collective work. Research question one (RQ1) was “what leadership practices model SEL competencies and/or promote SEL opportunities for staff?” Research Question two (RQ2) was “how do these leadership practices shape a district and its schools?” Our methodology included a qualitative case study with a unit of analysis of a single school district in Massachusetts, fictitiously named Westlake Public Schools (WPS). Our study encompassed four elementary and two middle schools. Utilizing purposeful sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), we selected our interview participants from four categories: district leaders, school-based leaders, teachers, and mental health staff (MHS). For data collection, we employed semi-structured interviews, document reviews, online questionnaires, and onsite observations. To analyze the data, our team used coding software, Dedoose, and used the coded data to find patterns and themes (Creswell, 2014).

In our analytic lenses, all members of the team used the CASEL competencies which

³This chapter was jointly written by the authors listed and reflects the team approach to this project: Michele Connors, Mark Ito, Adam Renda, Geoff Rose, and Donna Tobin

included self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships skills, and responsible decision-making and their associated skills (Appendix D) when determining the social and emotional competence of our identified leadership practices. Individually and collectively, we established that the competencies of social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making were the most widely recognized SEL competencies related to the identified leadership practices (i.e., what leaders think and do).

From our synthesis of our individual studies, we found three common themes in response to our RQ1: 1) Leaders allocated time and resources to meet the needs of individuals; 2) Leaders engaged in relationship building with staff and/or colleagues; and 3) Leaders created structures for shared responsibility amongst colleagues. We found these leadership practices shaped the district and its schools (RQ2) when leaders prioritized outside resources and time to support individual development; staff felt validated when their leaders supported their personal and professional wellbeing; and leaders created structures designed to access shared knowledge and decision-making. In the following sections, we present our synthesized findings, discuss these findings in relation to the literature, propose a new framework for socially and emotionally competent leadership, and discuss recommendations and implications for practice.

Synthesis of Findings

We begin the section by examining common leadership practices identified across our studies. To address RQ1, we determined if the practices modeled (i.e., demonstrated or displayed) the SEL competencies or promoted (i.e., actively encouraged) SEL opportunities. For RQ2, through districtwide examples and the existing literature, we also explored how these practices shaped the district and its schools. As a result, we make recommendations to the district on how to potentially approach these practices when implementing them in the future.

Leaders Allocated Time and Resources to Meet the Needs of Individuals

This leadership practice focused on professional development (PD) and scheduled time in relationship to how leaders allocated time and resources that affected the needs of staff. In relation to RQ1, leaders modeled and/or promoted the SEL competency of relationship skills in their practices when they worked cooperatively with others, engaged socially with diverse individuals, listened well, and communicated effectively in order to increase the professional knowledge of their staff. Additionally, when leaders allocated resources for scheduled time in their practices, they also modeled and/or promoted the competency of social awareness, because they recognized the importance of collaboration for staff and the resource of time needed for them to engage. In response to RQ2, this practice shaped the district and its schools by leaders prioritizing outside resources for learning as opposed to internal expertise; and providing time in the schedule as opposed to developing greater capacity for shared responsibility of the work.

Professional Development

Collectively, we found that leaders encouraged and supported staff to attend training, workshops and conferences in order to increase their professional knowledge. Leaders promoted opportunities for staff to seek PD in the areas related to their specific roles (e.g., instruction, mental health and/or leadership) and/or in support of higher-level district goals (e.g., SEL, cultural proficiency, and/or project based learning). District leaders also modeled and promoted this practice by encouraging participation for individual WPS staff to attend out-of-district PD opportunities. These actions shaped the district and its schools by leaders prioritizing external opportunities for increased professional knowledge.

We found WPS spent more than half a million dollars (\$535,801) in FY19 on external PD (WPS Report to Town Meeting & Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Summary, p. 30). In relation to the

district's PD investments, one district leader referred to providing "buckshot PD opportunities to WPS staff," as a means for supporting their learning. A buckshot PD opportunity is one that is widely communicated and often a one-time experience outside of the school district. Another district leader reflected that "part of what I see as my job is scouring the internet and places to find PD opportunities so that teachers can sign up for them." These specific examples from district leaders showed practices that modeled an awareness to support individualized staff practices through encouragement and communication of PD offerings.

In some cases, staff independently initiated and sought support for PD opportunities, specifically when the expertise the individual needed resided outside of internal district resources. During the semi-structured interviews, staff members across the district often commented that their leaders provided substitute coverage and paid registration fees in order for staff to participate in their choice of adult learning outside of their schools. This practice shaped the work of the schools by staff feeling supported through the time and money provided to attend PD. Furthermore, while some staff referenced these training sessions during interviews, findings showed that staff did not identify PD as pivotal in shaping their practice. Additionally, limited evidence supported purposeful shared learning from these "external" opportunities.

Conversely, another district leader acknowledged that they "made significant investments in bringing in national trainers to come here and certify about 12 or 15 instructors." One leader highlighted that the district-supported PD promoted SEL opportunities such as Responsive Classroom, Trauma Sensitive Schools, and Social Thinking, through an iterative process designed to support internal implementation. Based on our gathered evidence, it was unclear if the district's priorities aligned with buckshot PD opportunities or those that provided iterative training. The inconsistent use of district resources to support staff learning and development

shaped the work of WPS staff.

Overall, this leadership practice shaped the district and its schools since leaders and staff relied on outside resources to support their professional development. Furthermore, leaders promoted opportunities for staff to find and access external PD offerings. However, intentionally using internal time and resources appeared less in the data as a way to gain professional knowledge, and sharing expertise among colleagues did not happen regularly enough for staff to feel it was a standard practice in which they benefited from during collaborative time.

Scheduled Time

Throughout our data collection processes, we found that leaders allocated time for leaders, teaching and learning directors, coaches, teachers, and mental health staff to meet. Through this practice, leaders modeled the competency of social awareness because they recognized the importance of collaboration for staff, and the resource of time needed in which to engage. As one staff member reported, “Even at the highest level, leaders realize how important collaboration is, so they carve out time for it.” This practice of scheduling time shaped WPS leaders’ responsibilities, as it was expected that they would perform this task.

At the school level, our analysis showed that leaders promoted opportunities for staff to formally meet with their leaders and/or colleagues. During the semi-structured interviews, staff members commented that they participated regularly in formal meetings with leaders and/or colleagues. At both the elementary and middle school levels, school and district leaders built four to five formal meetings (e.g., staff, department, community) into their weekly and monthly schedules. Planned district and school meetings occurred both during the school day and after school (including weekly early release days for all elementary staff on Tuesdays). Additionally, interviews indicated that MHS across all schools observed that school leaders provided

scheduled time to collaborate with others. Specifically, leaders modeled relationship skills when they created structures for MHS to participate in job-alike groups or tried to match them up with different related service providers. These examples showed how leaders shaped the interactions of staff by providing opportunities for them to meet.

