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A Study on Social-Emotional and Trauma-Informed Learning in the Classroom

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Abstract

Social-emotional and trauma-informed learning are extremely important concepts in school systems today. Students come from many different backgrounds, possibly including ones filled with trauma, neglect, abuse, court-involvement, involvement in foster care, or other negative experiences. Students bring these negative experiences and feelings into the school setting, so educators need to be prepared to support their students. This research study gains more insight into the knowledge and opinions of teachers and students, past, present, and future. It was found that teachers and students find social-emotional learning to be very important within the classroom. It was also indicated that teachers need more support from educators in order to better support their students' mental health.

Keywords: trauma, social-emotional learning, trauma-informed learning, support

Introduction

In the American public school system, 1 in 5 students have significant mental health needs and because of this, it puts them at risk of difficulties with academic and social skills (Aviles et al., 2006). Additionally, in the United States, up to $\frac{2}{3}$ of kids have experienced some sort of trauma during childhood (abuse, neglect, natural disaster, experiencing/witnessing violence) (Minahan, 2019). And almost 90% of the youth that are detained in juvenile facilities report having experienced childhood trauma (Crosby, 2015b). If the student becomes frustrated with their difficulties in learning and getting along with peers, it can lead to acting out, absences from school, and possible suspension or expulsion. This behavior will then continue in a cycle. To prevent this cycle, teachers and administrators need to be aware of the social-emotional management issues and help break that cycle (Aviles et al., 2006). It is important to give a definition to social-emotional learning and competence and trauma-informed education. “Social-emotional competence is defined as cooperative and pro-social behavior, initiation, and maintenance of peer friendships and adults’ relationships, management of aggression and conflict, development of a sense of mastery and self-worth and emotional regulation and reactivity.” (Aviles et al., 2006). Social-emotional learning is related to school engagement and grades and tries to teach students how to avoid and handle risky behavior, delinquency, and depressive symptoms. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), social and emotional learning (SEL) encompasses five core competencies: Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Strahan & Poteat, 2020). According to The Substance and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), trauma is, “experiences that cause intense physical and psychological stress reactions. It can refer to a single event, multiple events, or a set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically and emotionally harmful or

threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individuals physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.” Trauma-informed learning is helping students through this trauma and teaching them techniques to help deal with and thrive despite the trauma (Crosby, 2015a). Teachers and administrators need to be able to understand students and their social-emotional development because students bring their problems into the classroom and they often play out in school (Aviles et al., 2006) Adolescent students are very susceptible and sensitive to social-emotional learning because of stability and plasticity in the developing neural networks of the adolescents. These motivate the students to engage in the social-emotional learning experiences (Cherewick et al., 2021). According to Cherewick et al. (2021), “social emotional learning experiences shape how adolescents build their individual identities, establish behaviors, gain social knowledge and make sense of their relationships, and shape their values and beliefs.” In order to be able to concentrate and be prepared to learn, students need a healthy social-emotional development. If a student has poor social and emotional development, then they may have poor social, emotional, and academic success (Aviles et al, 2006). Because kids are in class most days out of the year, it is the environment that they are in the most and where they function most often. Because of this, schools have the ability and the potential to instill values and ideals in the students that have a positive impact, not just on overall academic achievement, but also on their social and emotional development. It is even more important in schools to identify children in need of mental health services because some students do not have access to a proper doctor or health care provider (Aviles et al., 2006). Teachers can be seen as secure and trusting figures, almost like another primary caregiver. This makes them valuable relationships in students’ lives, and they play an important role in a student’s adjustment to the classroom and making students feel comfortable. These relationships make the school environment specially more important in

the lives of children, in helping children adapt, form strong relationships, and in identifying potential situations of neglect and maltreatment (Aviles et al., 2006).

Children who are exposed to violence at a young age will show behavioral problems, deficits in standardized test scores, and lower grades. Specifically, students who have been maltreated may have difficulties with the negotiation of school environments, students who have been physically abused may show signs of aggressive behavior and perform poorly of cognitive tasks, and neglected kids may be anxious and inattentive, not able to focus on their work at school and lack initiative (Aviles et al., 2006). Also, kids who have experienced childhood trauma are more prone to develop difficulty in self-regulation, negative thinking, being on high alert, difficulty trusting adults, and inappropriate social interactions (Minahan, 2019). Students who do struggle with these problems may be placed in a lower academic tier or track, and it will be difficult to be promoted to higher tracks, leading to low competence, inability to engage in the learning process, and high rates of overall academic drop out. In order to prevent these consequences from happening, we need to focus on social and emotional learning and trauma informed learning and teach kids how to handle their emotions and social maladaptation while encouraging a change in their environment at home (Aviles et al., 2006).