In relation to the allocation of scheduled time, we heard inconsistent reflections from school leaders and staff. Some staff perceived that collaborative time was not useful and took away from other work that needed to happen. As seen through the questionnaire data, both leaders and staff positively perceived that staff are committed to collaborative time; however, more than half of both staff and leaders did not positively perceive that time was used effectively. Related to this data, we acknowledge that the positionality of each staff member may influence their perceptions about the usefulness of collaborative time. Moreover, leaders also placed an emphasis on supporting summertime curriculum work when they provided teachers or MHS daily stipends. Although one district leader mentioned that leaders encouraged staff to meet as groups during these summer opportunities, school-based staff did not discuss or reference these opportunities as shaping their growth. These reflections highlighted the lack of coherence from WPS staff about the perceived value of their time.

Additionally, district leaders modeled social awareness for school-based leaders by providing time for elementary principals to collaborate during meetings. Moreover, when asked how they show support for collaboration, several district leaders modeled relationship skills by protecting the structures and schedules that allowed for ongoing, consistent collaboration among leaders. Other leadership meetings included principal meetings; superintendent's administrative team meetings, and opportunities for school leaders to work with mental health staff to design interventions. Furthermore, every district leader referred to ongoing discussions between district-

and school-based leaders about the promotion of SEL opportunities across schools and within classrooms. The overarching theme was that district leaders modeled and empowered school-based leaders to engage in collaborative opportunities with their job-alike colleagues.

Leaders Engaged in Relationship-building with Staff and/or Colleagues

Leaders in WPS modeled and/or promoted practices that valued and fostered collaborative relationships with school-based staff and between staff and their colleagues. In response to RQ1, leaders modeled the competency of relationship skills because they communicated clearly when they publicly acknowledged the work of staff and/or showed their appreciation. Leaders also modeled relationship skills when they delivered and shared information during formal and/or informal interactions. Lastly, leaders positively promoted relationship skills when they collaborated with staff and effectively modeled this competency when they offered support. In relation to RQ2, this leadership practice positively shaped WPS when leaders engaged in actions that strengthened relationships through communication, collaboration, and support.

Cooperative Opportunities

Data analysis at the school- and district-level strongly supported the importance of relationships. As an illustration, one district leader commented, “everything that applies to education is all about building relationships so the best way to support the staff is to know them as human beings.” Furthermore, district leaders specifically modeled positive relationship skills by understanding the importance of bonding as a community, and caring about departments as a community of people. In general, we learned that school-based and district-level leaders considered the importance of modeling and maintaining positive, healthy, and supportive relationships.

In order to strengthen relationships, district leaders highlighted that meetings are often opportunities for cooperation, collaboration and discussion, including many ice breakers. They also emphasized the importance of social gatherings and outings outside of school. As noted in one interview with an MHS, “my principal always tries to bring people together.” These relationships, in turn, promoted opportunities with staff to engage in practices that developed positive relationships with their leaders. As a result, district and school leaders positively shaped WPS when they exhibited practices that valued WPS staff and their collaborative opportunities with each other.

Staff expressed coaching as a valued resource, specifically when leaders promoted opportunities for subject area coaches to collaborate with teachers in their schools in order to improve their teacher’s instructional practices. By promoting opportunities to collaborate with coaches, leaders provided dialogue between staff and their coaches specific to their content curriculum in an effort to bring improvement and change to what happens in classrooms. In some instances, elementary school teachers scheduled time with coaches to be in their classrooms to observe, discuss and advise on the instruction being delivered. As an example, one staff member emphasized that their collaborative relationship with a coach shaped their practices by having a “really good feeling, and I feel like I still can go ask her for advice just because I have that connection with her.” In summary, when leaders supported collaborative opportunities between staff and coaches, their practices promoted opportunities for encouraging relationship skills, specifically positive connections and cooperative mindsets.

Clear Communication

In order to promote clear communications, two different district leaders acknowledged open door policies by naming that “doors are always open here.” Furthermore, another district

leader commented, “I listen to teachers and if I think if there's something that they think they need, whether it's just time to talk to me or whether it's time to work with their colleagues or whether it's more resources.” Another district leader commented on the importance of having conversations with teachers, just listening to them and asking them questions of what they need. These examples modeled how leaders effectively listened and supported both staff’s individual needs and professional skills.

In addition to supporting by listening, data also showed that leaders modeled the relationship skills competency when they communicated with staff through feedback and praise. Noticing strong practices of staff and appreciating them, led to positive attitudes about meeting with administrators, and the trust and support that ensued. Collectively, we learned that leaders often recognized the work of staff privately and publicly. Leaders provided recognition in a variety of ways, including: notes in mailboxes or on a staff member’s desk, a quick email, a shout-out in a newsletter or publication, a social media (Twitter or Facebook) acknowledgement, or just a quick verbal thank you or high-five. More specifically, staff interviews confirmed the importance of how recognizing others’ successes can support and maintain positive relationships. In general, most staff expressed positive experiences receiving feedback and praise from their leaders as it shaped their perceptions about their own practices.

By providing cooperative opportunities and clear communication, this leadership practice shaped adult relationships by setting the tone for ongoing engagement: therefore, it paved the way towards honest and authentic dialogue between staff and leaders as well as a greater commitment to the school and district work. Furthermore, conversations between leaders and staff were important in building and/or maintaining relationships and staff viewed feedback and praise as constructive and positive. In summary, this leadership practice shaped the district and

its schools since staff felt validated when their leaders took the time to listen to and talk with them about their personal and professional wellbeing.

Leaders Created Structures for Shared Responsibility Among Colleagues

Leaders in WPS employed practices that modeled SEL competencies and/or promoted SEL opportunities, such as accessing and sharing expertise, encouraging interaction between colleagues, and providing problem-solving opportunities that included consulting and working with others. More specifically, in response to RQ1, leaders promoted responsible decision-making by giving staff opportunities to be involved in decisions regarding their work. While not consistently seen across the schools, when leaders gave staff opportunities to analyze situations and to identify possible solutions, they promoted opportunities to be included in responsible decision-making on behalf of the greater organization. In response to RQ2, shared expertise shaped the district and its schools by implementing collaborative structures that allowed access to the sources of collective efficacy, namely vicarious experiences and social persuasion. Additionally, shared decision-making opportunities shaped WPS by providing structures for leaders and staff to process challenging situations through a sense-making lens.

Shared Decision-making

Leaders promoted learning opportunities related to responsible decision-making by forming teams to access expertise, analyze situations, solve problems accurately, and provide input into the school community's policies and procedures. Evidence supported that some school leaders included staff in decisions related to their work. When leaders involved staff in decisions, staff reported that they felt valued and trusted. During the interviews, staff provided numerous examples of times when leaders sought their input during meetings, through surveys, or during individual conversations. Specifically, MHS mentioned that principals included them in the

decision-making and communication processes to best support students and keep them safe.

At the district level, one leader highlighted the presence of monthly principal meetings which included shared facilitation roles and open agendas. Specifically, leaders were asked, “What do you need? What would you like some feedback on or what do you need to present to everybody [staff]?” This showed the intentionality of district leaders supporting the individual needs of school leaders as well as encouraging shared responsibility during collaborative opportunities. In addition to scheduled meetings, district and school leaders also referenced frequent opportunities to problem solve together. School leaders felt empowered to call or email various district leaders with a dilemma. In turn, district leaders felt responsible to partner with school leaders “to problem solve things that could really be very impactful to their school or their department.” Through these examples, WPS leaders modeled relationship-oriented practices while they interacted with each other, as they assessed outcomes, dealt with challenging situations, and made collaborative decisions.

Conversely, some staff stated that leaders should be more inclusive in decision making and that when leaders asked for input, they should actually consider it. Additionally, although evidence supported that some schools had structures in place to facilitate shared responsibility for decisions, some staff expressed there were many committees where their input was not apparent in the results. Although the practice was modeled, not all staff felt that the decision-making processes were inclusive.

Shared Expertise

Leaders promoted learning opportunities related to relationship skills by allowing staff to observe and learn from each other in order to build collaborative teams and support colleagues when needed. Findings demonstrated that collaborating with colleagues was the primary driver

for staff changing practice. Moreover, staff expressed that they learn from their colleagues and that informal collegial discussions support their work. By recognizing the value of sharing expertise, leaders modeled the competency of responsible decision-making because they assessed what could happen when colleagues learn from each other. Additionally, this practice promoted opportunities for others to take responsibility for the learning and professional exchange of knowledge with colleagues.

Across all six schools, the leadership practice of staff sharing expertise through collegial visits and observations emerged as a common theme. Leaders referenced various structures for sharing learning such as creating a “What do you want to see project?” posting staff schedules online to allow for self-identified pedagogical strengths and times when others can observe, publicly posting a board with staff strengths, and utilizing different frameworks for learning walks. These structures provided opportunities for staff to share their practices in their teaching environment in an effort to display their interactive work in classrooms.

Despite the fact that all leaders identified these different structures for sharing expertise, few school-based staff mentioned these specific practices during interviews. This finding is interesting and may be attributed to challenges with prioritizing substitute coverage and staff’s feelings about time away from their students. Furthermore, all of the meeting observations provided time for teachers to interact with each other in some capacity, yet, only three of the six meetings followed a protocol for sharing expertise. The questionnaire revealed that while half of staff positively perceived that their colleagues shared their expertise during collaborative time, only some leaders positively perceived that this was actually happening. Collectively, this data showed that inconsistencies emerged between the perceptions of leaders and staff about the value of formal collaborative structures.

Staff reported that collaborating with colleagues improved their instruction and supported their professional growth. One staff member said, “To be able to collaborate with our team helps my instruction improve. When we were looking at student work, I was able to check out what other classes are doing, and it helps me to learn and grow.” In support, leaders provided opportunities for staff collaboration, and when staff engaged with people from different content areas it broadened staff’s perspectives. One staff member said, “The best part of collaboration is getting different points of view and working with people with different skill sets.” Data also showed that some principals took the time to access the expertise of MHS specifically, by fostering opportunities for collective problem solving and modeling SEL lessons in classrooms.

Our synthesized findings supported the presence of leadership practices in WPS that modeled and promoted the competencies of social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These practices shaped the district and its schools when leaders prioritized outside resources for learning as opposed to internal expertise, and leaders provided time in the schedule as opposed to developing greater capacity for shared responsibility of the work. Additionally, staff felt validated when their leaders communicated with them about their personal and professional wellbeing. Lastly, leaders shaped WPS when they created structures designed for shared decision-making and knowledge. We further extended these findings to establish a framework that explores the importance of these practices and why they matter when thinking about socially and emotionally competent leadership.

Discussion and Recommendations

In WPS, our team found three leadership practices that modeled SEL competencies and/or promoted SEL opportunities: 1) leaders allocated time and resources to meet the needs of individuals; 2) leaders engaged in relationship building with staff and/or colleagues; and 3)

leaders created structures for shared responsibility among colleagues. Based on our findings, we connected these leadership practices to the literature and broadened them further. The result is three leadership practices that support the development of socially and emotionally competent leadership (SECL) in schools and districts. We encourage district and school leaders to implement these practices as outlined in Figure 4.1. In this visual, we display the SEL competencies, leadership practices, and how these practices shape a district and its schools, more specifically, by developing individual capabilities, strengthening coherence of vision and action, and establishing the structures that promote collective leadership capacity.

It is important to note that the identified leadership practices in the visual represent those found within the scope of our study. Specifically, we focused on the identification of leadership practices that modeled and/or promoted SEL competencies (i.e. social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making) in the context of adult interactions as opposed to SEL competencies (i.e. self awareness and self-management) that focus more on attributes specific to an individual. Although self awareness and self-management are important competencies to develop in SECL, in our study, we did not look for practices that exhibited these competencies. As a result, our visual below highlights the leadership practices and competencies we encourage leaders to develop and support when considering adult dynamics, and a means to SECL.

Socially and Emotionally Competent Leadership

The visual we created establishes three practices that can guide leaders in both districts and schools. The center of our visual, “Socially and Emotionally Competent Leadership,” reflects an intentional integration of the SEL competencies with what leaders think and do. Around the center, we build on and broaden the three identified leadership practices. Specifically, we discuss how each practice can shape the development of individual capabilities,

the strengthening of coherence of vision and action, and the establishment of collective leadership capacity in a district and its schools. Finally, the “outer ring” of our SECL visual reflects the SEL competencies that our study highlights, and that we argue are integral to the work of leaders, districts, and schools. Collectively, the visual below answers our team’s research questions: 1) What leadership practices modeled SEL competencies and/or promote SEL opportunities for staff? and 2) How did these leadership practices shape a district and its schools?

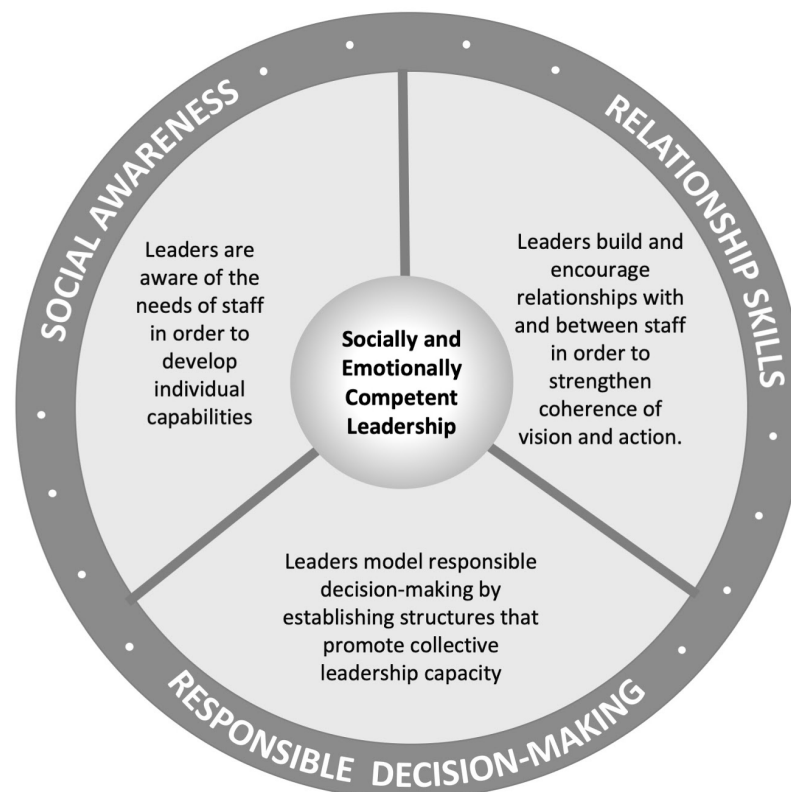


Figure 4.1. Recommended Practices that Support Socially and Emotionally Competent Leadership

The three practices found in WPS enabled our team to collectively develop this visual that constructed meaning and reasoning as to why these leadership practices that modeled

competencies and/or promoted SEL opportunities mattered. By implementing these practices, we argue that leaders can increase adult capabilities and their organization's capacity. As defined by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), capabilities are more than just having "adequate ability," but rather the possession of "attributes required for performance or accomplishment" (p. 55). Additionally, Mullen and Jones (2008) refer to capacity in their work as "enabling the growth of teachers as leaders who are responsible for their actions" (p. 329). Based on our findings and the literature, we assert in our recommended practices that both adult capabilities and capacity improve as a result of SECL, which further extends the research of Cohen and colleagues (2007) who laid the groundwork for differentiating between capabilities and capacity-building.