The outcomes for students who struggle with social and emotional difficulties in terms of academics will vary depending on the support that is provided to them by parents, caregivers, and teachers (Aviles et al., 2006). Trauma can be more acute in nature, it is a more recent and emotionally tense event, or chronic, an intense and persistent experience that varies if trauma experienced (Crosby et al., 2015a). Also, the outcome of the trauma will vary. Multifinality is recognizing that people may start at the same point in their lives and learning, they may vary in the developmental outcomes (Aviles et al., 2006). Students may come from the same

background, like an abusive home, but one may become an abuser, and another may become a protector. Equifinality is the opposite, meaning that kids can start at different starting points but end up the same developmentally. One kid may come from an abusive home and become an abuser, another may come from a non-abusive home and also become an abuser (Aviles et al., 2006). Because kids can all develop differently and come from different environments, in order to provide the services to each individual student, we need to know each child's strengths and weaknesses (Aviles et al., 2006).

There is a direct correlation between a child's exposure to violence, abuse, and/or neglect in the home or community and their success in school. As the more abuse they experience increases, school success decreases. This neglect may also lead to problems negotiating their environments. However, there are students who defy these odds and succeed in the classroom, even while experiencing the trauma outside school (Aviles et al., 2006).

Current Issues and Solutions. Neurobiologically, students cannot learn if they do not feel safe, known, and cared for within their schools and small changes within the classroom can make a huge impact on students who have been traumatized (Minahan, 2019). There has been a recent increase in effort in schools to work with mental health professionals and agencies, but research and literature still shows that students are being served inappropriately and that there is a lack of available services within schools (Aviles et al., 2006). Programs such as Flexible Framework, COmpassion TEaching, and the Multiplying Connections Model have been used in the past to help teachers provide needed services for students struggling with social-emotional learning (Crosby, 2015b). But most schools in America are not equipped or organized enough to help counsel adolescents about mental health issues and refer them to help (Aviles et al., 2006). Studies show that schools do not employ or contract very few mental health experts. It was found

that 55% of schools (out of the 485 schools studied) employ counselors, 40.5% have psychologists, 21% have social workers, and 2.1% have psychiatrists. One way to provide resources for students is to reach out and collaborate with different organizations that can help provide them with the resources they need to help serve their students (Aviles et al., 2006). Teachers and administrators within schools should be provided with specific professional development to help them gain knowledge about social-emotional needs of their students (Aviles et al., 2006). Although it seems like a great idea to integrate outside organizations into the school setting, districts need to do this carefully. Tensions can be created between school employees, like counselors and psychologists, and these outside organizations. School staff may think that the district questions their ability to do their job (Adelman & Taylor, 2000). In a study done by Crosby et al. (2015a), teachers have a desire to have greater skills, information, and support to help their students. Some small effective strategies for respect and transparency that can be implemented by teachers in the classroom are to avoid authoritative directives, allow students to make choices, and provide reasons. Also, if teachers are provided with effective strategies through professional development, they are able to share experiences with their co-workers, allowing them to express what worked best in their classroom (Minahan, 2019). This type of training for staff can increase their awareness of childhood trauma, allowing students to feel more supported, leading to improved academic efficacy, and decreases in aggression, deviant behavior, and psychological stress (Crosby et al., 2017). Schools that do not work and communicate with community resources are not effectively providing the support needed by students to participate fully in society (Aviles et al., 2006). Another issue that is seen among schools is which students are receiving the social-emotional services needed. In many schools, these mental health services are often provided to younger students and less available for

adolescents and young adults in older grades (Aviles et al., 2006). Recent research has found that emotional and behavioral problems have more than doubled in the last 25 years, and only 1 in 4 kids are getting the treatment they need to overcome these issues. Adolescence is such a pivotal stage for all kids, and that makes it even more important that mental health services are provided to them (Aviles et al., 2006). If services are not provided for adolescents, this impacts their academic success, as they are less likely to complete high school, but it also is detrimental to their adult livelihood, as they are not prepared for employment (Aviles et al., 2006). An additional issue that often occurs is that high school students can be neglected and not taken care of. It is often thought that, at this age, students should be able to take care of themselves.

“Services at the highschool level are extremely important in supporting adolescents in their developmental trajectory towards school. The presence of a mental illness has been shown to have a large impact on school completion.” About 42,000 adolescents who have been diagnosed with a mental illness in the US yearly never complete high school, and they are not prepared for employment. The skills that students learn in schools can serve as a foundation for success in higher education and in later job opportunities. (Aviles et al., 2006).

By analyzing different pieces of research and literature, a professional in the field of education can find many strategies that help with social-emotional learning of traumatized students. Teachers should know what to expect when working with these types of students. They should expect unexpected responses. Minahan (2019) uses the analogy of soda cans. When one shakes a soda can, they expect it to burst when they open it. A traumatized student is like that shaken up soda can. When you try to open them up and really help them, they may explode, so it is important to expect the unexpected. Teachers should also employ thoughtful interaction with their students and be specific when it comes to things such as relationship building. Another

important and easy strategy to implement is promoting predictability and consistency within a classroom (Minahan, 2019). Many of these students who had experienced trauma do not have stable and consistent lives outside of school, so doing this may provide them with a sense of normalcy and comfort. This could be something as simple as keeping a daily schedule of events, so they know what to expect each day. Along with this, teachers can also slowly incorporate strategies that help students deal with change (Minahan, 2019). On one day out of the month, a teacher could switch up and schedule or activities and teach students how to adapt and deal with this change and inconsistency. This helps them to build their own techniques for dealing with their feelings, thus building on their social-emotional regulation skills. It is also important to give the students supportive feedback in order to help reduce their negative thinking (Minahan, 2019). It is essential that traumatized students develop a growth mindset. Students should know that they have areas of competence so that these can counteract the negative moments with more positive experiences (Minahan, 2019). For example, allow these students to teach each other about things they know well, thus allowing them to acknowledge that they are smart and knowledgeable. In terms of discipline with traumatized students, exclusionary practices, such as sending to the office, ignoring bad behavior, and time outs, should be limited within the classroom. These types of punishments can trigger negative feelings in children who have experienced abandonment and neglect. It is important that the teacher is seen as someone they can go to and be comfortable with and ignoring them may make the child feel like the teacher dislikes them or is happy that they are upset (Minahan, 2019).

Foster-Care and Court-Involved Students. It is also important to take into account students who are or were at some point court-involved or in the foster care system, as many of these children have experienced trauma during childhood. Into adulthood, the rates of post-

traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are 20% higher for those who were involved in foster-care compared to the general population (Crosby, 2015b). Research done by Crosby et al. (2017) found that female youth who are court-involved experience unique trauma responses, such as a higher prevalence rate of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These young females also tend to internalize their behaviors more compared to youth males. The trauma these court-involved children experience increases the risk of negative outcomes such as delinquency, recidivism, unemployment, and poverty. We often see other problems such as PTSD, major depression, low self-esteem, difficulty regulating emotions, aggression (both physical and verbal), low problem-solving skills, difficulty with concentration and processing information, and negative classroom behavior. There is an overall large achievement gap among students who are court-involved (Crosby et al., 2017). One way pointed out by Crosby et al. (2017) that can help decrease this achievement gap is to help students develop a sort of attachment to school. They found that students who had a strong attachment and were involved in school tended to exhibit less maladaptive and disruptive behavior. They also experienced stronger academic motivation. Strong attachment is also useful in reducing the behaviors that could get one involved in court. School attachment equals social support. Social support can be very important in counteracting the negative effects of adverse experiences. Social support provides stability, resources, and opportunities for positive experiences. Teachers and administrators can serve as sources of social support within schools. It has been found that secure attachments to teachers and administrators can lead to fewer delinquency incidents and a positive self-concept and feelings of self-worth. Another source of attachment and support for students is peers (Crosby et al., 2017). Overall, the research done by Crosby et al. (2017) demonstrated that schools that had trauma-informed teaching that promotes attachments and trauma-sensitive teaching through professional

development and staff coaching showed stronger levels of strong attachment, involvement, and teacher support among students.

Teachers need to be aware of strategies to help these students within the classroom who may be struggling with social-emotional difficulties. Crosby et al. (2015a) conducted a study on court-involved/foster-care children in schools. They gained knowledge on the teachers' perspective on the learning of these students. They found that teachers who work with court-involved and foster care students need more input for administration regarding decision making, more professional development training, and better learning environments in order to confidently help and support these students. Overall, teachers believed they needed aggressive revisions to practices done within the classroom that service specifically to foster care and court-involved students (Crosby et al., 2015a).

Rationale

There is always room for more investigation and improvement when it comes to students' mental health and social-emotional learning and capacity. Through further research, we want to know the opinions of current and past students and past, current, and future educators. Through this research with teachers, we hope to draw conclusions on what current practicing teachers know to help with their students' social-emotional learning and how important they think this type of learning is. From students, we want to know if students are experiencing the level of social-emotional learning and support that they need within the classroom. From these conclusions, we want to be able to show teachers practices that they may be able to implement in their own classroom. If students are not experiencing the level of social-emotional learning that they need in the class, then we want to use this information to inform educators that there is still room for improvement.

Hypothesis

After the survey is sent out and the answers are analyzed, the research team will be able to draw conclusions from the results. It is hypothesized that teachers will know a good amount about social-emotional learning and trauma-informed learning. They will be able to explain ways in which they implement it within their own classroom, and they will think that it is an extremely important part of the day-to-day curriculum.