The first leadership practice that we aimed to broaden, "leaders allocated time and resources to meet the needs of individuals," was significant because leaders showed an awareness of the needs of staff in order to support the development of an individual's capabilities. This practice aligned with Fullan and Quinn (2016) who discussed how surface learning "occurs when the experience is very individualized" and may "result from one-shot workshops and random accessing of online resources without a linkage to broader goals or applications" (p. 61). Capabilities of staff in an organization are built by offering individualized support to followers (Leithwood, 1994) and leaders are expected to assess followers' motives, satisfying their needs, and treat them as full human-beings (Northouse, 2016).

The significance of this practice of allocating scheduled time and resources is that the formal leaders at WPS provided time and budget to what staff felt were important to their work or dictated as iterative training that supported the district's vision and goals. However, we learned that individualized PD was primarily happening through buck-shot opportunities outside of the district, without coherence or alignment to collective goals. We argue that leaders should

recognize that providing opportunities for staff to seek expertise outside of the district may not have been as cost-effective or as valuable as creating opportunities for staff to leverage expertise from within the organization itself (Leithwood et al., 2019). Seeking outside PD opportunities did not necessarily yield more efficacious results.

From our findings, we broaden this original practice to one that develops SECL by arguing that leaders should be aware of the needs of staff in order to develop individual capabilities. Specifically, we recommend that WPS implement PD into their scheduled meetings and utilize the expertise found internally to grow staff capabilities. Forman et al. (2015) supported this recommendation by asserting that “professional development events are replaced by a culture of professional learning that happens in real time throughout the school year” (p. 218). This recommendation reflects an understanding that adult learning should be embedded within scheduled time and often take place in collaborative peer structures such as networks (Leithwood et al., 2010).

The second leadership practice that emerged from our findings, “formal leaders engaged in relationship building with staff and/or colleagues,” was significant because leaders demonstrated that engaging in and modeling healthy relationships with staff and colleagues promoted the implementation of SEL competencies that built individual capabilities. It built these individual capabilities by considering the individual’s needs and what supported them emotionally and stimulated them intellectually (Leithwood, 1994). In order for this practice to happen, leaders implemented practices that encouraged collaborative relationships between leaders and staff. The SECL practice that we established from this original practice is that leaders built and encouraged relationships with and between staff in order to build coherence of vision and action. We acknowledge that the organization benefits when leaders model through their

practices important organizational values and their vision (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). Additionally, this practice aligns with the research of Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) who maintained the importance of relationships for strengthening individual and collective commitment to the organization. Specifically, we recommend that WPS strengthen adult relationships by clarifying roles and responsibilities of administrators, coaches, and staff that align to the vision of leaders with the actions of staff. For example, explicitly naming the differences and/or similarities of the roles and responsibilities of coaches, administrators, MHS, and teachers related to the planning, facilitation, and outcomes of weekly team meetings within the schools. The research focused on role clarity and intentional alignment of collaborative work reflects the research of Donohoo (2018) who asserted that common understanding of responsibilities is essential to group effectiveness.

The third leadership practice that we looked to broaden, “leaders created structures for shared responsibility amongst colleagues,” was significant because leaders, at times, supported a distributed model of shared decision-making that led to capacity building in their organizations. Data inconsistently supported that WPS staff felt empowered to contribute in shared decision-making structures and shared expertise opportunities. In order for this practice to happen more frequently, leaders should work internally and with intentionality to create opportunities for staff leadership to develop (Patti et. al., 2015). Specifically, by identifying where social capital exists and utilizing it to share expertise, schools and districts can most effectively influence practices and beliefs between colleagues (Minckler, 2014; Guskey, 1996). By implementing this approach, the organization can benefit by developing structures that foster participation in school decisions and improvement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999).

The leadership practice that develops SECL is that leaders model and promote

responsible decision-making in order to build collective leadership capacity. Specifically, we recommend that WPS formally identify internal expertise and provide these informal staff leaders with opportunities to model and promote their practices through adult learning structures (see Minckler, 2014; Leana, 2011). Within this final recommendation, we argue that leaders should support adult learning structures that share expertise, in the context of staff making responsible decisions for the good of the organization. We argue that this recommendation leads to collective leadership capacity where formal leaders do not need to facilitate all collaborative interactions and manage individual actions (see Spillane, 2004). We assert that the more that expertise is identified and collectively shared, the greater the capacity of the organization, and the stronger likelihood that the organization will reflect a consideration of the greater good (see Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009).

Limitations

This study identified leadership practices that modeled SEL competencies, and/or promoted SEL opportunities for district and school-based staff, while investigating how those leadership practices shaped a district and its schools. We acknowledge the following areas with limitations: 1) generalizability of findings; 2) time period of research; and 3) data collection and analysis.

A limitation of our study was the generalizability of the findings due to the small scope of the study. Because our research focused on a single unit of analysis, one school district in Massachusetts, our findings are not generalizable to other school districts in Massachusetts, or in the United States. While generalizability was a limitation within our study, the purpose of our study was not to seek ultimate truths, but to understand the relevance of our findings both as educational leaders and contributors to existing research (Mills & Gay, 2019). Despite a focus on

one district, our process of selection ensured that the district we studied provided meaningful insights about a district-wide focus on SEL, and assisted us in identifying themes that we believe are relevant to other districts in the process of implementing this type of reform, because qualitative research builds theory.

The specific time period during which the data was collected and analyzed was driven by the research team's limited timeframe, and thus we only captured a moment in time. As a result, we were not able to analyze how each of our individual research themes and the leadership practices evolved over time. The district hired a Director of SEL two years prior to our study, which likely played a key role in our findings. Entering a district in the initial stages of a district-wide focus on SEL would likely result in different outcomes than entering a district deeply engaged in SEL. However, our findings are relevant and meaningful as they could assist other districts in developing leadership practices that model or promote SEL competencies.

Importantly, we did not gather data from all members of the case study district, but rather from a purposeful sample of district and school leaders. District, schools, and leaders were purposefully selected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), however, individual staff participants volunteered to contribute to this study. Self-selection into the study opened up the possibility of participant bias in terms of what they wanted to promote or conceal as strengths or challenges both within the district and as individuals. To mitigate this bias, we asked probing questions to maximize the interactions between the participant and interviewer to increase rapport and reduce the risk of socially desirable answers (Patton, 1990). In addition, we used multiple sources of data to allow for methods triangulation in this study.

We aimed to access a range of perspectives by collecting data from documents, questionnaires, observations, and interviews to triangulate the outcomes of the interview

analyses. It was important that we had multiple data sources because, “every type of data has strengths and limitations, using a combination of techniques helps compensate for the weaknesses found in one approach (Salkind, 2010).

We analyzed documents that were readily and publicly available to district and school staff, parents or guardians, and the community. We interviewed district administrators, principals, teachers and mental health staff who volunteered to participate. Their perspectives were not necessarily representative of the perspectives of all certified professional staff in the district and its schools. In addition, schools are dynamic environments in which the teachers and administrators can change from one year to the next.

Finally, this qualitative case study has the potential for validity errors. According to Creswell (2014), validity signals that the researcher checks for accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures. To improve validity, we posed “how” research questions that influenced the use of strategies to address external validity (Yin, 2014). We triangulated our data sources, data types, and methods, while reflecting upon the data collection and interpretation process in an effort to minimize methodological threats to interpretation of the data (Yin, 2014).

Conclusion

Our collective findings supported the identification of leadership practices in WPS that modeled and promoted the SEL competencies of social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These leadership practices shaped the district and its schools when leaders encouraged collaborative relationships and supported the development of individual capabilities, needs, and professional skills. Furthermore, our collective research led to the identification of new leadership practices that supports the development of SECL.

We argue that implementing leadership practices with the intention of developing SECL has the potential to positively shape a district-wide focus on SEL, the sources of collective efficacy, adult collaboration, staff resilience and wellbeing, and the work of MHS. As a result of our research, leaders should focus their efforts on cultivating the capabilities of the adults through structures that promote collaborative and collective expertise. Additionally, we acknowledge that relationships and resources have the potential to positively shape the work of educators and the tasks that we cannot accomplish individually. In conclusion, by developing SECL practices in districts and schools, adults will grow their professional knowledge, vision and actions will align more coherently, and shared responsibility will build organizational capacity. Ultimately, district and school-based leaders and staff will benefit the students they teach and support.

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Appendix A

DISTRICT LEADER INTERVIEWS

Social and Emotional Leadership Practices that Shape Districts and Schools *Interview Protocol and Notetaking Form*

Researcher (to be read to participants): Hi, my name is (insert) and we are here today as part of our dissertation as doctoral candidates at Boston College. Our overarching research questions are, “*How do leadership practices model SEL competencies for adults, or promote the social and emotional learning of teachers and other staff?*” and “*How do these leadership practices shape a district and its schools?*” We will be asking questions related to general leadership practices, collective efficacy, adult collaboration, teacher resilience and well-being, and the work of mental health staff.

ALL INFORMATION PROVIDED WILL BE TREATED AS CONFIDENTIAL. The information from responses to this semi-structured interview will be compiled by the dissertation team for their analyses. Any data, including race/ethnicity and gender, that is not currently available to the public will only be used in aggregated form that cannot be used to discern the identity of any participant in any report or presentation or in the public use file that will be made available to the public at the conclusion of this study.

Before starting we would like to ***get your consent*** to participate in this study and permission to record this session. (*Get signature on consent form.*) Thank you. (*Once recording starts.*) The recording has started. Thank you for allowing us to record this session. Before we start, do you have any questions?

[Interviewer: Prior to starting the script, ensure that all questions re: consent form & study have been thoroughly addressed]

Thank you for sharing your time so we can learn more about your experiences in the Westlake Public Schools. As a quick reminder, we’ve allocated 45 minutes for this conversation and a questionnaire that we will ask you to complete at the end of the interview. Please let us know if you have any questions during our conversation. We just want to remind you that there are no right or wrong answers, we only wish to understand your unique insight. All of your information and responses will be confidential and used for research purposes. No individual information or identifying information will be shared. At any point in our interview, you can end our conversation or take a break for any reason. If for any reason, the interview questions do not apply to you, or you wish to skip any question, you may do so.

Your input is important to us and we want you to feel comfortable during this interview so please ask any clarifying questions you may have or let us know if you don’t understand a question.

QUESTIONS (Look for leadership practices – what leaders *think and do*)

1. What is the role of leadership in your district/school? In other words, what do leaders *do*?
2. a) In your district/school, who supports your work and *what type of things do they do* to show support?
b) Whom do you support? What do *you do* to show support?
3. a) How are collective and/or individual goals established in your district/school?
b) What do you *do* to support this process?
4. How do you *show* support for collaboration in your district/school?
5. What do you *do* to *actively encourage* your staff's professional growth and development?

6. How have SEL initiatives been implemented in your district/school in the last 3 years?

Probe: What drove the district to implement a district-wide SEL initiative(s)?

Probe: In comparison to other district-wide (school-wide) initiatives, how would you prioritize the SEL initiative(s)?

Probe: Is SEL part of the district's strategic plan (school's strategic/improvement plan)?

7. What opportunities were available for district and school personnel to come together to make sense of the implementation process and expectations?

Probe: Assuming there were both formal communications (memos, emails, meetings) and informal communications, what were the most effective platforms to assist school leaders in making sense of the change process?

Probe: What is your perception of how school-based leaders understand, and make sense of, the SEL initiative?

8. What was your understanding of SEL prior to the rollout of the initiative by the district?

Probe: What, if any, prior training or professional development have you participated in outside of the district?

Probe: Please describe the focus of the training or professional development (type of professional development; SEL and leadership vs. SEL for students)

9. How was the implementation plan communicated to school-based leaders?

Probe: What rationale/vision/goals for the SEL initiative were communicated to you?

Probe: What strategies were used during implementation to help school-based leaders understand the purpose of the initiative?

Probe: What strategies were used during implementation to assist school-based leaders with making sense of the initiative?

Probe: How would you measure "full implementation" of the SEL initiative in your school?

Probe: How many schools would you characterize as having fully implemented the SEL initiative?

10. How has the district-wide SEL initiative informed your leadership practices?

Probe: Can you describe any changes to your leadership practices since the implementation of the SEL initiative(s) in your district/building?

Probe: How do you support the SEL initiative in your role as a district leader/school-based leader?

Probe: What leadership practices have you found most effective during and after implementation of the SEL initiative(s)?

Appendix B

SCHOOL-BASED LEADER INTERVIEWS

Social and Emotional Leadership Practices that Shape Districts and Schools *Interview Protocol*

Researcher (to be read to participants): Hi, my name is (insert) and we are here today as part of our dissertation as doctoral candidates at Boston College. Our overarching research questions are, “*How do leadership practices model SEL competencies for adults, or promote the social and emotional learning of teachers and other staff?*” and “*How do these leadership practices shape a district and its schools?*” We will be asking questions related to general leadership practices, collective efficacy, adult collaboration, teacher resilience and well-being, and the work of mental health staff.

ALL INFORMATION PROVIDED WILL BE TREATED AS CONFIDENTIAL. The information from responses to this semi-structured interview will be compiled by the dissertation team for their analyses. Any data, including race/ethnicity and gender, that is not currently available to the public will only be used in aggregated form that cannot be used to discern the identity of any participant in any report or presentation or in the public use file that will be made available to the public at the conclusion of this study.