It is also hypothesized that students will not know much about the terms presented to them, like social-emotional learning and they will not be familiar with what it entails. But students will have experienced some sort of social-emotional learning within their schools. If this is the case, we can conclude that students themselves may need to be familiarized with the terms and be taught what they can do to help take control of their own social-emotional learning and success.

Methods

Participants

Seventy-two former and present students and teachers participated in this study. Forty-six of these participants were teachers, nine were students, and seventeen were students and teachers; these could be students who may be completing student teaching. The seventeen student/teacher responses were evaluated as strictly teacher responses, as the responses were answered from the point of view of a teacher. Ethics approval was obtained before recruiting participants. The survey was advertised through social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and Snapchat, and sent to the admin at the University of Akron School of Education and to Canton City School teachers and staff. A teacher, in this study, is defined as an employee who works

with students and sees them on a daily basis, helping them with academics and on a day-to-day basis. A student is someone who attends a school to learn.

Questions

Following the IRB approval, participants were invited to voluntarily complete a survey. The first survey question assured that participants provide informed consent and agreed to participate in the survey. Participants were then asked to identify how they were completing the survey, as a past/present student, teacher, or both. Following this, participants were asked a series of questions regarding their knowledge of social-emotional and trauma-informed learning.

These questions included material asking how familiar participants were with social-emotional and trauma-informed learning, what they mean and entail, and how they had experienced or taught it. These questions were followed with more regarding participants' thoughts on how beneficial this type of learning is and in what ways it was beneficial. One question was directly for participants who were completing the survey as teachers, asking how one executes social-emotional and trauma-informed learning in their own classroom.

The survey was completed with two final questions. One question asked to what extent does a students' home life influence their learning and behavior at school. The final question was used to see how participants felt teachers could be better prepared to help their students grow and learn. The question asked how participants felt teachers could be more informed on the trauma students are experiencing and what strategies could be implemented to help with this trauma.

Procedure

All participants were told that the survey concerned students' and teachers' knowledge of social-emotional learning and would take no more than ten minutes. Participants were then asked to provide informed consent. The survey was administered using Google Forms. The greatest

response rate was received within the first two days of sending out the survey. After a week and a half, the survey was closed, and results were analyzed.

Results

Students

Table 1.1: Student responses for question 1

How familiar are you with social-emotional learning and trauma-informed teaching? (scale from 5 - highly familiar to 1 - not familiar at all)	
N = 9	Average = 1.5

Table 1.2: Student responses for question 2

What does social-emotional learning and trauma-informed teaching mean to you, if anything? What does it entail?
N/A
It means that you are learning about yourself, how you interact with others and how your brain reacts to certain situations. I'd imagine that trauma-informed teaching means that you consider trauma in others while you are teaching.
N/A
I don't know what it means
Meeting students where they are at, considering life experiences and their effect in the classroom
I don't know
Being able to recognize emotions of students and how they can help/hurt their learning.
I don't really know what it means or entails.
I have no clue

Table 1.3: Student responses for question 3

In what ways, if any, have you experienced or taught social-emotional learning and trauma-informed learning in a classroom? Please include the grade level at which you

experienced/taught it.
N/A
I took a class this past semester that taught us about social-emotional learning throughout childhood. I learned how to implement that information into the classroom (kindergarten).
N/A
None that I know of
Have not experienced it (knowingly)
None
I do not know
None that I'm aware of, but maybe during college.
I haven't

Table 1.4: Student responses for question 4

If you have experienced or included social-emotional or trauma-informed learning in your classroom, how beneficial do you feel it was? (scale from 5 - crucial to learning to 1 - would be fine without)
4
N/A
N/A
N/A
N/A
1
3
3
5

Table 1.5: Student responses for question 5

If you feel that the social-emotional and/or trauma-informed learning you have experienced/taught was beneficial, in what ways would you say it positively impacted you or the students and their learning?

N/A
It impacted me because I learned to get to know every child and their families. Their family is a huge part of the child’s life and you have to get to know the family to learn more about the child.
N/A
N/A
N/A
I don’t know
Unsure
N/A
N/A

Table 1.6: Student responses to question 7

In your opinion, how much does a students’ home life influence their learning and behavior at school?
N/A
Greatly. The second they leave school, they head home. It’s the largest part of their life.
N/A
A high amount. Home life is a huge factor on how people act or believe.
A lot! Huge influence
Massively. Respect is key
A significant amount. A lot of which is seen when students return from summer breaks or long breaks. Those who learn some at home come back more prepared.
A decent amount. If a child doesn’t have a good or supportive home life, then even the most determined student is at a disadvantage.
N/A