Before starting we would like to **get your consent** to participate in this study and permission to record this session. (*Get signature on consent form.*) Thank you. (*Once recording starts.*) The recording has started. Thank you for allowing us to record this session. Before we start, do you have any questions?

[Interviewer: Prior to starting the script, ensure that all questions re: consent form & study have been thoroughly addressed]

Thank you for sharing your time so we can learn more about your experiences in the Westlake Public Schools. As a quick reminder, we’ve allocated 45 minutes for this conversation and a questionnaire that we will ask you to complete at the end of the interview. Please let us know if you have any questions during our conversation. We just want to remind you that there are no right or wrong answers, we only wish to understand your unique insight. All of your information and responses will be confidential and used for research purposes. No individual information or identifying information will be shared. At any point in our interview, you can end our conversation or take a break for any reason. If for any reason, the interview questions do not apply to you, or you wish to skip any question, you may do so.

Your input is important to us and we want you to feel comfortable during this interview so please ask any clarifying questions you may have or let us know if you don’t understand a question.

QUESTIONS (Look for leadership practices – what leaders *think and do*)

1. What is the role of leadership in your school? In other words, what do leaders *do*?
2. a) In your district/school, who supports your work and *what type of things do they do* to show support?
b) Whom do you support? What do *you do* to show support?
3. a) How are collective and/or individual goals established in your district/school?
b) What do you *do* to support this process?
4. How do you *show* support for collaboration in your district/school?
5. What do you *do* to *actively encourage* your staff's professional growth and development?
6. Describe what you *do* in meetings.
(*Exposes what the interviewee thinks a leader does in the context of collaboration.*)
7. What do you see as the benefits of collaboration in your district/school?
(*Exposes the interviewee's perceptions of collaborative time*)
8. What do you do that contributes to your staff's feelings of success?
9. What opportunities do you provide for your staff to learn from their colleagues?
10. What and/or who drives you to change your practice?
(*Probe: Can ask specifically about adults.*)
11. Are there things that you do that promote social and emotional learning opportunities for staff? If so, what are they?
12. What types of things seem to cause the most stress for teachers and what do you do, if anything, to support teachers when they are feeling stressed?
13. Do you engage teachers in decision making that is related to the work that they do in this school? If so, how?
14. How is feedback delivered and how open are teachers to receiving feedback?
15. What are the primary responsibilities of mental health staff? How is this determined? By whom? When? How would you change this?
16. How do you manage the mental health staff's work and/or interactions with students and how does the work impact students?

Appendix C

SCHOOL-BASED STAFF INTERVIEWS

Social and Emotional Leadership Practices that Shape Districts and Schools

Interview Protocol

Researcher (to be read to participants): Hi, my name is (insert) and we are here today as part of our dissertation as doctoral candidates at Boston College. Our overarching research questions are, “*How do leadership practices model SEL competencies for adults, or promote the social and emotional learning of teachers and other staff?*” and “*How do these leadership practices shape a district and its schools?*” We will be asking questions related to general leadership practices, collective efficacy, adult collaboration, teacher resilience and well-being, and the work of mental health staff.

ALL INFORMATION PROVIDED WILL BE TREATED AS CONFIDENTIAL. The information from responses to this semi-structured interview will be compiled by the dissertation team for their analyses. Any data, including race/ethnicity and gender, that is not currently available to the public will only be used in aggregated form that cannot be used to discern the identity of any participant in any report or presentation or in the public use file that will be made available to the public at the conclusion of this study.

Before starting we would like to ***get your consent*** to participate in this study and permission to record this session. (*Get signature on consent form.*) Thank you. (*Once recording starts.*) The recording has started. Thank you for allowing us to record this session. Before we start, do you have any questions?

[Interviewer: Prior to starting the script, ensure that all questions re: consent form & study have been thoroughly addressed]

Thank you for sharing your time so we can learn more about your experiences in the Westlake Public Schools. As a quick reminder, we’ve allocated 45 minutes for this conversation and a questionnaire that we will ask you to complete at the end of the interview. Please let us know if you have any questions during our conversation. We just want to remind you that there are no right or wrong answers, we only wish to understand your unique insight. All of your information and responses will be confidential and used for research purposes. No individual information or identifying information will be shared. At any point in our interview, you can end our conversation or take a break for any reason. If for any reason, the interview questions do not apply to you, or you wish to skip any question, you may do so.

Your input is important to us and we want you to feel comfortable during this interview so please ask any clarifying questions you may have or let us know if you don’t understand a question.

QUESTIONS (Look for leadership practices – what leaders *think and do*)

1. What is the role of leadership in your school? In other words, what do leaders *do*?
2. a) In your district/school, who supports your work and *what type of things do they do* to show support?
b) Whom do you support? What do *you do* to show support?
3. a) How are collective and/or individual goals established in your district/school?
b) What do leaders *do* to support this process?
4. How do leaders *show* support for collaboration in your district/school?
5. What do leaders *do* to *actively encourage* your professional growth and development?
6. Describe what leaders (i.e., teachers or administrators) *do* in meetings.
(*Exposes what the interviewee thinks a leader does in the context of collaboration*)
7. What do you see as the benefits of your collaboration?
(*Exposes the interviewee's perceptions of his/her collaborative time.*)
8. What do leaders do that contribute to your feelings of success?
9. What opportunities do leaders provide to learn from colleagues?
10. What and/or who drives you to change your practice?
(*Probe: can ask specifically about adults.*)
11. Are there things that your leader does that promote social and emotional learning opportunities for staff? If so, what are they?
12. What causes you the most stress, and what if anything, does your leader do to support you in managing this stress?
13. Does your leader engage you in decision making that is related to the work that you do in this school? If so, how?
14. How do you receive feedback from your school leader and how do you usually feel after receiving feedback?
15. What are the primary responsibilities of mental health staff? How is this determined? By whom? When? How would you change this?
16. How does the principal manage the mental health staff's work and/or interactions with students and how does the work impact students?

Appendix D

BC DIP SEL Coding Manual

Codes that focus on leadership practices and support, interview questions, social and emotional learning competencies and skills, adult collaboration and collective efficacy.

While entering into the initial coding process, we began our coding manual to define the SEL skills related to each SEL competency and came to an “aha realization” that CASEL may have purposefully selected different verbs when outlining each of the skills. No verb is repeated. We expect to use these verbs to support our findings and discussions when thinking about our research questions related to LEADERSHIP PRACTICES - what leaders think and do! Out of the 29 SEL skills identified, **23 skills are action oriented** and **6 skills are descriptive**.