Table 1.7: Student responses to question 8

How do you think teachers can be more informed about the trauma that their students are experiencing? What strategies should be implemented to help with this trauma once identified?
N/A

The teacher needs to get to know the families almost as well as they know the children.
N/A
Make the environment welcoming to discuss these things. Maybe a 1-on-1 environment so it is more private.
Being aware of district demographics, local social services, news, and needs. Talks to students. Reaching out and having relationships with local services. Not every teacher, but at least 1–2-point people.
The school needs to communicate students' deficiencies and needs. Empathy
Being emotionally available to the students to allow them to express whatever they are feeling.
Understand the context and area in which they're teaching. What is the common background of their students? Do they share a similar background? Be cognizant and respectful of possible difficulties with learning/focusing.
N/A

The number of student responses was far fewer than the expected results. With only nine student responses, the credibility of the answers is not as good. Of the nine student responses, six answered as a one on a scale from one to five, stating they were not at all familiar with social-emotional learning and trauma-informed teaching; one answered two as slightly familiar, and two answered as a three (table 1.1). Continuing on with the survey, the results showed that students did not necessarily feel as though this learning was important to students (table 1.4).

When asked what social-emotional and trauma-informed learning means or entails (shown in table 1.2), the answers could be separated into two different categories. Approximately half of the students responded that they did not know what these meant or entailed. The other half came to the conclusion that social-emotional learning and trauma-informed learning were about understanding students' life experiences and feelings and noting how these could affect students' schoolwork. One student said, "It means that you are learning about yourself, how you interact with others and how your brain reacts to certain situations. I'd imagine that trauma-

informed teaching means that you consider trauma in others while you are teaching.” Another answers, “Being able to recognize emotions of students and how they can help/hurt their learning.”

Continuing to complete the survey, a majority of students responded by saying that they had not knowingly experienced social-emotional or trauma-informed learning (table 1.3). However, there was one response that stated the participant had taken a class that taught about social-emotional learning and how to implement it. Due to these participants not having experienced this type of learning, there was few data from students’ perspectives as to why this learning would be important and how it could positively affect students.

When it came time for participants to answer how they felt a students’ home life influenced their learning and behavior at school (table 1.6), every response was the same. Many believed that a students’ home life was critical to their learning and development in school. Some responses include:

1. “A decent amount. If a child doesn’t have a good or supportive home life, then even the most determined student is at a disadvantage.”
2. “A high amount. Home life is a huge factor on how people act or believe.”

Participants had many different ideas as to how to be more informed on the trauma that other students are experiencing but did not necessarily know what strategies teachers could implement to help their students overcome these traumatic experiences (which makes sense). Participants agreed that teachers need to be more aware, involved with their students, their families, and the community, and provide a welcoming environment that allows their students to feel safe (table 1.7). Responses include:

1. “Make the environment welcoming to discuss these things. Maybe a 1-on-1 environment so it is more private.”
2. “Being aware of district demographics, local social services, news, and needs. Talks to students. Reaching out and having relationships with local services. Not every teacher, but at least 1–2-point people.”
3. “The school needs to communicate students' deficiencies and needs. Empathy”
4. “Being emotionally available to the students to allow them to express whatever they are feeling.”
5. “Understand the context and area in which they’re teaching. What is the common background of their students? Do they share a similar background? Be cognizant and respectful of possible difficulties with learning/focusing.”

Teachers

Figure 2.1: Teacher responses to question 1

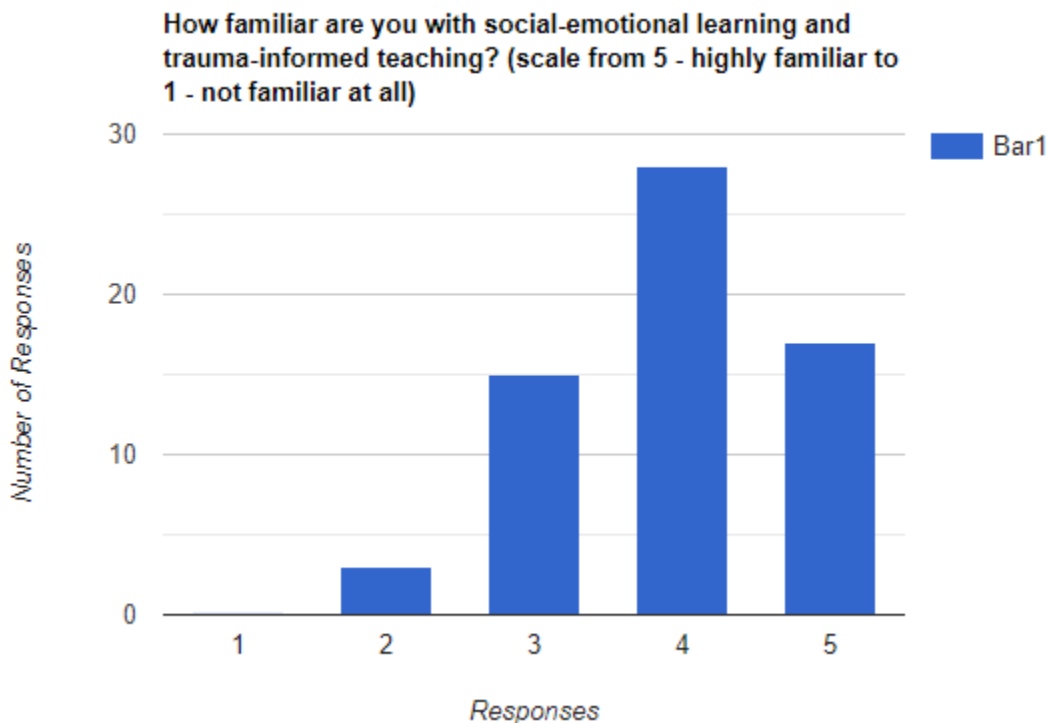
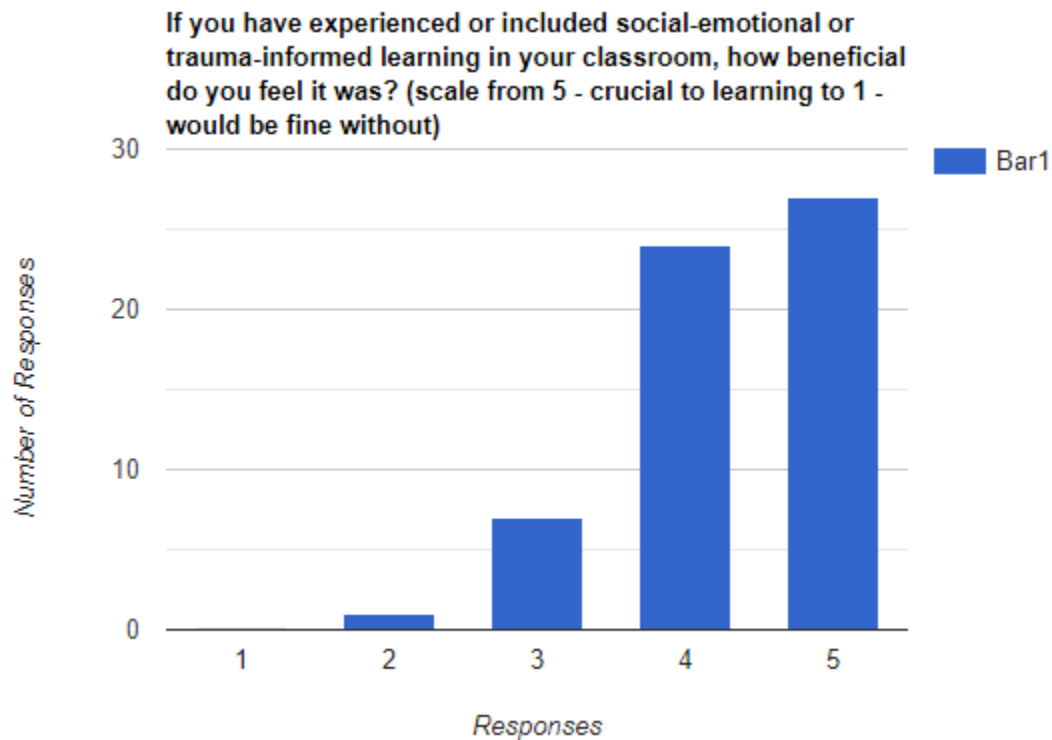


Figure 2.2: Teacher responses to question 4



The results gathered from the teacher responses varied greatly from those of the students. As stated previously, the participants who completed the survey as both a student and a teacher, were counted only in the teacher results; their responses will be noted in this section.

When analyzing the results of these participants, seventeen of the sixty-three answered as a five on a scale from one to five on how familiar they are with social-emotional learning (one representing “not familiar at all” and five being “highly familiar”), stating they are highly familiar with it (table 2.1). Twenty-eight answered as a four and fifteen as a three, meaning that 71% of the participants answered as a four or five, and 95% answered as a three or above. The average response was a 3.9.

The results for how beneficial the participants felt social-emotional and trauma-informed learning were supported by how familiar participants were with this type of learning (figure 2.2).

Twenty-seven participants answered as a five, saying it is crucial to learning, while twenty-four answered as a four; hence, approximately 81% of these participants stated that it was extremely important or crucial to student learning. The average rating was a 4.25.