General Codes

Parent code	Child code	Definition
Leadership Practices	THINK	To have as an intention or opinion
	DO	To perform or execute
Leaders Support (reoccurring themes)	LISTENING	To hear something with thoughtful intention
	TIME	A measurable period when an activity or thought exists; *Schedules
	TRUST	Assured reliance on someone to be honest, truthful, good
NON-SEL		A leadership practice that does not model one of the CASEL competencies

Interview Question Codes

Parent code	Child code	Interview question number	
Interview Questions	School-based leaders	SBL #1 SBL #2 SBL #3 SBL #4 SBL #5 SBL #6 SBL #7 SBL #8	SBL #9 SBL #10 SBL #11 SBL #12 SBL #13 SBL #14 SBL #15 SBL #16
	School-based staff	SBS #1 SBS #2 SBS #3 SBS #4 SBS #5 SBS #6 SBS #7 SBS #8	SBS #9 SBS #10 SBS #11 SBS #12 SBS #13 SBS #14 SBS #15 SBS #16

*Note: The coding of transcripts needs to identify leadership practices that **model** (i.e., display and/or demonstrate) or **promote** (i.e., actively encourage) SEL competencies.*

CASEL Competencies (5) and Skills (29)

Parent code	Child code
Self-awareness	Accurate self-perception
	Sense of self-confidence
	Self-efficacy
	Recognizes strengths
	Identifies own emotions and impact on others

Parent code	Child code
Self-management	Controls impulses
	Manages stress
	Self-motivated
	Self-discipline
	Sets goals
	Exhibits organizational skills

Parent code	Child code	Definition
SOCIAL AWARENESS	RESPECTS OTHERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows respect to others and consideration for them *praise or affirmation
	SHOWS EMPATHY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates perspective taking an/or affective understanding
	APPRECIATES DIVERSITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizes the importance of and understands inclusivity as it relates to race and other marginalized groups
	ABLE TO CONSIDER OTHERS' PERSPECTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works to understand what others are experiencing and thinking
	UNDERSTANDS SOCIAL AND ETHICAL NORMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceives the importance of and has an awareness of how to act and interact with and around others for the common good
	RECOGNIZES FAMILY, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies and acknowledges available resources
RELATIONSHIP SKILLS	WORKS COOPERATIVELY WITH OTHERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interacts collegially with colleagues
	RESOLVES CONFLICTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works with others to improve challenging situations
	COMMUNICATES CLEARLY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver, share or exchange information, news, or ideas in understandable ways
	ENGAGES SOCIALLY WITH DIVERSE INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interacts w/ individuals of different races and/or other marginalized groups
	COLLABORATES WITH TEAM MEMBERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meets and works jointly with colleagues and supervisors
	LISTENS WELL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives one's attention to someone
	SEEKS AND OFFERS HELP WHEN NEEDED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receives and gives support when needed
RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING	MAKES ETHICAL CHOICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acts with and makes decisions with moral principles
	IDENTIFIES AND SOLVES PROBLEMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finds and deals with challenging situations and figures out ways to improve them. *technical problems, for example
	REFLECTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes thoughtful decisions
	ANALYZES SITUATIONS ACCURATELY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examines methodically and in detail within a specific context for the purpose of interpretation; *adaptive problems, for example
	EVALUATES CONSEQUENCES IN CONSIDERATION OF THE WELL-BEING OF OTHERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assesses what could happen and how it could impact others for positive outcomes; *people-oriented, relationship-oriented

DIP Focus Areas

Parent code	Parent code	Parent code
Sensemaking	Teacher resilience and well being	Mental health staff

COLLECTIVE EFFICACY	MASTERY EXPERIENCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you feel that something you did works
	VICARIOUS EXPERIENCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeing/hearing someone else have a successful experience • Sharing a successful idea
	SOCIAL PERSUASION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving feedback from someone else that causes you to reflect or change practice
	AFFECTIVE STATES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions that make you feel a certain way
ADULT COLLABORATION	POSITIVE ATTITUDES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive, trusting • Committed, motivated • Understanding of collaborative roles • Accountability to team • Shared philosophy/goals
	TEAM PROCESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications b/w colleagues • Clear, formal processes • Collective effort over individual wants
	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity of focus (standards, expectations, values) • Teacher voices in planning • Connections b/w activities and classrooms • Teachers and administrators share expertise • Ongoing activities, flexibly scheduled • Community building climate
	LEADERSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared leadership • Supportive climate • Volunteer for leadership roles • Effort is recognized • Participants hold themselves to high expectations
	RESOURCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets needs • Ongoing assessment • Participant initiated
	BENEFITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evident • Lived and prominent • Public recognition



Boston College PSAP Social and Emotional Leadership Practices that Shape Districts and Schools

- Michele Conners
- Geoff Rose
- Mark Ito
- Donna Tobin
- Adam Renda
- October 6, 2019

Defining Social and Emotional Learning

Dusenbury, Calin, Domitrovich, and Weissberg (2015) define Social and Emotional Learning as:

The process through which children and adults acquire 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. Social and emotional skills are critical to being a good student and citizen (p. 2).

SEL competencies	Definition of competency	Examples of skills with the competency
Self-awareness	Recognizing one's emotions, thoughts and values and how they influence behaviors, and identifying and cultivating one's strengths and limitations, and positive qualities	Accurate self-perception, sense of self-confidence, self-efficacy, recognizes strengths, identifies own emotions and impact on others
Self-management	Monitoring and regulating one's emotions, thoughts and behaviors in different situations and establishing and working toward achieving positive goals	Controls impulses, manages stress, self-motivated, self-discipline, sets goals, exhibits organizational skills
Social awareness	Understanding the thoughts and feelings of others and appreciating the value of human differences, understanding social and ethical norms for behavior and recognizing family, school, and community resources and supports.	Respects others, shows empathy, appreciates diversity, considers others' perspectives, understands social and ethical norms, recognizes family, school and community resources and supports
Relationship skills	Establishing and maintaining healthy, rewarding relationships with diverse individual and groups based on cooperation, listening, support, effective (clear) communication, conflict resolution, and an ability to resist inappropriate social pressure	Works cooperatively with others, resolves conflicts, communicates (clearly) effectively, engages socially with diverse individuals and groups, collaborates with team members, listens well, seeks and offers help when needed
Responsible decision-making	Making constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. Evaluating consequences of various actions in consideration of the well-being of oneself and others.	Makes ethical choices, identifies and solves problems, reflective, analyzes situations accurately, evaluates consequences in consideration of the well-being of others

Table 1. Social and emotional learning: competencies, definitions and associated skills. Adapted from "What does evidence based instruction in social and emotional learning actually look like in practice?: A brief on findings from CASEL's program reviews" by Dusenbury, L., Calin, S., Domitrovich, C., & Weissberg, R. P., 2015. A Publication of the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, Chicago: CASEL; and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2017, retrieved from <https://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Competencies.pdf>

Appendix E

Social and Emotional Leadership Practices that Shape Districts and Schools *Observation Protocol and Field Notes Form*

Researcher (to be read to participants): Hi, we're here from Boston College as doctoral students conducting research on Leadership Practices that model and/or promote Social and Emotional Learning competencies, as they relate to adult collaboration and collective efficacy. All activity that we observe and/or record will be confidential and any action that makes an individual identifiable will not be used publicly without consent. We ask that you act as naturally as possible, and that our presence not be a distraction to your work. Thank you for allowing us this opportunity to observe you in practice.