Participants explained in many different ways what social-emotional and trauma-informed learning means to them. Many participants stated that it is providing skills to identify trauma and to self-regulate behavior. Others stated that it means to provide support, teaching students how to deal with and avoid triggers, and how trauma can affect the brain and learning. Participants agreed that teachers must create a welcoming environment that students consider a safe space. Most importantly, participants said that social-emotional and trauma-informed learning allows teachers to be able to teach the *whole* student by understanding all of their needs. Responses include:

1. “Providing students with the skills to identify sources of trauma & skills to self-regulate behavior. For teachers the ability to identify the signs of trauma & the skills to provide support.”
2. “You must know the students' trauma and understand what is the trigger for their behavior in order to teach them.”
3. “It means that we aren't just talking about feelings but addressing that they are ok and how to deal with it. When we are looking at trauma informed teaching, we need to be aware of the changes in brain development and what is happening in a person's brain when they are experiencing past/present trauma. We need to help students learn coping mechanisms and how to recognize when their feelings are from trauma they have experienced. We also need to be careful when labeling trauma.”
4. “It allows for educators to teach the whole child.”

5. “Social and emotional teaching related to trauma means that I as the teacher recognize the impact that trauma may have on my student’s learning. It means that I provide supports based on their emotional needs. This goes well beyond the academic portion, but wraps around the whole child, so that the student has the opportunity to reach their fullest potential.”

When it came to discussing how participants experienced or taught social-emotional and trauma-informed learning, most answers remained the same. Participants' responses ranged from preschool to college where they had experienced and/or taught this learning. Responses included teaching how trauma affects the brain, interacting with those who have experienced trauma and have difficulty following rules, using restorative practices, and using a responsive classroom approach. Responses include:

1. “I participated in a number of Social & Emotional Intelligence workshops and conferences in the early 2000s. I have never had the good fortune to be involved in its serious implementation. I apply everything that I can apply in isolation in a classroom, particularly in trying to view student responses in terms of what they understood my instructions to mean, and then working from there to achieve cognitive continuity.”
2. “I have seen it at the PK-2 level with the implementation of Restorative Practices.”
3. “The clinical experience prior to student teaching in the dual early childhood program focuses on the Responsive Classroom approach to establishing a safe learning environment. The candidates learn specific strategies and view classroom episodes where strategies are used.”
4. “I have taught 9th through 12th grade and young adults through age 21. I focus on developing relationships with students. I show my enjoyment and appreciation for

students every day in taking interest in what interests them. I provide (face to face) students with baskets that contain stress leaving fidget type items; I have their birthdays on my board and recognize them with a small gift. I provide scaffolding, choice, and freedom from failure at all times, using a competency-based grading system. We take the time to "just talk" and listen to some music at various times. I provide a predictable structure to the classroom and to each day's lesson. For example, right now with my virtual students, I use a four-component agenda for our meetings: 1 Ice-breaker 2 Student concerns/questions/student led discussion 3 Academic support topic (video, discussion) that will help them with organization, goal setting, or academic understanding 4 Short physical activity (yoga, dancing, stretching, fun exercises)"

As participants were asked how social-emotional and trauma-informed learning were beneficial, responses were all very similar. Many responses stated that students felt safer speaking to the teacher, and it allowed teachers to get a better understanding of students' backgrounds. With a better understanding of where students come from and what they have been through, teachers were better able to understand how to work with the student and they could implement strategies that benefited the student.

1. "It helps to understand students with behavior issues as people first and understanding that you need to address this problem prior to teaching."
2. "I think it created a very welcoming environment for my students where they felt safe to share their feelings and talk about their mental well-being. I also think it helped for me to create rapport with my students. I think it has also given the students skills that they can apply to their lives in and out of school. Having a strong understanding of your social-emotional skill set is always beneficial."

3. “Getting students to understand that they are not the only people dealing with these issues, and that there is help available.”

The next survey question was created directly for the purpose of getting a teacher’s perspective. When asked how teachers implemented social-emotional and trauma-informed learning in their classrooms, there were many varying responses; however, a common theme existed between all of them. Participants responded saying they held morning meetings to see what was going on with students and if there may be anything their students would like to talk about. Participants also created their lessons to be conscious of what their students may have gone through, making sure to create a safe place for them. Some of the specific responses are listed below:

1. “I conduct classroom meetings, use restorative practices, implement calming strategies and a calming corner in my classroom to help student’s self-regulate, I have also implemented a social emotional curriculum in my classroom.”
2. “I focus mostly on goal setting and why goals, both short term and long-term goals, are so important. I try to focus on academics predominantly but will address how to deal with difficulties in life and how to handle others when in an adverse situation.”
3. “I use body language and social interactions to give me a look into who this student really is. I also receive information from the counselor/principal upon enrollment in our program. But for those that fly under the radar, just building relationships help me utilize what I have learned. There is no set rule for how to do it, it just happens. I use my training to help me respect the space needed at various points with student interactions. It is also important to create a safe environment. This is not just about physical safety but also social emotional safety. Trauma children need consistent environments. Therefore,

my class is very obvious in expectations on every level. I don't really have a prescription for how I specifically execute these things, I just do it. I work hard every day to ensure my students feel safe in all aspects without waiver of growth.”

4. “I create lessons where students can identify ways to handle trauma and conflict. I believe this is something that is also part of the health and science classes which all students must have. The more they learn about it the better.”

One of the final questions regarding how much participants felt a student's home life influenced their learning and behavior at school was answered almost unanimously in the same way. Participants agreed that a student's home life directly affects how that student does in school. Multiple participants also referred to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Taormina, 2013) at this point and stated that students must feel safe in all environments to succeed.

Finally, the survey asked how teachers could be more informed about the trauma their students experience and what strategies they could use to help students overcome it. Participants seemed to come to a common theme when responding to this question. All agreed that teachers need to build relationships, share information, and have open communication with all those who are involved with their students; this includes past and present teachers, parents, counselors, etc.

Participants also agreed that teachers need more professional development training when it comes to social-emotional and trauma-informed learning. One teacher responded, “Not all students will talk about their trauma with teachers and more counselors are needed per student ratio in the inner city school system. There needs to be more professional development with strategies and implementing them in the schools.” Many responses stated that professional developments are highly focused on curriculum and there is little to no guidance on how to teach students with trauma. Another teacher said, “During our professional development which we get

a ton of, the focus is on academics and curriculum. I'd like to see more focus on the trauma & social learning of the students because if that isn't addressed, the academics won't matter. The students won't hear an academic thing I say if they are feeling burdened emotionally and physically.” Participants agreed that if teachers can learn how trauma can affect the brain and have the support they need to help their students, then the students would benefit greatly.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to gain knowledge on how past and present teachers have experienced social-emotional and trauma-informed learning. The research team hypothesized that teachers would have a relatively good understanding of what social-emotional and trauma-informed learning was and how it was being used. On the other hand, it was anticipated that students would not be as familiar with these terms. A ten question survey was conducted and seventy-two responses were received.

The results of the survey supported the researchers' claims. Students were far less familiar with social-emotional and trauma-informed learning than teachers. These findings do not come as a surprise as most students are not taught specifically about these types of learning. With the knowledge we gained from this survey, teachers need to familiarize students about what social-emotional learning and competence is. This will allow students to help take control of their emotions and allow them to know that teachers care about them and are trying to help them not only with their education, but also with their mental and emotional health.

Similarly, the responses from teacher participants supported the idea that teachers were more familiar with what social-emotional and trauma-informed learning are. Results showed that teachers truly believe that the social-emotional and trauma-informed learning of students is crucial to the students well-being. Based on the study, teachers strongly believe that using social-

emotional and trauma-informed learning can help create a safe environment in which students feel open to being themselves and sharing their struggles. The study also revealed an important finding that educators and administrators need to be aware of. Many participants stated they required more professional development when it comes to social-emotional and trauma-informed learning in order to be better equipped for students. This is an important fact for higher-up administrators to take note of so that they are readily able to provide these types of opportunities for their staff.

The findings from this research study are so important because it shows educators and professionals what else needs to be done to help better the mental health of students. It also helps future and current teachers to gain further knowledge and ideas from other professionals about how to implement social-emotional learning in their own classrooms. In the field of education, it is important that teachers and professionals collaborate together and learn from one another. The best way to gain ideas is from other professionals, and this survey and research allows for that.

Within the review of current research and literature, it was found that teachers are familiar with social-emotional learning and that they want to be provided with more resources to better educate themselves. The results of the survey go along with this finding, as many of the educators surveyed had some previous experience with social-emotional learning and wanted to gain more information on how to implement it. Teachers understood how important a student's mental health was in relation to their academic performance and they wanted to be able to support students in any way they need to improve both mental health and their learning. Also, the teachers' ideas and opinions on what SEL and trauma-informed learning is correlate with what the research says. It is all about helping students overcome their trauma and teaching them in ways that promote positive emotions.

Overall, we conclude that it is extremely important that all educators are familiar with ways that social-emotional learning can be implemented in the school setting because a student's mental health affects everything in their lives, including their academic performance and ability to learn. In order for students to learn and perform to their full potential, they need to be healthy mental, and it is a teacher's job to help support mental health and teach a student how to live a healthy life, even if their home circumstances are not ideal. Many students experience trauma at home and in the community and they can bring these issues into the classroom, so teachers need to be ready to deal with these issues and support students through them. Teachers and educators have an extremely important job, and they need to be educated in order to implement quality education to all students.

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