Date: _____

School level: HS MS ES

Time: _____

School name: _____

Meeting name: _____

Participants present: Administrators (#) _____ Teachers (#) _____ Support staff (#) _____

Other (specify): _____

Meeting format (leadership practices)

Check all that apply:

- ☐ Discussion (agenda/protocols)
- ☐ Discussion (no agenda/free form)
- ☐ Presentation (PPT)
- ☐ Interactive/feedback driven
- ☐ Information dissemination
- ☐ Clearly stated goals/objectives

Objective(s):

☐ Other (describe): _____

Meeting attitudes (collaboration)

Check all that apply:

- ☐ Shows commitment and motivation
- ☐ Clear roles, understanding; acceptance of them
- ☐ Accountability for teacher and student performance
- ☐ Demonstrates knowledge of philosophy, goals and expertise

Other (describe):

Room and Seating Dynamic (identification of leadership)

- Sketch of participants and how they are seated (include initials and/or first names).
- Place a “tick mark” next to the participant when he/she speaks.
- Note: Air time (who is talking/listening).

Meeting Activity (identification of leaders and leadership practices)

[illegible]

Appendix F

SCHOOL-BASED LEADER QUESTIONNAIRE PROTOCOL

Adapted from Damore and Wiggins (2006) Elements of Collaboration Rubric and Goddard, Hoy, Woolfolk-Hoy (2004) Collective Efficacy Scale, Huntington (2016) Resiliency Quiz, Sinclair and Wallston (2004) The Brief Resilient Coping Scale, and Smith et al (2008) Brief Resilience Scale

Audience: School-based leaders who are also interviewed for the study. Each interviewee will be given an identification number for triangulation purposes.

Form: Qualtrics electronic surveys via supplied technology device

Purpose: The questionnaire will be used to triangulate data collected from two or more of the following forms of data collection: semi-structured interviews, observations or documents, and will serve to highlight the following feedback:

Leaders

- Leaders' perception of how they support teachers' resilience and well-being
- Leaders' and leaders positive or negative attitudes about adult collaboration
- Leaders' perceptions of their and their colleagues' ability to support students
- Leaders' perceptions of collective efficacy (i.e., the ability and capacity of teachers to support the achievement of all students)

The questionnaire will be conducted by a Boston College dissertations team. The questionnaire will be conducted using Qualtrix and all information that could be used to identify a respondent or link responses to individual respondents for any question will be maintained in storage that is secure. ALL INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE WILL BE TREATED AS CONFIDENTIAL. The information from your responses to this questionnaire will be compiled by the dissertation team for their analyses. Any data, including race/ethnicity and gender, that is not currently available to the public will only be used in aggregated form that cannot be used to discern the identity of any survey participant in any report or presentation concerning the survey or in the public use file that will be made available to the public at the conclusion of this study.

Please choose the number that describes your experience best.

Collaboration

1. I feel that teachers collaborative time is used effectively.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

2. I feel that teachers are committed to collaborative time.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

3. I feel that teachers are motivated to use collaborative time productively.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

4. I feel that teacher roles are clearly understood during collaborative time

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

5. I feel that teachers are accountable for their collaborative time together.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

6. I feel that teachers have time collaboratively to discuss teaching and/or instructional standards.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

7. I feel that teachers share their philosophies, goals and/or expertise during collaborative time.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

8. I feel that teachers reflect on their work during collaborative time.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

Collective Efficacy

9. Teachers in this school are able to get through to difficult students.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

10. If a child doesn't learn something the first time, teachers will try another way.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

11. Teachers here are confident they will be able to motivate their students.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

12. If a child doesn't want to learn teachers here give up.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

13. Teachers here need more training to know how to deal with challenging students.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

14. Teachers in this school think there are some students that cannot be successful.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

15. Teachers here don't have the skills needed to produce meaningful student learning.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

16. Teachers here fail to reach some students because of poor teacher-student relationships.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

Resilience and well-being

17. Teachers tend to bounce back quickly after difficult situations.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

18. I help teachers through stressful events.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

19. It does not take teachers long to recover from a stressful event.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

20. It is hard for teachers to recover when something bad happens at school.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

21. Teachers often feel overwhelmed.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

22. I help teachers find creative ways to deal with difficult situations.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

23. Regardless of what happens in teachers' classrooms, I can control my reaction to it.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

24. I believe teachers can grow in positive ways by dealing with difficult situations.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

25. I help teachers develop healthy coping mechanisms for handling stress.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

Appendix G

SCHOOL-BASED STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE PROTOCOL

Adapted from Damore and Wiggins (2006) Elements of Collaboration Rubric and Goddard, Hoy, Woolfolk-Hoy (2004) Collective Efficacy Scale, Huntington (2016) Resiliency Quiz, Sinclair and Wallston (2004) The Brief Resilient Coping Scale, and Smith et al (2008) Brief Resilience Scale

Audience: School-based staff who are also interviewed for the study. Each interviewee will be given an identification number for triangulation purposes.

Form: Qualtrics electronic surveys via supplied technology device

Purpose: The questionnaire will be used to triangulate data collected from two or more of the following forms of data collection: semi-structured interviews, observations or documents, and will serve to highlight the following feedback:

Teachers

- Teachers' feelings and perceptions about their own resilience and well-being
- Teachers' perception of how leaders support their resilience and well-being
- Mental health staff's perceptions of their and their colleagues' ability to support students
- Teachers' positive or negative attitudes about adult collaboration
- Teachers' perceptions of collective efficacy (i.e., the ability and capacity of their colleagues to support the achievement of all students)

The questionnaire will be conducted by a Boston College dissertations team. The questionnaire will be conducted using Qualtrics and all information that could be used to identify a respondent or link responses to individual respondents for any question will be maintained in storage that is secure. **ALL INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE WILL BE TREATED AS CONFIDENTIAL.** The information from your responses to this questionnaire will be compiled by dissertation team for their analyses. Any data, including race/ethnicity and gender, that is not currently available to the public will only be used in aggregated form that cannot be used to discern the identity of any survey participant in any report or presentation concerning the survey or in the public use file that will be made available to the public at the conclusion of this study. This questionnaire will be given to interview participants at the end of the interview.

Please choose the number that describes your experience best.

Collaboration

1. Teachers feel that collaborative time is used effectively.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

2. Teachers are committed to collaborative time.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

3. Teachers are motivated to use collaborative time productively.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

4. Teacher roles are clearly understood during collaborative time.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

5. Teachers are accountable for their collaborative time together.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

6. Teachers have time collaboratively to discuss teaching and/or instructional standards.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

7. Teachers share their philosophies, goals and/or expertise during collaborative time.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

8. Teachers reflect on their work during collaborative time.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

Collective Efficacy

9. Teachers in this school are able to get through to difficult students.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

10. If a child doesn't learn something the first time, teachers will try another way.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

11. Teachers here are confident they will be able to motivate their students.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

12. If a child doesn't want to learn teachers here give up.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

13. Teachers here need more training to know how to deal with challenging students.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

14. Teachers in this school think there are some students that cannot be successful.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

15. Teachers here don't have the skills needed to produce meaningful student learning.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

16. Teachers here fail to reach some students because of poor teacher-student relationships.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

Resilience and well-being

17. I tend to bounce back quickly after difficult situations.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

18. Leaders here help me through stressful events.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

19. It does not take me long to recover from a stressful event.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

20. It is hard for me to recover when something bad happens at school.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

21. I often feel overwhelmed.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

22. Leaders help me find creative ways to deal with difficult situations.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

23. Regardless of what happens in my classroom, I believe I can control my reaction to it.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

24. I believe I can grow in positive ways by dealing with difficult situations.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

25. Leaders help teachers develop healthy coping mechanisms for handling stress.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree