ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF CHARACTER, MORAL, AND SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

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ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CHARACTER, MORAL, AND SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING.

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Abstract

This study aimed to assess rural Pennsylvania elementary educators’ perceptions, utilizations, and observations of character, moral, and social emotional learning. In this trinary research study, the first research question aimed to evaluate educators’ perceived value of teaching character, moral, and social emotional learning. The second research question focused on measuring the frequency with which the teachers were utilizing character, moral, and social emotional learning within their school day. The third research question of the study was an evaluation of the teachers’ recognition of character, moral, and social emotional learning (CMSEL) as observed in student behavioral outcomes.

Participants in this study were kindergarten through fifth-grade teachers within three school districts in rural Pennsylvania. There were 36 participants in total that completed the survey. Of the 36 teachers that answered the survey questions, 30 answered two additional open-ended response questions, and three of the respondents volunteered to participate in an extension interview.

The findings of this study indicated that the majority of the elementary teachers participating in the survey perceived value for the students, schools, and communities by teaching CMSEL to the student populations. This study’s results also illustrated the varied, yet significant overall utilization of CMSEL within the classrooms of the three participating school districts. Lastly, this study ascertained that the educators largely recognized a positive impact on student behavior due to the utilization of CMSEL within the school environment.
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Chapter One - Introduction

Overview

Character education, moral education, and social emotional learning were approaches striving to increase school-led teaching of moral decision making, prosocial skills, and positive emotional development of the 21st-century learner. Character education has been found to be fundamental in building and maintaining morality, virtues, and relationships throughout a lifetime (Bialik et al., 2015; Paolini, 2021). The opportunity to utilize the educational process was an approach to the whole-student developmental process that would have been valuable to the student immediately and then as a member of the world community (McGrath, 2018; Nadelson et al., 2019). Throughout the process of character education, embedding morals and values into school curricula, schools were building programs that encouraged and cultivated a student who had been successful academically and behaviorally (Green et al., 2020). Character education was the belief that in addition to transmitting knowledge and skills, education should foster moral and civic virtues (Baehr, 2017; Sayer, 2020).

The specific traits or characteristics that have been defined as essential and the focal characteristics were as varied as the programs. Many character programs included but were not limited to, the following characteristics: gratitude, forgiveness, kindness, respect, generosity, tolerance, and diversity (Baehr, 2017; Rusk & Waters, 2014). While the aforementioned characteristics were important, many other prosocial words were included in the programs and initiatives of moral, character, and social emotional education (Pattaro, 2016). The chosen characteristics, values, goals, and the actuality of
character education depended on the culture and society in which it was being utilized (Sayer, 2020; Temiz, 2016).

In addition to the effect on behavior, social emotional, character, and moral education and reasoning had benefits beyond social and emotional growth. The effects of character, social, and emotional learning had a positive academic impact, as well. Increasing character educational programs contributed to the growth and development of both the cognitive and social emotional abilities of students (Elmi, 2020; Greenberg et al., 2017; Hoedel & Lee, 2018; Hyson & Taylor, 2011; Zurqoni, 2018). Furthermore, Samanci’s (2015) study illustrated a direct link between moral judgment competencies and critical thinking skills. Learning and living the traits and characteristics of a prosocial individual encouraged moral growth and critical thinking abilities of 21st-century student populations.

Moral education programs utilized learning opportunities to teach, encourage, and increase prosocial and ethical behaviors. It was vital to teach students how to be socially competent and moral beings outside of social scenarios and prior to the prosocial expectations of cultural interactions (Ahmed et al., 2020; Dewey, 1909). Moral education aimed to cultivate and embed moral development into student’s educational processes (Chinnery, 2019; Pijanowski, 2017). Morals were defined as “universal values and standards of conduct that every rational person wants every other to follow” (Chowdhury, 2016, p.1). Seider et al. (2017) asserted that traditional character programs were designed to encourage “individuals to function as competent moral agents” (p. 1149).

According to psychologist and educational reformer John Dewey (1933), moral reasoning was guided by human goals and interests which created innumerable ways to
encourage, engage, and enhance moral and character learning opportunities. Kohlberg (1976) believed that cognitive and moral skills should be developed in parallel within the educational process and subject to universally defined values, traits, and abilities. Gao and Wang (2021) found that moral education encouraged the development and transference of moral virtues by student populations. Moral education was foundational for the valuable development of students to guide and reduce negative behaviors for the benefit of schools and communities (Odebode, 2020; White & Shin, 2017). Dewey (1944) wrote that “all education which develops power to share effectively in social life is moral” (p. 360). The programs were designed to develop the emotional and interactional skills of the students within the learning process.

Social emotional learning (SEL) was focused on increasing students’ social and emotional skills throughout the educational process (Paolini, 2021; Stevens, 2021). SEL utilized embedded lessons of character through implicit and explicit means by targeting specific traits and values to assist students in prosocial development. Ahmed et al. (2020) suggested students exposed to social and emotional lessons within their class structure tested as being more socially and emotionally competent than their peers that did not have SEL throughout their classroom learning. SEL identifies traits and values that will increase the emotional and social competence of students in the classrooms as part of a whole-student approach, which was the development of academic and social emotional skills within the school day. Kasikci and Ozhan (2021) asserted that SEL skill levels were indicative of reported student happiness and hope while being protective against negative behaviors and interactions. SEL was valuable and vital to the students developing both interpersonal and intrapersonal skills to increase the prosocial characteristics of students.
(Paolini, 2020). Students’ abilities to learn emotional intelligence and social skills can be molded in schools and have been linked to future success (Greenberg et al., 2017; Kautz et al., 2021). Greenberg et al. (2017) outlined the short-term benefits of SEL which included increases in confidence, engagement in school, academic success, as well as improved behavior. They also found that the long-term benefits of SEL for the students included an increase in prosocial skills, career success, better mental health, and later becoming responsible citizens.

**Need for the Study**

Schools had become the shared environment tasked with change, identified as being the place that is the integration point between intelligence, personality, and good behavior (Abdi, 2018; Anwar, 2015; Blazevic, 2016; Nadelson et al., 2019; Santoso et al., 2020). There is no system in place that impacts the entirety of the future world citizens like the educational institutions of the 21st century. After instituting character education programs schools, administrators, and teachers have reported a reduction in office referrals, disciplinary issues, and behavioral issues (Khoury, 2017). Schools were the logical change agents to instill morals and values to produce a better student and member of society (Abdi, 2018; Ahmed et al., 2020). All stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, other personnel, and parents were an important solution to the problem of social degeneration (Badini & Wachidi, 2019; Demirel et al., 2016; Temiz, 2016; White & Shin, 2017). Character, moral, and social emotional approaches offered schools a proactive approach to behavioral intervention and skills training to deter or decrease disciplinary incidents and interventions within a school (Diggs & Akos, 2016). Teaching students how to communicate and behave in socially appropriate ways encouraged
prosocial student behavior and growth, which was foundational for personal social and emotional development (Paolini, 2021 & Pattaro 2016).

Globally, many of the world’s societies were working toward a solution to the degradation of society (Temiz, 2016 & Vengadasalam, 2018). Educational institutions were essentially tasked with comprehensive education, encompassing academics as well as character development (Santoso et al., 2020). Citizens of the world were expected to have the skills and awareness of universal ethical principles (Samanci, 2015). As a school culture, the rural Pennsylvania region had adopted and developed various approaches to character, moral, and social emotional learning (CMSEL) by embedding and including prosocial traits into the curriculum with short-term goals of decreasing negative behavioral incidents, increasing prosocial interactions, and improving academic success and the long-term goals of being an integral part in cultivating prosocial members of tomorrow’s society.

**Statement of the Problem**

The public was looking to the educational systems to take responsibility for the moral, social, and character edification of students to combat societal decline has increased in modern society (White & Shin, 2017 and Temiz, 2016). The effect of schools as crucial stakeholders in society increased due to character education programs and initiatives (Greene, 2019 and Yolcu & Sari, 2018). Often, the behavioral and character needs were evident in the form of reported student behavioral disturbances and disciplinary report data collected by the schools. Harper (2020) explained that a majority of states had laws that limited student suspension and expulsion and also suggest disciplinary alternatives. According to Odebode (2020), the increase of disciplinary
incidents in school systems was difficult for all stakeholders and should have been proactively addressed in schools through moral learning.

The role of schools as disciplinarians in society was both expanding and controversial. Schools were increasingly using the techniques of surveillance, investigation, and those efforts were creating a criminalization of student populations (Warnick & Scribner, 2020). Many districts were newly employing law enforcement officers to address the increase in negative and illegal behaviors in academic institutions. The presence of school police was associated with increases in school arrests in many districts (James & McGallion, 2013). Prevention programs to reduce or deter negative behaviors and aggression in schools were vital tasks of schools (Krek, 2020). Schools were increasingly facing increases in behavioral incidents, discipline referrals, fights, arrests, and mental health crises. Intervention responses by schools, to inappropriate, misguided, negative behaviors had created an increase in the importance of schools proactively teaching prosocial moral behaviors (Pijanowski, 2017).

Behavioral concerns within schools and the larger society have long been a topic of concern and those problems were exacerbated by the Covid-19 Pandemic. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2022b), 84 percent of public schools reported a negative behavioral impact, and 87 percent of schools reported a negative impact on social emotional development due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. The behavioral and academic impacts of the pandemic on the student populations were still being studied and quantified as the residual effects of the learning and social losses were changing schooling around the world as there were shifts in the use of technology, attendance, and instruction (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022a). The Covid-19 Pandemic
illustrated and intensified the need for social and emotional structures and support in
schools today (Curren et al., 2022 & Billy & Garriguez, 2021).

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined for the purposes of this study:

**Character education** - “course of instruction designed to educate and assist
students in developing basic civic values and character traits” (Pennsylvania School

**Character development programs** - “conceptualized character as a set of
psychological attributes that motivate or enable individuals to function as competent
moral agents” (Seider et al., 2017, p. 1149).

**Collateral Learning** - a term used by Dewey (1938) to describe learning beyond
academics effecting students’ character, moral, and social development

**Moral character** - “moral character is defined as right conduct, not only in our
immediate social relations but also in our dealings with our fellow citizens and with the
whole of human race” (Badeni et al., 2019, p. 24).

**Moral education** - teaching and training students to use “universal values and
standards of conduct that every rational person wants every other to follow” (Chowdhury,
2016, p. 1).

**Prosocial** - “denotes or exhibiting behavior that benefits one or more other
people” (American Psychological Association Dictionary, 2022).

**Social Emotional Learning** - “how people acquire and apply knowledge,
attitudes, and skills to understand and control emotions” (Billy, 2021, p. 9).
Whole Student Approach - “meeting the needs of every student requires a holistic approach to education that extends well beyond academics” (National Education Association, 2022).

Limitations

A limitation of the study was a lack of uniformity in the informal inclusion of character, moral and social characteristics within each educator’s implicit lessons. Many educators had already included prosocial characteristics, morals, and values as a part of classroom learning due to observation, preference, or in an effort to develop the whole student. The pre-existing inclusion of character, moral, social, and emotional material into the learning created a variation in the time allotted to the terms and ideas of the character, moral, social, and emotional materials (Robertson-Kraft & Austin, 2015; Nadelson et al., 2019). Teachers used prosocial techniques within their lessons based on preference, experience, and choice which created differentiation within the classrooms of focus and breadth of exposure to character, moral, and social emotional skill exposure within the school. The previous inclusion of prosocial lessons and behavioral expectations within the individual classrooms may have affected the educator’s perceived need for the program. Curren et al. (2022) asserted that there was variation between schools and between teachers in their programs, implementation, and utilization of character and moral education.

The teacher’s personal experiences with student behaviors, expectations of student behaviors, and the amount of time that the teacher had been trained on CMSEL are all variable within the teacher population. Another confounding factor that may have impacted the effect of the prosocial education initiative within the rural Pennsylvania
elementary schools is the time dedicated to prosocial characteristics or traits, as each classroom will have had variation in initial time allocations. The number of times the traits were revisited variate due to the individual teacher and student behavior. As well as the training that the teacher has had regarding character, moral, and social emotional development within their lessons and interactions with students (Poulou, 2017). Berkowitz et al. (2017) stated that “wanting to effectively promote the development of character is not equivalent to knowing how to do so” (p. 33).

Additional extraneous variables were the prosocial or antisocial behaviors of the individual student, and the morals, values, and characters that were valued in the student’s home environment. Bahri (2020) and Demirel et al. (2016) called for the inclusion of parents and households to impart and increase the student’s exposure and expectation for prosocial valuable moral and character traits. The limitations of this study also include that the study is focusing on one rural area in Pennsylvania. Cultural mores may affect both the behaviors and the expectations of CMSEL within the elementary grades.

Lastly, the time in which the study was conducted included the earliest generations of humans that had 24-hour access to electronics which includes, but is not limited to, video games, social media, and the internet. The devices, platforms, applications, and usage of media and technology complicated teaching and learning prosocial skills (Ergen, 2019; Istiharoh & Indartono, 2018). Additionally, this study is being conducted when schools are addressing the academic and social impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The social implications of the Covid-19 Pandemic have affected students, stakeholders, and schools (Curren et al., 2022; National Center for Education...
Statistics, 2022b; Paolini, 2021). The impact of the pandemic was far-reaching and had consequences that may affect the reporting of teachers’ value and recognition as well as student behaviors for the purposes of this study.

**Purpose of the Study**

Understanding the connections and relationships between character education and student behavior was the first step in identifying the need for embedding character education in the classrooms. If teachers’ perspectives, implementation, and experiences support the premise that the inclusion of character and moral education reduces behavioral incidents and increases prosocial behaviors it will show evidence to the effect of embedding morals and values into the curriculum and learning materials of the rural Pennsylvania elementary schools.

The three questions of focus were designed to measure the teachers’ perceptions of character education, moral learning, and SEL in education, the frequency of implementation of the CMSEL, and the perceived effects of the CMSEL program as a proactive deterrent for negative behaviors and an increase to positive behaviors:

1. Do teachers value incorporating character, moral, and social emotional learning into their lessons?
2. How often are teachers implementing character, moral, and social emotional learning?
3. Do teachers recognize character, moral, and social emotional learning increases student prosocial behaviors and reduces negative behaviors?
Summary

Incorporating prosocial skills may create ethical, moral, and positive character traits to benefit the population was a valuable initiative for the communities of today and tomorrow (Schonert-Reichl, 2019). CMSEL was comprised of various prosocial traits that were deemed important based on the mission statement of the school and the morals and values of the community, in efforts to aid in the growth of an emotionally developed student. Character education, moral learning, and SEL were of paramount importance in education to reduce negative behavioral incidents and improve social and emotional characteristics in student populations (Green et al., 2020 and Jeynes, 2019). Schools were increasingly being called to be the community’s keystone for teaching societal morals, values, and emotional awareness to the next generation (Abdi, 2018; Nadelson et al., 2019 & Santoso et al., 2020). The schools may have impacted the behaviors of students by using a self-developed approach, which is described by Pijanowski (2017) as based on the varied principles of moral reasoning, character education, and social emotional learning integrated into the school and school climate. Schools had a moral responsibility to the communities they served to teach values, traits, and social skills that were important to rearing a morally responsible individual (McGrath, 2018). The programs utilized varied from institution to institution while the goals remained the same.
Chapter Two – Literature Review

Introduction

Lerner (2018) found that character development is a process of learning and utilizing prosocial skills and emotions consistently in ways beneficial to yourself and others. Character education was about the acquisition and strengthening of virtues, values, and imparting the knowledge to make wise choices for a well-rounded life and thriving society (Bialik et al., 2015; Elmi, 2020, Greenberg et al., 2017; Zurqoni, 2018). The goal of character education programs was to focus on developing and maintaining traits of an individual’s character which would then be displayed appropriately and continuously (Diggs & Akos, 2016). Istiharoh and Indartono (2018) found that character education should influence the thinking pattern, attitudes, and actions of individuals in everyday situations. The foundational elements of the character education practice in Goldys’s (2016) study centered around the traits of empathy, persistence, grit, compassion, and self-control all of which are prosocial traits that encouraged positive growth of an individual for the present and throughout their lives.

Character education was not based on a static paradigm; it was a fluid and adjustable process applied throughout the curriculum in educational institutions to impart prosocial behaviors (Ahmed et al., 2020; Covaleskie, 2016; Dewey, 1909). Temiz (2016) and Sayer (2020) found the traits of character education were identified and determined to be fundamental to the formation of the next generation of citizenry by the community in which the school serves. One of the tasks of education was creating a citizen of tomorrow; using character education embedded into the curriculum to grow a student’s capacity to understand morals and values with the goal of making the best decisions
Recognizing that there was a need for character education did not start in the classrooms but by looking at and analyzing society (Sayer, 2020; Temiz, 2016). Covaleskie (2016) determined that there were various reasons societies were seeking ways to positively impact or alter the behavior within their populations to reflect the virtues and values deemed desirable to cultivating a citizen of tomorrow. Sayer (2020) found that character impacts behavior and was cultivated by the cultures and social groups that were influential on the individual. According to Walker and Thoma (2017) the intention of character education was to purposefully cultivate character traits through direct and indirect means within the educational system. Character education involved moral learning by identifying the traits that will create a morally ideal world and ideally involved the community stakeholders to define ideal morals, values, and character traits that will be foundational to the local character education programs (Chinnery, 2019).

The critical period for moral and character development was identified as childhood into adolescence (Hutchinson et al., 2016). The findings of the Hutchinson et al. (2016) study explained that there is a benefit to interventions designed to enhance childhood and adolescent prosocial behaviors. Human learning is a continuum of experience that encouraged the growth of the individual. Schools that capitalized on the opportunity to enhance the character and social growth of students were preparing students academically and socially (White & Shin, 2017 & Nadelson et al., 2019). Schools were developing students’ character strengths to increase their chances of future success (Dishon & Goodman, 2017 & Varner, 2020). Character education had reliably
been shown to increase academic output in student populations (Elmi, 2020, Greenberg et al., 2017; Hoedel & Lee, 2018; Hyson & Taylor, 2011; Zurqoni, 2018).

Character education programs implemented in the school systems were found to be a proactive behavioral approach for reducing negative social interactions and disciplinary incidents (Diggs & Akos, 2016; Greenberg et al., 2017; Thompson et al., 2020). In 1961, the seminal psychological study involving social learning designed by Bandura, Ross, and Ross (1961), showed that children learned from observation and their behavior was an imitation of the observed interactions of others. Educational institutions were the logical place for society to learn both academic criteria and morals, values, and prosocial traits to foster the development of each set of skills (Abdi, 2018; Anwar, 2015; Bahari, 2020; McGrath, 2018; Nadelson et al., 2019).

**Interdependence of Character Education, Moral Education, and Social Emotional Learning**

The ideals and practices of character education were similar, if not interchangeable, with many other programs that had the same goals: to increase the positive, prosocial traits within school curriculum (Bialik et al., 2015; Paolini, 2021; Temiz, 2016). The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) was created by the United States Department of Education with the Institute of Education Sciences to research educational practices and programs. The What Works Clearinghouse (2014) found that instilling prosocial characteristics in the students of today involves varied practices including social-emotional learning (SEL), conflict resolution, social skills training, service learning, and ethical value education. Jones and Doolittle (2017) identify SEL as being synonymous with the program goals of character education and all programs focused on
emotional development. According to Chowdhury (2016) one goal of moral education is to promote the moral character formation of student populations. Moral education started by articulating an ideal moral universe based on ethical and prosocial principles later used as a foundation for programs created within the schools (Chinnery, 2019). The various definitions of moral education were largely a result of the diverse context and needs of the schools (Pijankowski, 2017). Zurqoni et al. (2018) suggested that the various programs of character education, moral education, values education, restorative justice, etc. worked in conjunction with each other as models to reinforce character traits, values, and problem-based learning. Using problem-based learning within the curriculum was one of the ways the programs work in tandem (Karim et al., 2018). Teaching values, morals, and character traits throughout the learning material in classrooms increased exposure to prosocial values, thoughts, and practices (Khoury, 2017). Due to the similar program goals of moral education, the practices of each intersected throughout the academic processes to encourage, maintain, and review the prosocial characteristics of each of the character education inclusive programs (Chowdhury, 2016). The programs and initiatives of SEL developed skills and strategies to connect cognitive development and pro-social traits within the classroom increasing success and achievement (Elmi, 2020). According to Varner (2020), SEL included character, behavior, emotional, social awareness, and abilities that were vital to success in school, work, relationships, and society. O’Conner et al., 2017 explained that executive function, self-regulation and social emotional learning were foundational to SEL for student populations. Temiz (2016) stated that there were many programs that were used in the same context as character education such as ethical education, moral education, values education, and
virtue education. The programs were all striving to increase the prosocial, community-driven traits and characteristic lessons within education with a shared goal of creating a well-rounded member of society (Peterson, 2020).

Developmental Considerations for School Based Character, Moral, and Social Emotional Learning

Developmental psychology has long studied the growth, learning, and stages associated with morality and values in humans (Samanci, 2015). Kohlberg (1977), found that character and moral values are an integral part of the developmental and educational process. Once society and subsequently the school systems identified the desired characteristics and moral traits that needed to be developed or encouraged in the youth, they embedded the term lessons throughout the school curriculum (Septiani, 2020). According to Diggs and Akos (2016), the developmental period of adolescence was associated with greater impulsivity, risk-taking, challenges, anti-social behaviors, and declining grades, which made character education invaluable for the school population.

Dewey (1938), believed that creating lifelong patterns of behavior through the academic process is as important, if not more important, than the traditional education happening in schools. Dewey referred to emotional and character learning as “collateral learning” which describes the characteristics developed by a student in addition to learning within academic institutions. Through the process of character education, the exposure and practice of character and moral skills in education encouraged prosocial behaviors and discouraged anti-social behaviors (Lerner, 2018). Diggs and Akos (2016) assert that character education had the potential to increase moral and character development in a meaningful way. The periods of human development identified as
childhood and adolescence had such a profound impact on the creation of an individual’s character, it was imperative that schools imparted cognitive experiences to assist in the development of prosocial traits (Kohlberg, 1977). Indicating the importance of teaching prosocial traits to children, Fisch and Truglio (2019) found that the positive academic and social benefits for preschoolers that viewed Sesame Street carried into their high school experiences and behaviors. Wong (2022) described that the pop culture icon, Snoop Dogg, had created SEL songs and rhymes for youth to address and encourage SEL development through music. Teaching character, moral, and SEL through the various ages and stages of development is beneficial in each stage of life (Lerner, 2018). Hutchinson et al. (2018) described the period of adolescence as being crucial to the development of the lifelong character of an individual and having far-reaching effects on the person’s future and career.

Erikson created what he termed the eight stages of psychosocial development (Orenstein & Lewis, 2022). Erikson proposed that throughout each stage of human development individuals’ decisions were fundamental to that stage and would impact the remainder of their life (Orenstein & Lewis, 2022). McLeod (2018) found that the antisocial or prosocial behaviors of one’s peers vastly altered the way one identified which caused difficulty for the adolescent to identify the behaviors they deemed important or central to their identity.

Kohlberg’s (1977) stages of moral development were based on three stages occurring in pairs throughout an individual’s development beginning in childhood. According to Liu (2014), character education and Kohlberg’s moral development worked in tandem as a part of the developmental process. The moral progression furthered the
belief that schools were the logical and ideal placement for character and moral education in society (Seider et al., 2017). Henke (2017) stated that “morality developed in elementary is refined during adolescence and is aided by coursework focused on current ethical issues and opportunities to participate in their school, local, and global communities” (p. 31). Educational institutions that proactively addressed tomorrow’s issues for the children in education were a valuable service of character and moral education programs (Riekie et al., 2017 & Seider et al., 2017). Malin et al. (2017) found character improvement and a correlation between purpose, gratitude, compassion, and grit, increased the adolescents’ expressions of each. The development of a student over the course of their educational career paralleled the development of the student from childhood, through adolescence, into adulthood as a member of society. Schools built students’ sense of well-being and strength of character while simultaneously addressing risky behaviors through character education endeavors (White & Shin, 2017).

**Goals of Character, Moral, and Social Emotional Learning**

Character education was a system and process that was structured around the premise that there was to be a transfer of knowledge and skills to future citizens (Nadelson et al., 2019). The specific skills in character, moral or social learning were to be tailored by the location of the educational institution and the governing bodies of the educational process in that location (Purwastuti & Sugiyo, 2017). Chorrojprasert (2020) found that learners were affected by a myriad of other factors that included but were not limited to curriculum and instruction. Twenty-first century learners were dynamic and multifaceted; taking the whole person approach to education meant to encourage the growth of prosocial characteristics to develop prosocial members for our communities.
(Purwastuti & Sugiyo, 2017). Kasicki and Ozhan (2021) found a relationship between SEL skills and introspective prosocial term identification such as “happy” and “hopeful” simultaneously acted as a deterrent to negative reported emotionality. Chorrojprasert (2020) specified that the community expectation of knowledge included learning and character development. SEL programs supported the development and growth of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills and prosocial characteristics within student populations (Paolini, 2020). Cultivating students to be supportive and productive within society by addressing and encouraging positive character traits was the task of schools (Nadelson et al., 2019). Greenberg et al. (2017) found that SEL programs increased confidence, engagement, grades, and test scores while reducing negative behaviors. Krek (2020) found that through the use of moral education schools could have structured prosocial programs with the goal of reducing or eliminating negative aggressive behaviors. Peterson (2020) and Jerome and Kisby (2019) explained that looking beyond the needs of the individual to be attuned to others while connecting to the larger social and political community, was a goal of developing character for a prosocial member of society. The goals of character education as explained by McGrath et al. (2020) were determined by the broad behavioral outcomes and not by the process of teaching prosocial character.

Purwastuti & Sugiyo (2017) identified schools to be the place to teach and train citizens to become moral, productive, and prosocial members of their communities. Bialik et al. (2015) stated that “since ancient times, the goal of education had been to cultivate students who become successful learners, contributed to their communities, and served society as ethical citizens” (p.1). Rice (n.d.) illustrated that the needs for teaching
and molding character in schools of the United States has been an evolving part of education since the inception of the country. White and Shin’s (2020) research found that schools were called upon to promote certain values as individuals, communities, and societies strive for social justice, equity, and well-being. The values, morals, and trait-based characteristics embedded into the schools’ academic processes were addressing the needs of the stakeholders and communities.

Character education allowed schools to formally clarify and intentionally teach skills for both school and life success (Diggs & Akos, 2016). According to Clement & Bollinger (2017), there was a tremendous demand for insights to cultivate character in today’s educational process. Marini (2017) found that building the character of a student can be integrated into all subjects. Embedding the ideals, values, and traits to support the prosocial development of the students was vital to the immediate and future generations of the identified society (Sugiyo, 2017). Educational institutions were tasked with creating a future generation of leaders and cultivating their character and academic growth (Komalasari & Saripudin, 2017).

**Institutional Roles in Character, Moral, and Social Emotional Learning**

Schools had increasing responsibilities to their stakeholders to embed prosocial character traits to serve their communities academically and socially (Anwar, 2015; Greenberg et al., 2017; Haniah & Setiwan, 2020). According to Temiz (2019) schools have historically had the responsibility of including character development, stating “character education and education are the same age” (p.131). Bialik et al. (2015) assert that an ancient and persistent goal of education has been to create prosocial students that later become ethical and contributing members of their societies. Educational institutions
were a strategic choice for nations to address and remediate various societal needs (Anwar, 2015; Santoso et al., 2020). Lapsley and Woodbury (2016) stated that “moral character is omnipresent in every instructional encounter but absent from teaching standards” (p.195). Character education had sparked an increased interest globally and teachers were seeking guidance for the practice (Harrison et al., 2018). According to the research findings of Temiz (2019), school districts should have evaluated the needs of the student population and community, identified traits, and encouraged character development through learning opportunities. The school was expected to be a place of comprehensive education, skills education, and character development (Santoso et al., 2020 & McGrath, 2018). Demirel et al. (2016) asserted that schools had a vital responsibility to students and communities to teach academics and character education to benefit society. As explained by Kasicki and Ozhan (2021) “the main objective of today’s contemporary education system and pedagogical practices is to support not only students’ academic achievement but also their well-being and happiness” (p. 1).

Schools carried a responsibility to reinforce the character initiatives and needs of the country (Park, 2017 & Nadelson et al., 2019). Exclusive academic focus without character input “misses the opportunity to use school and school curricula as an obvious vehicle not only to educate for academics, but also to facilitate all-round wellbeing” (Gush & Greeff, 2018, p. 1). The goals of the educational process were the transfer of academic knowledge and societal norms simultaneously (Pijanowski & Lasater, 2020). Elias (2018) concluded that the need for character education was severe, and schools needed to altruistically embed character and address the social needs of the students. As
stated by Beckley et al. (2018), curricula necessitated an approach that included designs and strategies to teach morals.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Public Law 114–95, was passed in 2015 and replaced the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation and amended the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. ESSA continued the utilization of standardized testing and Title I funding to schools but also included schoolwide behavioral interventions that were designed to positively redirect and address negative student behaviors (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). Educational entities were responsible for the implementation of behavioral wellness programs as well as the social emotional learning of the students (National Association of School Psychologists, n.d.). According to the ESSA legislation, schools were tasked with including universal preventative measures for students with social-emotional needs (National Association of School Psychologists, n.d.). The Centers for Disease Control (2016) identified school-based proactive interventions for all students at all grade levels to be taught positive social skills to reduce negative behaviors and negative academic consequences for students. The Pennsylvania Statutes Title 24 P.S. Education § 15-1502-E. (1949), commonly referred to as the Pennsylvania School Code, directed and outlined the following traits as a part of approved character education programs in Pennsylvania: trustworthiness, responsibility, fairness, caring, citizenship, service ethic, and community outreach.

The reasons and methods for employing character education as an integral part of the educational process were as varied and diverse as were the ways in which all educational institutions implemented the inclusion of these vital traits (McGrath, 2018;
Pattaro, 2016). In addition to potentially increasing prosocial behaviors, character and moral education were used as a proactive deterrent for antisocial behaviors (Warnick & Schribner, 2020). Waters et al. (2020) concluded that there needed to be prevention efforts in schools to reduce bullying behaviors, increase school performance, and support students’ mental health. School disciplinary techniques were nearly identical to what they were decades ago and needed to evolve to include SEL. Warnick and Scribner’s (2020) study asserted that disciplinary techniques were out of step with the developmental ethos of education and believed that schools should be designing moral communities to address the behavioral concerns in schools. Schools were responsible for addressing the need for character traits to be disseminated throughout instruction (Haniah & Setiwan, 2020). Character development used as a proactive approach to improving prosocial traits also addressed the antisocial behaviors of students by reducing negative disciplinary behaviors (Haniah & Setiwan, 2020). White and Shin (2017) found that character improvement and development in schools naturally redirected negative behaviors preemptively. Krek et al. (2019) found that school leadership supported the systematic approach of moral education and then also managed the analysis of the programs to make valuable adjustments for the continuation of the endeavor to reach moral program goals.

**Educator Roles in Character, Moral, and Social Emotional Education**

Teachers had a crucial role in the planning and delivery of the character education traits, values, and morals that were embedded into their curriculum (Yolcu & Sari, 2018). A teacher’s role in character education was invaluable because they interacted with students the most within a school system (Sudirman, 2019). According to ESSA (2015) teachers had a responsibility to incorporate social-emotional learning into their lessons.
Teachers had dual roles within schools as mentors and role models tasked with skill-building in the school and community (Lerner, 2018 & Santoso et al., 2020). As well as having a crucial role in the character education process, teachers also became the face of the programs, as role models (Berkowitz, 2017; Turan & Ulutas, 2016 & Sudarmika et al., 2020). Covaleskie (2016) explained that what we tell children about morality and moral belief matters less than what we show them. Zurqoni et al. (2018) asserted that the integration of character education as a part of the teaching and learning process was initiated by the good role model of the teachers. Berkowitz et al. (2017) emphasized that the adults within the school building should have been role modeling to provide examples and to have been examples of good character. Margerison & Ravenscroft, 2020 & Sudarmika et al., 2020) explained the role of the teacher as a facilitator enabled students to access personal and social developmental opportunities within the learning experience. Character education was important for the social development of the individuals forming the next generation (Abdi, 2018 & Sugiyo & Purwastuti, 2017). Teachers that reported higher levels of efficacy in teaching, classroom management, and student engagement also reported higher levels of student success in SEL (Poulou, 2017). However, educators had different views and understandings in regard to learning and imparting the traits of character to their students (Julia & Supriyadi, 2018).

Nadelson et al. (2019) posited that educators needed evidence-based strategies to teach positive character traits to their students. Character education programs needed to be formalized and taught to educators to improve the uniformity of the character curriculum embedding, implementation, and evaluation of the character process (Nadelson et al., 2019; Julia & Supriyadi, 2018). Turan and Ulutas (2016) found that
teachers needed the support of educational leaders to effectively provide character education.

The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) had standards for teachers that required educator conduct to include morality, integrity, and ethical behavior on the part of the teacher (Pijankowski, 2017). Harper (2020) explained that character education encouraged a supportive relationship between students and adults in education. Educators held a unique position in society to prepare the child both academically and cognitively to meet the challenges of the current day as well as the days ahead (Peterson, 2020; Haniah & Setiwan, 2020; Varner, 2019).

**The Implementation of Character, Moral, and Social Emotional Education**

The approaches and ideals that supported the cultivation of a prosocial student, and later citizen, were as varied as the implementation and potential for including character education within school settings (Abdi, 2018; Covaleskie, 2016. Jerome & Kisby, 2019). According to the research of Berkowitz et al. (2017), schools used their identified subcategories of “rhetoric, allocation of resources, school climate, structural prioritization, and leadership” (p. 41) to guide the planning and implementation process of character education programming. The goal of character and social-emotional education was to create students that were both morally and cognitively competent using educational institutions with each teacher creating embedded learning of traits, values, and morals into their lessons (Seider et al., 2017). What Works Clearinghouse (2014) suggested a focus on intrapersonal and interpersonal skills transfer for students to learn how to understand themselves and others through character education in the classroom setting. Jerome and Kisby (2019) asserted that it was important for character to be taught
with an inclusive approach because society is not an individual and character education should reflect the needs of society. Peterson (2020) found that character development should occur in social contexts and have been taught relationally through the curriculum.

Social emotional learning through character education could have been a seamless part of the learning process throughout the school day by using various techniques (What Works Clearinghouse, 2014 & Marini, 2017). Yeager (2017) found skills models of SEL and character education were more effective in younger children and adolescents. Purwastuti and Sugiyo (2017) found that character education integration required teachers to be creative and innovative in their planning and execution of prosocial emotional and character education inclusion into their curriculum and lessons. Anwar (2015) noted that the effective approaches to teaching character and prosocial traits required repetition for a trait to become habituated for the student. Chowdhury (2016) found that multiple teaching techniques such as role-playing, drama, simulation, educational games, debate, discussion, projects, group work, and interviews were a few of the ways to incorporate positive emotional development into lesson planning and implementation. Komalasari and Saripudin (2017), found that students that had utilized value-based interactive multimedia increased character development significantly when measured against their control group peers. Turan et al. (2016) studied storybooks, as character education tools, and found that they were a successful tool for teaching prosocial traits. Septiani et al. (2020) stated one way of teaching and encouraging character development in students was to use the historical figures studied in the curriculum. Using history to highlight examples of courageous, kind, and pro-social actions within societies was another way to encourage character development through the
curriculum (Septiani et al., 2020). The subject of history allowed schools to embed and then analyze the character of the various figures to encourage the growth of the students while simultaneously teaching about the history of the world, country, or region (Sopacua, 2020). All classes, including the arts, had the ability to utilize their curriculum and their teaching to include prosocial learning. According to Varner (2020), music classes offered the educator and student opportunities to teach and reinforce social and emotional development through improvisation, song, and the utilization of instruments.

Outside of the traditional academic classroom setting as a part of the school day experience, playgrounds, gymnasiums, and recess times were also places to encourage character development, skills, and engagement through the authentic use of prosocial character traits (Agans et al., 2018 & Truglio, 2019). Character education had also been used in physical education classes due to the use of interaction, cooperation, communication, and discipline within the coursework (Tutkin et al., 2017). Lynch et al. (2016) measured character education and its impact on the adolescent character and found that engagement was the key factor to increase the factors of “cheerfulness, kindness, and intentional self-regulation” (p.81). The findings of Lynch et al. (2016) encouraged teachers to be mindful of both the character and engagement levels of each lesson to achieve positive character building for the students. The results of Sudarmika et al. (2020) showed that interactions within the learning environment between students, peers, and educators increased prosocial character traits and were superior to lecture and didactic lessons that included character building components. Odebode (2020) found that educators had reported successful reductions of behavioral infractions due to utilizing
moral education, reinforcement for positive behaviors, role modeling by staff, and scaffolding support systems for student interventions.

Schools had a large responsibility in character education to provide role models, interventions, habituation, and reinforcement of the identified prosocial characteristics (Zurqoni et al., 2018). School systems around the globe were utilizing the power of the educational system to reach the young members of their communities. In Indonesia, educators were rewriting civics texts and lessons to help shape the character of the student body (Komalasari & Saripudin, 2018). In the United States, schools in California were using technology and video games, such as Minecraft, to aid in the teaching of their character education programs (Javorsky, 2019).

One learning system, studied by Bertrand and Namukasa (2020), that was effective in increasing emotional development was called Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM). Using a collaborative approach to learning had both academic and character benefits for the students. One outcome of creating collaborative STEAM assignments was the students displayed character growth by being able to explore, design, and complete work using their strengths to aid the group. Those students would later use the transferrable skills to solve different problems (Bertrand & Namukasa, 2020). Increasing self-efficacy while working collaboratively was one of the many ways educational institutions and programs encouraged the development of prosocial traits and interpersonal skills that were paramount to the emotional and cognitive development of a 21st-century citizen.

The action research concept created by educational reformer John Dewey in the 1920’s and 30’s and later used by social psychologist Kurt Lewin in the 1940’s was a
framework to include, execute, and evaluate the process of program implementation (Vengadasalam et al., 2018). According to the research of Dewey (1938), Lewin, and application research by Vengadasalam et al. (2018) analysis, planning, process, and measurement were vital for educators and students using the programs created to increase prosocial behaviors within the school environment.

**The Potentials for Character, Moral, and Social Emotional Education Programs**

Character education had the potential to improve social interactions, behaviors and future societal placement for the students being taught morals, values, and character traits that were important to society (Curren, 2017). The impact of the increases in the prosocial characteristics for those students is yet to be known as they age into a society that will need them to be a productive member of the economy and social structure (Diggs & Akos, 2016). In addition to increasing prosocial behaviors, Hoedel & Lee (2018) found that the efficacy studies of their character education implementation program showed a significant reduction of negative behavioral outcomes. According to the National Association of School Psychologists (n.d.), “ESSA acknowledges the direct link between students’ mental and behavioral wellness and overall positive student achievement, school climate, high school graduation rates, and the prevention of risky behaviors and disciplinary incidents” (p.1).

As explained in the findings of Diggs and Akos’ (2016) embedding and utilizing character education resulted in an increase in student life satisfaction, efficacy, and hope. Kim et al. (2018) found character education implemented in high poverty districts improved both the students’ behavior and the career satisfaction of the teachers. Goldys (2016) asserted that character should not be taught in isolation but infused throughout the
According to Zurqoni et al. (2018), character education played an important role in shaping well-qualified human resources. Schools were tasked with building and creating the next generation of the community and the workforce and character education was a vital part of that process. According to McGrath (2018), character education was cultivating one’s prosocial and positive cognitive and behavioral attributes to benefit the person and their community. SEL programs that built character also supported academic learning and engaged citizenship (Lerner, 2019 and Jones & Doolittle, 2017).

Creating a prosocial and culturally aware citizen for the next generation was an overarching goal of the educational process (Pijanowski & Lasater, 2020). Social movements in the United States made it clear that U.S. education should include more than standard-driven academics (Harper, 2020). Teaching about tolerance and justice was a part of the moral education process and it encouraged critical thinking skills (Goldys, 2016). Underlying all interactions that lead to or result from conflict was the failure to recognize value from others’ perspectives (Ergen, 2019). Teaching that each person has value and recognizing that encouraged a thoughtful and reflective response in dealing with the difficulty and adversity that one faced in school and in life can be a part of the CMSEL. Covaleskie (2016) explained that respect was an invaluable part of moral diversity and life experience. Thompson et al. (2020) found that there were legitimate responses to undesired behavior that incorporated moral lessons for students.

Encouraging the prosocial traits and morals of character education set the students in good stead to become the adults of society tomorrow (Hoedel & Lee, 2018 and Jeynes, 2016).
The immediate and future benefits of SEL found by Wallender et al. (2020) illustrated that SEL programs developed prosocial tools that promote resiliency, workplace, and relationship skills that cultivated a productive citizen beyond the classroom. Khazanchi et al. (2021) identified that the skills taught in character and SEL programs increased responsible decision making, social awareness, self-management, and encouraged prosocial growth of the individual. Without the tether of morals, values, and prosocial character traits, the ever-changing structure of the world could create problems of interpersonal communication, insecurity, and violence (Yolcu & Sari, 2018).

Through emotional education and the teaching of prosocial skills during this time in the world, the skills were invaluable for a free and fair world (Beckley et al., 2018). The global era of technology had impacted the upcoming generations and the schools needed to innovate to focus on character and moral action for the good of the global community (Isthharoh & Indartono, 2018). Wallender et al. (2020) identified that SEL programs develop tools that promote resiliency, workplace, and relationship skills that cultivated a productive citizen beyond the classroom. The 21st century educational process focused on the whole learner and enhanced the academic and emotional connectedness that student had to the school, community, country, and world (Bialik, 2015).

**The Global Perspective of Character, Moral, and Social Emotional Learning**

Throughout the world, there had been an acknowledgment of the need for character education as a guide for the generations of the 21st century (Nadelson et al., 2019; Temiz, 2016 & Abdi, 2018). The United Nations (2019) had identified that educational institutions around the world should strive to cultivate peace by teaching
global citizenship. Pattaro (2016) found that international character education values sought similar behavioral and academic outcomes through the academic inclusion of morals, values, and character.

In many nations, schools had taken on the responsibility of cultivating and implementing programs that address the moral, trait, and social needs of their citizenry (Bialik et al., 2015; Demirel, 2016). In Jamaica, where crime rates are high and antisocial behaviors are common, character education within the school system was used to intercept these issues (Dempster, 2020). In Britain, the government had invested millions into educational grants for character education and resilience education programs (Curren, 2017). The British Department of Education had given financially to schools that had instilled the lessons of mental toughness and grit into their teaching and student body (Bates, 2019). In India, schools were tasked with social change and had begun addressing the collectivist needs in the formation and use of character education (Abdi, 20108). Indonesia created an educational initiative to spread character education throughout the curricular planning and implementation process called “Indonesia Vision for 2005-2025” (Septiani, 2020). In 2015, the South Korean government introduced the Character Education Law, which was created to secure the character values that are in the South Korean constitution, to develop students into adults that will contribute to society, in part, with the identified prosocial traits (Park, 2017). Character education continued to be developed, studied, and implemented in educational institutions in Indonesia (Julia & Supriyadi, 2018). In Germany, the academic curriculum included and embedded the tenets of democracy and character education (Budde & Weuster, 2017). According to
Demirel et al. (2016) “all nations regard education as an effective instrument to have good characters” (p. 1630).

**The Barriers of Character Education**

Teacher preparation programs focused on education and psychological concepts of development but were lacking focus on the character and moral facets of the teaching process which resulted in a lack of preparedness in those entering the field of education (Lapsley & Woodbury, 2016). Yolcu and Sari (2018) studied teacher efficacy and found that less experienced teachers reported low self-efficacy in teaching character. Card (2017) found that the lack of continuity in the terms, the various identified traits, the differentiated approaches and the lack of uniformed measurement of character education created a significant difficulty in using psychometrics to determine program strengths and needs. Milner and Delale-O’Connor (2016) stated that the lack of empirical evidence created difficulty in clearly defining the appropriate characteristics and subsequently delegating the responsibility of teaching character traits to teachers. An additional concern regarding the inclusion of character in the classroom was identified by Robertson-Kraft and Austin (2015), they found that the majority of teachers in their study taught character as a mastery skill which reduced the potential for higher-level thinking skills, such as application and synthesis of character traits.

**Summary**

The inclusion of character education, moral education, and social emotional learning created a focus on prosocial traits within the educational process. These program initiatives were needed in schools and societies to cultivate students’ prosocial traits and characteristics for immediate and future success. The world was looking to educational
systems to teach children academics as well as social skills. Thompson et al. (2020) found that schools using proactive CMSEL programs have reduced negative behaviors and increased prosocial behaviors of the student population. As public-serving institutions the schools needed to meet the challenge of whole student development within the original academic system of education (Covaleskie, 2016). Educators needed to be prepared to teach and model character, moral, and social emotional education to support the prosocial development of their pupils. Within the school systems, the benefits reported due to CMSEL teaching and focus included emotional improvement of students’ positive emotionality (Kasicki & Ozhan, 2021). The benefits of the CMSEL program were immediate and had far reaching potential to benefit the future of the students that learn emotional and character skills that benefited their interactions throughout their lives (Paolini, 2020). The identified benefits for the socioemotional future of the students and their global interactions as a part of the citizenry were significant to each student’s future and the future of the world.
Chapter Three- Methods and Procedures

Introduction

Character education, moral education, and social emotional learning programs (CMSEL) and initiatives have been shown to increase prosocial traits, skills, and interactions within the student population (Hatchimonji et al., 2022). Utilizing CMSEL as a part of the learning process within schools decreases negative behavioral incidents (Haniah & Setiwan, 2020). In 21st century society, schools were increasingly called upon to develop and expand upon student character, moral, and social emotional skills as a part of the educational process (Abdi, 2018; Anwar, 2015; Nadelson et al., 2019; Santoso et al., 2020). Thus, the onus was placed on the school systems to teach and incorporate CMSEL as a proactive behavioral approach. The common goals of CMSEL programs and initiatives included increasing prosocial skills, reducing negative social interactions, and reducing disciplinary incidents (Thompson et al., 2020).

This tripartite qualitative study was designed to understand the perceptions, implementations, and observations of CMSEL within rural Pennsylvania elementary schools. The first question of the study was to understand the teachers’ perceptions of the need and value of CMSEL within the schools. The second question of the study was designed to measure the frequency of utilization of CMSEL by teachers. The third question addressed in the study was teachers’ recognition of CMSEL, as a determined by observation of student’s prosocial behaviors and negative behaviors.

This study focused on various components of character education, moral learning, and social emotional learning within elementary schools in rural Pennsylvania. Each of the teachers within the three regional school districts was asked to voluntarily participate
in the study by completing a survey designed to measure their perceived value and need for utilizing character, moral, and social emotional learning. The frequency of implementation was measured in research question two, to measure the frequency of use of CMSEL by the teachers, including teaching, reviewing, and reiterating the CMSEL skills and traits with their student populations. Lastly, to address the third research question, teachers were asked about their recognition and observation of the effects of the CMSEL lessons on student’s prosocial and negative behaviors. The procedures utilized for data collection were surveys, open-ended response questions, and interviews. The study was comprised of 43 questions, each designed to answer each of the three research questions for this study.

The data collected was utilized to answer the following research questions.

1. Do teachers value incorporating character, moral, and social emotional learning into their lessons?

2. How often are teachers implementing character, moral, and social emotional learning?

3. Do teachers recognize character, moral, and social emotional learning increases student prosocial behaviors and reduces negative behaviors?

**Setting**

The study was focused on three rural Pennsylvania school districts that are regionally close in location. The households and local economies of the rural Pennsylvania schools were diverse in career and vocation. The variation of employment included agricultural production, various professional positions, service industry positions, and manual labor positions that comprised the local workforce. The school
distributors varied financially and had different budget allotments. In the 2022-2023 school year, the schools ranged in yearly budget from 54.9 million dollars to 44.1 million dollars (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2023). In the 2020-2021 school year, the average daily member (ADM) calculation or per-student expenditure amount was similar across the three schools. The lowest expenditure per student was $9,968., the median $10,733., and the highest amount of money spent per student was $11,813. (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2021).

**Subjects**

The 36 teachers of the three districts that agreed to participate in the study teach grades kindergarten through fifth grade, which will be identified as “elementary” throughout the remainder of this study. The subjects varied in career longevity between new to the profession and 21 plus years of experience. Of the 36 teachers that volunteered to participate in the study, the entirety of the population completed the survey questions, 30 completed the open-ended questions, and three people volunteered to be interviewed as a part of the study.

**Instruments**

The research methodologies for data collection in this qualitative study were survey, open-ended questions, and an optional interview. The survey questions were shared and accessed using the online format of Google Forms (see Appendix A). The survey questions were designed by the researcher and the response measurement was a graduated response option or Likert scale (1932) to collect participant responses. The total survey question number was 34. The first two questions were demographic questions, asking which grade the educator teaches and then asking for length of the
educator’s teaching career. Survey questions three through 12 and the open-ended question number 35 addressed research question one, focusing on teachers’ perception of the value of CMSEL. The survey questions thirteen through twenty-three and the open-ended question 36 were designed to measure question two of the research study, how frequently were teachers implementing CMSEL. The third research question was addressed in survey questions twenty-four through thirty-four and in the open-ended question 37. At the conclusion of the survey and open-ended questions, each participant was requested to complete an optional extension interview to expand upon their survey and open-ended responses. The interview questions (see Appendix B) were designed in pairs, two questions for each research question. The first two questions of the interview, 38-39, collected additional data for research question one. Questions 40-41 sought to collect information for research question two. The interview questions 42-43 addressed research question number three of the study. Each of the elementary teachers within the three participating school districts was emailed to request their voluntary participation in the study.

The first section of the survey evaluated the teachers’ perceived value of incorporating CMSEL into their classrooms. The second section of the survey measured the frequency of implementation of the CMSEL skills, traits, learning, and characteristics as a part of their classroom teaching. The third section of the survey focused on the teachers’ observations and recognitions of CMSEL increasing prosocial behaviors and reducing the negative behaviors of students.

The survey was estimated to take approximately 20 minutes for each participant to complete. The survey information was collected anonymously. After the completion of
the 34 survey questions and the three open-ended questions, the participants were invited
to participate in a video interview that was comprised of six additional questions. Each of
the interview questions were designed in pairs of two, 38-39, 40-41, and 42-43 to allow
subjects to expand upon their survey and open-ended responses and addressed each of the
research questions respectively. The video interviews were conducted using Zoom
conferencing software, recorded using the Screencast-o-Matic program, and then stored
on a locked and password-protected zip drive. The video interview did not request
personal or identifying information, the email addresses collected to schedule and hold
the interviews will be held on a secure password-protected zip drive. All recorded footage
will remain confidential and anonymous. All materials will be destroyed after five years.

Validity and Reliability

The survey and interview questions were verified for validity and reliability
through a professional expert review panel. The questions were given to the field experts
to review and test, ensuring that the questions focused on and measured the intended
information. Determining validity was critical to collecting information that accurately
measured the intended data.

The first step was the field experts’ review of the survey and interview questions
to determine if the survey questions appropriately measure teacher’s value of
incorporating CMSEL into their lessons, the frequency of implementation of the CMSEL
lessons, and teachers’ recognition of the CMSEL lessons to increase prosocial behavior
and reduce negative behavior. All questions were revised based on the suggestions and
input of the panel of field experts.
Procedure

Permission from each of the participating school district’s Superintendents was requested through a formal letter (see Appendix A) to request the district to approve the kindergarten through fifth grade teachers’ voluntary participation in the study for completion of study sections one and two. The researcher then received a letter of approval (see Appendix B) granting permission for the teacher participation and the data collection from the Superintendent which was contingent upon the review and approval of the Immaculata University Research Ethics and Review Board (see Appendix C). Upon approval by Immaculata University’s Research Ethics and Review Board, email communication with a link to the study was then sent to the kindergarten through fifth grade teachers of the three participating school districts.

The teachers did not receive a physical letter; all communication was sent via email requesting the teacher’s participation in the survey (see Appendix D). The email communication letter sent to the teachers explained that the survey and open-ended questions would be anonymous and confidential (see Appendix E). The survey program utilized to collect the survey and open-ended responses was Google Forms and all information was collected anonymously. The survey and open-ended questions were designed to collect data to address the three research questions (see Appendix F). The educators that chose to participate in the extension interview, were individually contacted upon completion of the survey through their shared email addresses. To ensure the privacy and anonymity of the respondent’s survey and open-ended questions if they agreed to participate in the interview process the subjects were directed to a second
Google Form via a link on the survey Google Form to share a contact email address to schedule and later participate in the interview.

The interviews were held on the video meeting program Zoom and recorded using the Screencast-o-Matic program. All participants were informed that the interview was recorded and then stored securely on a zip drive. The subjects were also informed that their responses will remain confidential and anonymous (see Appendix G). The interview questions collected additional data for the three research questions of the study (see Appendix H). The surveys and interviews did not collect personal information from the subjects, the respondents will be anonymous. The data collected was stored on a secure zip drive without indicating the identity of the respondents. The initial segment of the survey was an informed consent protocol and the first question required that the subjects read and understood the informed consent and agreed to participate in the study. Within the three school districts that were a part of the study a total of 36 teachers volunteered to participate in the study. Each of the 36 participants answered the survey questions, 30 answered the open-ended questions, and three of the participants agreed to be interviewed for the study. The survey was available through the Google Forms link for completion for four weeks from the date of the initial participation request.

Design of the Study

The first section of the survey was designed to answer the first research question by collecting and measuring perceptions via a Likert (1932) scale of agreement and one open-ended question. The second part of the survey was comprised of questions and responses based on a frequency Likert scale response to measure how often the teachers were employing or implementing CMSEL within their classrooms and included one
open-ended question designed to focus on the second research question of the study. The third section of the survey measured teachers’ recognitions and observations of the effectiveness of CMSEL on increasing the prosocial behavior of students and reducing negative behaviors of students by asking the subjects to use a Likert scale of reporting and one open-ended question.

**Section I- Value and Necessity of CMSEL**

The survey and interview questions three through 12 and open-ended question number 35 focused on measuring teachers’ perceptions and beliefs about the necessity and value of teaching each component of the CMSEL program. The answers to questions three through 12 were collected utilizing a Likert (1932) scale which the teachers self-reported their perceptions and beliefs regarding the need and value of CMSEL using a “strongly disagree, disagree, agree,” and “strongly agree” range of responses and included one open-ended question. Respondents are not offered other reporting methodologies within the survey formatting (see Appendix A) but are offered an open-ended response for question 35 which collects additional information for the first research question. Interview questions 38 and 39 were also designed to collect information to address research question one.

The survey and open-ended questions 13 through 23 measured the frequency of implementation of the CMSEL lessons and focused on answering research question number two. Questions 13 through 23 were based on a Likert (1932) scale of reporting. The respondents were given five options of response for each question, the options are “never, infrequently, sometimes, often, or daily”. The results of the survey and interview questions 13 through 23 measured and collect information to answer the second study
question. Learning about the frequency of implementation of the CMSEL goals will measure the utilization of character, moral, and social emotional learning. There will also be question number 36, which was open-ended for the respondents to answer that addresses research question two. Interview questions 40 and 41 were written to expand upon the data collection for research question two.

Lastly, the survey evaluated teachers’ perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the CMSEL lessons through observation of an increase in students’ prosocial behaviors and/or reduction of the student’s negative behaviors. Questions 24 through 34 addressed the third research question of the study through a Likert scale (1932) the response options were “strongly disagree, disagree, agree,” and “strongly agree”. There was also one open-ended question, number 37, for the respondents to complete that collected additional data for research question three. Questions number 42 and 43 were created as interview questions for the participants to learn more about research question three.

Each participant was given the opportunity to continue the conversation investigating the three study research questions by participating in an online interview. The interview included two questions from each of the three research questions from this study, for a total of six questions (see Appendix B). The interview was a voluntary extension or an additional technique of data collection to answer the study questions. The participants were informed that the information from the interview would remain anonymous and confidential. The interview utilized the Zoom online meeting program and was recorded using the Screencast-o-Matic program, and lastly, stored on a secure zip drive. Each interview response was recorded and included as a part of chapter four.
Data Analysis

The data for this study will be collected using the three methodologies of survey, open-ended response, and participant interviews. The first two questions of the survey asked the subject’s demographic information regarding the length of their teaching career and the elementary grade they taught. The survey utilized a Likert (1932) scale variation of graduated response choice for questions two through 34. Survey questions three through 12 were designed to collect data for the first research question and utilized a graduated Likert (1932) scale response. Response options varied from “strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree”. The survey questions 13 through 23 focused on collecting information to address research question two, the responses used a Likert (1932) scale of reporting with the response options of “never, infrequently, sometimes, often, daily”. Questions 24 through 34 measured information for the third research question and the Likert (1932) scale options offered for response were “strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree”. The open-ended questions, 35 through 37 each addressed one research question respectively. The interview questions were designed in sets of two, totaling six to address each of the research questions, questions 38 and 39 focusing on research question one, questions 40 and 41 designed to collect additional information for research question number two, and questions 42 and 43 were asked to collect additional data for research question three. The participant responses were recorded verbatim as shared by the subjects. If the subjects agreed to participate in the interviews the format for the meeting used an online meeting program, Zoom. The data collection for each question was categorized and included as research data in chapter four.
Summary

The purpose of this study was to measure the teachers’ perceptions of the need and value of character education, moral education, and social emotional learning (CMSEL) in elementary schools in rural Pennsylvania. The study measured the teachers’ value of character, moral, and social emotional learning, the frequency of implementation of CMSEL, and teachers’ recognition of the character, moral, and social emotional lessons based on their observations of students’ prosocial and negative behaviors. The processes and procedures explained in this chapter were utilized to answer the three focus questions of the study. The results of this data collection and research will be described and analyzed in Chapter Four.
Chapter Four- Results

Introduction

The purpose of this tripartite qualitative study was to evaluate elementary school teachers’ perceptions of character, moral, and social emotional learning (CMSEL). All data collected through this study was used to measure the elementary educators’ perceptions, utilization, and observation of CMSEL within their teaching experience.

This chapter will report the data collected for each survey, open-ended, and interview question. The study included three school districts and six elementary-level schools. Within three school districts and six buildings, a total of 36 kindergarten through fifth-grade teachers participated in this study. The participants were asked two demographic questions, the first question asked them to identify which grade they teach kindergarten through fifth grade and the second question asked about their years of teaching experience. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 illustrate the responses to the two demographic questions. The participants completed a total of 34 survey questions utilizing graduated Likert scales for subjects to indicate their responses. The questions also included three open-ended questions (35,36,37), each question addressing one of the research questions. The extension interview was the last portion of the data collection, which was comprised of six total questions (38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43), two questions for each of the three research questions.

The total number of participants was 36 and each participant completed the entirety of the Likert-scale survey questions. Each participant was assured confidentiality and anonymity and to protect the subjects there was no personal information collected in the survey or open-ended portions of the study. The Google Form utilized to collect their
survey and open-ended responses did not collect nor save any identifying information of the respondents. If the participants volunteered to participate in the optional interview to continue the discourse of their perceptions of CMSEL they were directed to click on a second Google Form like. The utilization of the second Google Form for participants to share their email information was designed to protect the anonymity of the subjects’ survey and open-ended responses. The three participants that volunteered to participate in the interview were contacted utilizing the email address provided by the respondent. The interview was conducted via Zoom and the Zoom program did not collect nor save any identifying information to further protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the subjects.

Compilation of Data

Participant Demographics. The participants in this study were asked two demographic questions. The first question asked the teachers what elementary grades they were teaching in the 2022-2023 school year. The results were four kindergarten teachers (11.1%), eight first grade teachers (22.2%), six second grade teachers (16.7%), zero teachers of the third grade, eight fourth grade teachers (22.2%), and ten fifth grade teachers (27.8%). The second demographic question asked the respondents how many years they have been elementary school teachers. Four of the participants (11.1%) were in the first five years of their career, four of the participants (11.1%) reported being in the sixth to tenth year of their careers, eight of the teachers (22.2%) were within their 11th through 15th year of teaching, 10 of the educator respondents (27.8%) were within years 16 to 20 of their career, additionally ten of the teachers (27.8%) had 21 plus years of elementary experience as educators.
Table 4.1  
Demographic Information of Survey Participants  

*What grade do you teach?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8 (22.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6 (16.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>8 (22.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10 (27.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 36. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.*

Table 4.2  
Educator Career Longevity of Survey Participants  

*How many years have you been an elementary teacher?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>8 (22.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>10 (27.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+</td>
<td>10 (27.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 36. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.*
Research Question One: Do teachers value incorporating character, moral, and social emotional learning into their lessons?

Survey Responses. The first research question asked teachers’ perception of value regarding CMSEL was assessed using survey questions three through 12, one open-ended question (35), and two interview questions (38-39). Each of the questions (3-12) were fashioned as statements and the response options were “strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree”. Thirty-six (100%) of the survey respondents answered each of the survey questions pertaining to research question one.

Question three of the survey asked teachers to respond with their agreement level to the statement that there is a need to teach students character, moral, and social emotional lessons throughout the learning day. Four (66.7%) strongly disagreed, zero disagreed, eight (22.2%) agreed, and 24 (66.7%) strongly agreed.

The fourth question asked the teachers to identify if they found value for the students in teaching character, moral, and social emotional learning. Four (11.1%) strongly disagreed, zero disagreed, eight (22.2%) agreed, and 24 (66.7%) strongly agreed.

Question number five requested the teachers to rate their level of agreement that there is value to the teachers in teaching character, moral, and social emotional learning. Four (11.1%) strongly disagreed, zero disagreed, 14 (38.9%) agreed, and 18 (66.7%) strongly agreed.

The sixth question asked teachers to determine their level of agreement stating that character, moral, and social emotional learning has value to the school. Four (11.1%) strongly disagreed, zero disagreed, 10 (27.8%) agreed, and 22 (61.1%) strongly agreed.
Question number seven requested teachers to rate their agreement with the statement that character, moral, and social emotional learning in schools holds value for the communities. Four (11.1%) strongly disagreed, zero disagreed, 10 (27.8%) agreed, and 22 (61.1%) strongly agreed.

Survey question eight queried whether the school is the proper societal placement of character, moral, and social emotional learning. Four (11.1%) strongly agreed, four (11.1%) disagreed, 18 (50%) agreed, and 10 (27.8%) strongly agreed.

The ninth question of the survey requested teachers to express their level of agreement with the statement that there should be a strict implementation of character, moral, and social emotional learning in schools. Two (5.6%) strongly disagreed, four (11.1%) disagreed, 24 (66.7%) agreed, and six (16.7%) strongly agreed.

Question 10 asked the educators if they have observed a need for character, moral, and social emotional learning in schools based on the behaviors of the student populations. Zero of the participants strongly disagreed or disagreed, 18 (50%) agreed and 18 (50%) strongly agreed.

Survey question 11 requested teachers to identify their agreement with the statement that they have observed an increased need for character, moral, and social emotional learning within the student populous. Zero of the participants strongly disagreed or disagreed, 16 (44.4%) agreed and 20 (55.6%) strongly agreed.

Question 12, the last survey question addressing research question number one, asked teachers to rate their agreement with the statement that they have utilized a teachable moment based on an immediate perceived need for character, moral, and social
emotional learning. Zero of the participants strongly disagreed or disagreed, 16 (44.4%) agreed and 20 (55.6%) strongly agreed.

Table 4.3

*Responses to Survey Statements and Questions Pertaining to Research Question One*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement/Question</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. There is a need to teach social emotional, character, and moral lessons within the academic learning day for students.</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24 (66.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. There is value for the students in teaching character, moral, and social emotional learning.</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24 (66.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. There is value for the teachers in teaching character, moral, and social emotional learning.</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18 (50.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. There is value for the communities in teaching character, moral, and social emotional learning.</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22 (61.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. There is value for the communities in teaching character, moral, and social emotional learning.</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22 (61.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. School is the proper societal placement for teaching social emotional, character, and moral development.</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10 (27.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.3 (Continued)

*Responses to Survey Statements and Questions Pertaining to Research Question One*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement/Question</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. There should be a strict implementation of social emotional, character, and moral education in schools today.</td>
<td>2 (5.6%)</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
<td>24 (66.7%)</td>
<td>6 (16.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Based on your experiences as a teacher, do you observe/have you observed a need for social emotional, character, and moral education in the student populations you teach?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18 (50.0%)</td>
<td>18 (50.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Based on your experiences as a teacher, have you observed an increased need in the student population for teaching character, social, and moral development throughout the school process?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16 (44.4%)</td>
<td>20 (55.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Based on your experiences as a teacher, do you find benefit in altering your teaching to address an immediate perceived need for social emotional, character, or moral direction based on student behavior?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16 (44.4%)</td>
<td>20 (55.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 36. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.*
**Open-Ended Question Responses.** Question 35, the open-ended question designed to collect data for research question one, asked the respondents to identify the most valuable traits, terms, or characteristics of character, moral, and social emotional learning for student populations. Thirty of the respondents (83.3%) of the study participants answered this question, while six (16.7%) provided no answer. The participants’ responses contained common terminology and themes that led to an organization of two distinct categories the teachers’ identified through their answers. The first theme was to teach the students CMSEL traits and skills that are other-orientated. The students’ interactions with other people and being other-orientated included skills of concern for others, conflict resolution, teamwork, cooperative learning, friendships, respect for others. The second theme to emerge in the teachers’ answers was teaching students CMSEL to develop their individual prosocial traits and skills. Traits and skills such as, self-esteem, self-respect, self-control, “upstanding not by-standing”, self-love, and resilience. Respondent number 13 shared that “being happy when others succeed, and I can do hard things” were important CMSEL skills to teach and emphasize. Respondent number 23 wrote that “engaging with others, while having self-understanding is valuable to all students”. The results of these questions illustrate the interdependence of the two themes as they are separate ideas, yet they work in tandem to address the social and emotional needs of the students within the classrooms and school systems of the 21st century. CMSEL is recognized, by the participating teachers, as teaching students how to recognize and develop their own internal skills as well as developing skills to interact with others.
Interview Responses. The first interview question that addressed teachers’ perceptions of the value of character, moral, and social emotional learning, research question number one, was question number 38. The question asked the interview participants to share their thoughts on teaching character, moral, and social emotional learning within the school day.

To answer question number 38, Interview respondent number one (IR-1) explained:

I am so old school I constantly teach character. Instead of having a traditional word wall in my classroom, I have a character word wall. I put all my kid’s names around it and we have words about character and as soon as something arises, whether it be positive or negative, we’ll say ok how are we acting is there a word up there or is there a word we should add to what’s going on in our classroom and what’s going on in our community. It takes a village to raise these kids and unfortunately a lot of them don’t get this at home.

To question number 38, Interview Respondent 2 (IR-2) answered:

I feel it is very important. I don’t know that it should be a separate curriculum, but I feel like it needs to be brought into everything we do in the course of our day. It needs to be in all areas not just one select twenty-minute lesson a week.

In answering question number 38, IR-3 explained that teaching CMSEL “is essential and important just like any academic material.”

Question number 39 was the second interview question to collect additional data for research question number one, asking the respondents if they believed it was appropriate for schools to take on the task of socioemotional development in addition to the academic development of the students. IR-1 responded “Wholeheartedly. Like I said,
so much of it does not happen in the home environment that unfortunately, we need to.” IR-2 answered question number 39, in the following way: “I do because we want to raise kind humans. There are so many not-kind humans out there.” IR-3 agreed with schools teaching CMSEL, stating “I do feel that it is appropriate.”

**Research Question Two: How often are teachers implementing character, moral, and social emotional learning?**

**Survey Responses.** The second research question, teachers’ frequency of utilization of CMSEL, was measured in survey questions 13 through twenty-three, one open-ended question (36), and two interview questions (40 and 41). Thirty-six (100%) of the survey respondents answered the survey questions pertaining to research question two. The options for response included “never, infrequently, sometimes, often, daily” to record the frequency of character, moral, and social emotional learning implementation, or occurrences throughout the learning experience.

Survey question number 13 asked the participants to identify how often they intentionally incorporate or focus on prosocial character, moral, or social emotional traits within their lessons. Two of the respondents (5.6%) answered never, two (5.6%) responded that they infrequently, 14 (38.9%) responded sometimes, 12 (33.3%) answered often, and six (16.7%) of the participants said that they intentionally incorporate or focus on prosocial CMSEL traits.

Question number 14 asked the educator respondents to identify how often they unintentionally (authentically) incorporated or focused on prosocial character, moral, or social emotional traits within their lessons. Zero reported never or infrequently, eight (22.2%) of the teachers reported that they sometimes authentically incorporate CMSEL
into their teaching, 18 (50%) of the teachers answered often, and 10 (27.8%) reported incorporating CMSEL traits naturally throughout their teaching.

Survey question number 15 asked the teachers to identify the frequency of utilization for learning materials focused on prosocial (positive) traits, characteristics, and/or skills. Zero of the participants reported never, six (16.7%) teachers responded infrequently, 16 (44.4%) reported sometimes, eight (22.2%) participants answered often, and six of the participants reported daily use learning materials to teach prosocial traits, skills, and characteristics to their students.

The participants were asked, in question number 16, to identify the frequency of lessons that were solely focused on character, social emotional, or moral learning, exclusive of other learning material. Two (5.6%) of the teachers responding to the survey reported never focusing solely on CMSEL, four (11.1%) reported infrequently, 22 (61.1%) answered that they sometimes teach CMSEL exclusively as a part of their lessons, six (16.7%) reported often, and two (5.6%) teach singularly focused CMSEL daily.

Question number 17 requested that the respondents identify how often they reviewed or revisited prosocial (positive) traits, characteristics, and/or skills after the initial learning of the trait or skill. Zero reported never, four (11.1%) responded infrequently, 14 (38.9%) answered sometimes, 14 (38.9%) answered often, and four (11.1%) teachers answered that they review and revisit CMSEL daily.

Survey question 18 asked the teachers how often they assess the effectiveness of the character, social emotional, and moral lessons and adjust the lessons or material based on their perception of need within their class. Four (11.1%) of the teachers that
volunteered to complete the survey responded that they never adjust CMSEL based on their perceptions of the need within the class, six (16.7%) reported infrequently, 12 (33.3%) reported sometimes, 12 (33.3%) responded often, and two (5.6%) said they assess and adjust CMSEL to reflect the needs of the students daily.

Question 19 of the survey asked teachers to report how often they are modeling character, moral, and social emotional skills, and behaviors to the students. Zero participants reported never or infrequently, four (11.1%) answered sometimes, 12 (33.3%) reported often, and 20 (55.6%) teachers answered that they model CMSEL to the students daily.

The participants were asked, in question number 20, to answer the frequency with which they intentionally incorporated social learning, character, or moral learning terminology into their teaching. Zero respondents reported never, two (5.6%) of the participants infrequently intentionally incorporate CMSEL terminology in their teaching, 12 (33.3%) sometimes, 12 (50%) often incorporate terms, and four (11.1%) reported using CMSEL language daily.

Survey question number 21 asked the educators how often they reviewed and enhanced the social emotional, character, or moral education learning in their lessons. Zero of the subjects reported never, two (5.6%) replied infrequently, 22 (61.1%) reported sometimes, eight (22.2%) often, and four (11.1%) review and enhance their lessons to incorporate CMSEL.

Question 22 requested that the respondents answer how often their students request or show a need for lessons in character, social emotional, and moral education. Zero reported never, four (11.1%) reported infrequently, 12 (33.3%) reported sometimes,
10 (27.8%) replied often, and 10 (27.8%) reported that the students display a need or request for CMSEL.

Lastly, survey question number 23, the last Likert style question in the survey, designed to collect data for research question number two, asked the participants to report the frequency of choosing individual traits to focus on that are a part of character, social emotional, or moral development. Zero of the participants responded never, four (11.1%) of the educators responded that they infrequently choose CMSEL traits of focus, 16 (44.4%) reported sometimes, 10 (27.8%) replied often, and six (16.7%) of the participants answered daily.

Table 4.4

Responses to Survey Questions Pertaining to Research Question Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Infrequently</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Daily</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. How often do you intentionally incorporate or focus on prosocial character, moral, or social emotional traits within your lessons?</td>
<td>2 (5.6%)</td>
<td>2 (5.6%)</td>
<td>14 (38.9%)</td>
<td>12 (33.3%)</td>
<td>6 (16.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. How often do you unintentionally (authentically) incorporate or focus on prosocial character, moral, or social emotional traits within your lessons?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8 (22.2%)</td>
<td>18 (50%)</td>
<td>10 (27.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Responses to Survey Questions Pertaining to Research Question Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Infrequently</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Daily</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. How often do you use learning materials to teach prosocial (positive) traits, characteristics, and/or skills to your students?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6 (16.7%)</td>
<td>16 (44.4%)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. How often do you focus on or have a lesson that is solely focused on character, social emotional, or moral learning, exclusive of other learning material?</td>
<td>2 (5.6%)</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
<td>22 (61.1%)</td>
<td>6 (16.7%)</td>
<td>2 (5.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. How often do you review/revisit prosocial (positive) traits, characteristics, and/or skills after the initial learning of the trait or skill?</td>
<td>0 (11.1%)</td>
<td>4 (38.9%)</td>
<td>14 (38.9%)</td>
<td>14 (38.9%)</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. How often do you assess the effectiveness of the character, social emotional, and moral lessons and adjust the lessons or material based on your perception of need within your class?</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
<td>6 (16.7%)</td>
<td>12 (33.3%)</td>
<td>12 (33.3%)</td>
<td>2 (5.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.4 (continued)

**Responses to Survey Questions Pertaining to Research Question Two**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Infrequently</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Daily</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19. How often do you model character, moral, and social emotional skills, and behaviors to the students?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(11.1%)</td>
<td>(33.3%)</td>
<td>(55.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. How often do you intentionally incorporate social learning, character, or moral learning terminology into your teaching?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(5.6%)</td>
<td>(33.3%)</td>
<td>(50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. How often do you review and enhance social emotional, character, or moral education learning in your lessons?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(5.6%)</td>
<td>(61.1%)</td>
<td>(22.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. How often do your students request or show a need for lessons in character, social emotional, and moral education?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(11.1%)</td>
<td>(33.3%)</td>
<td>(27.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. How often do you choose individual traits to focus on within your teaching that are a part of character, social emotional, or moral development?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(11.1%)</td>
<td>(44.4%)</td>
<td>(27.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 36. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.*
**Open-Ended Question Responses.** The second research question which measures the frequency of implementation of character, moral, and social emotional learning, includes two open-ended questions. Thirty of the respondents (83.3%) of the study participants answered this question, while six (16.7%) provided no answer. Question number 36 asked teachers to identify the character, moral, and social emotional lessons that they were already teaching their students prior to the school-wide implementation of a character, moral, and social emotional program. Upon review, the answers were easily broken into three categories. The first category being character building and including the responses of respect, honesty, work ethic, responsibility. These responses indicated that the teachers were utilizing CMSEL within their classes with varying frequency. The second categorization of response showed that the teachers that utilized CMSEL interventions or lessons, as needed, based on student behavior with regularity. This was clear in the answers of respondents’ number three, 10, 24, and 25 that answered that they utilized CMSEL through “informal lessons, when behavior issues presented themselves, and within teachable moments”. The third categorization was that the teachers created and used CMSEL approaches before it became a school mandate. The teachers that were utilizing CMSEL prior to the school programming were focused on traditional prosocial traits. Respondent number 15 explained that within their classroom “I do a growth mindset weekly prompt that we talk about each day in different ways. For example, today we did I am strong in mind and heart.” Respondent number seven, listed words that they have used throughout their career to develop CMSEL skills, the words included “confidence, self-management, and personal growth”. The words and descriptions of how
the educators used CMSEL within their classrooms created a better understanding of the traits and utilization by each respondent.

**Interview Responses.** The questions numbered 40 and 41 were designed to collect additional information to measure the utilization of character, moral, and social emotional learning within the school day. Question 40 asked respondents how teaching character, social emotional, and moral learning throughout their day impacted their planning. IR-1 answered that “I don’t think it impacts my planning, especially at my level my plans are a bare skeletal thing and if something happens my plans are out the window.” IR-2 replied “I find a lot of what I do regarding that is unexpected. There is a situation, or something happens, we make a lesson out of it. We use the teachable moments the best we can.” IR-3 answered, “it takes time away for planning for academic specific areas.” Question number 41 asked the participants if they would like more or less time within their teaching to focus on character, moral, or social emotional learning and to explain their response. IR-1 answered “We are asking for more time with everything. More time would be awesome but is not the reality that we have.” IR-2 shared that “I would like more, but I would like to feel not so pressured to cover other things. We are so pressured in other area to cover other academic subjects that we don’t cover it enough.” IR-3 replied that “I would like additional time to support a school-wide program or plan re-teaching or critical thinking as it relates to social skills.”
Research Question Three: Do teachers recognize character, moral, and social emotional learning increases student prosocial behaviors and reduces negative behaviors?

Survey Responses. The third research question, teachers’ observational recognition of CMSEL in the behavior of students, is evaluated using survey questions 24 through 34. Each of the 36 (100%) respondents answered each of the survey questions pertaining to research question three. Response options were “strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree”. The first question was designed to evaluate the teacher’s recognition and observations of the character, moral, and social emotional learning lessons on the students is number 24.

Question 24 asked the teachers to respond with their level of agreement to the question: Do you find that character, moral, and social emotional lessons resonate with the students in their class, as determined by their social interactions? Four (11.1%) responded that they strongly disagree, four (11.1%) disagreed, 22 (61.1%) reported that they agreed, and six (16.7%) strongly agreed.

Survey question number 25 asked the respondents to indicate their agreement with the question that character, moral, and social emotional lessons resonate with the students in their classes, as determined by their vocalizations. Four (11.1%) strongly disagreed, 20 (55.6%) agreed that they had heard students vocalize CMSEL, and eight (22.2%) strongly agreed.

Question number 26 was an additional measure of agreement asking participants to rate their agreement that character, moral, and social emotional lessons resonated with the students in their classes, as determined by their behaviors. Four (11.1%) of teachers
responded that they strongly disagreed that student behavior was indicative of CMSEL, eight (22.2) disagreed, 16 (44.4%) agreed that the student behaviors indicated CMSEL resonance, and eight (22.2%) strongly agreed.

The survey question number 27 asked the teachers if they had observed positive behavioral implications due to the social emotional, moral, and character lessons implemented in their classrooms. Yet question 27 responses did not mirror question 26 responses although the questions both asked about CMSEL and student behavior. The results of question 26 were two (5.6%) of the teachers strongly disagreed, four (11.1%) disagreed, 22 (61.1%) agreed, and eight (22.2%) strongly agreed that they had observed student behavioral implications due to CMSEL.

The participants were asked, in question number 28, if they had observed positive outcomes in social interactions within the classroom after or due to the social, emotional, character, and moral lessons shared in your class their agreement with the question. Four (11.1%) indicated that they strongly disagree, two (5.6%) disagreed, 22 (61.1%) agreed, and eight (22.2%) strongly agreed that they had viewed positive social interaction due to CMSEL.

Question number 29 changed focus to measure the indication of a negative outcome of character, moral, and social emotional learning. Question 29 asked the respondents if they have observed negative outcomes in social interactions, within their classroom, after or due to the social emotional, character, and moral lessons shared in their class. This 29th question was purposefully designed to assess if the CMSEL was creating the opposite effect on students than intended, a backlash of students increasing negative traits or behaviors. The results were that ten (27.8%) replied that they strongly
disagreed, 18 (50%) disagreed, and eight (22.2%) agreed, and zero strongly agreed. This result was informative and is an area of study that should be studied further.

Participants were asked to answer question 30, indicating if they had observed a single student showing negative behavioral outcomes due to the social emotional, moral, and character lessons implemented in their classroom. This question was placed in this study to evaluate possible the negative outcome of CMSEL. Eight (22.2%) strongly disagreed, 14 (38.9%) disagreed, 12 (33.3%) agreed, and 2 (5.6%) strongly agreed. The last two figures, the 12 that agreed and the two that strongly agreed point to the possibility that the CMSEL lessons are being utilized by the students in a negative way.

Survey question number 31 shifts back to measuring recognized positive outcomes of character, moral, or social emotional learning, by asking if the respondent had observed a single student showing positive behavior after the teaching of character, social emotional, and moral learning. Zero of the participants strongly disagreed, four (11.1%) disagreed, 22 (61.1%) agreed, and 10 (27.8%) strongly agreed that they had observed a single student positive outcome after CMSEL.

Question 32 inquired of the teachers if they had noticed an overall classroom decrease in student negative behaviors after the implementation of character, moral, and social emotional learning. Two (5.6%) strongly disagreed, 6 (16.7%) disagreed, 18 (50%) agreed, and 10 (27.8%) strongly agreed.

The question asked of the participants for number 33 was to report if they had noticed an overall classroom increase in student positive or prosocial behaviors after implementing character, moral, and social emotional lessons. Two (5.6%) strongly disagreed, six (16.7%) disagreed, 20 (55.6%) agreed, and eight (22.2%) strongly agreed.
Survey question number 34, the last question to address the research question number three, requested that the participants reported their agreement with noticing a school-wide improvement in student prosocial or positive behavior due to the character, moral, and social emotional lessons. Two (5.6%) strongly disagreed, 14 (38.9%) disagreed, 16 (44.4%) agreed, four (11.1%) strongly agreed.

Table 4.5

*Responses to Survey Questions Pertaining to Research Question Three*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24. Do you find that the character, moral, and social emotional lessons resonate with the students in your classes, as determined by their social interactions?</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
<td>22 (61.1%)</td>
<td>6 (16.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Do you find that the character, moral, and social emotional lessons resonate with the students in your classes, as determined by their vocalizations?</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
<td>20 (55.6%)</td>
<td>8 (22.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Do you find that the character, moral, and social emotional lessons resonate with the students in your classes, as determined by their behaviors?</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
<td>8 (22.2%)</td>
<td>16 (44.4%)</td>
<td>8 (22.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.5 (continued)

*Responses to Survey Questions Pertaining to Research Question Three*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27. Have you observed positive behavioral implications due to the social emotional, moral, and character lessons implemented in your classroom?</td>
<td>2 (5.6%)</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
<td>22 (61.1%)</td>
<td>8 (22.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Have you observed positive behavioral implications due to the social emotional, moral, and character lessons implemented in your classroom?</td>
<td>4 (11.1%)</td>
<td>2 (5.6%)</td>
<td>22 (61.1%)</td>
<td>8 (22.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Have you observed negative outcomes in social interactions within your classroom after or due to the social emotional, character, and moral lessons shared in your class?</td>
<td>10 (27.8%)</td>
<td>18 (50%)</td>
<td>8 (22.2%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Have you observed a single student showing negative behavioral outcomes due to the social emotional, moral, and character lessons implemented in your classroom?</td>
<td>8 (22.2%)</td>
<td>14 (38.9%)</td>
<td>12 (33.3%)</td>
<td>2 (5.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.5 (continued)

Responses to Survey Questions Pertaining to Research Question Three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31. Have you recognized or observed a single student showing positive behavior after the teaching of character, social emotional, and moral learning?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(11.1%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(61.1%)</td>
<td>(27.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Have you noticed an overall decrease (within your classroom) of student negative behaviors after implementation of character, moral, and social emotional learning?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5.6%)</td>
<td>(16.7%)</td>
<td>(50%)</td>
<td>(27.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Have you noticed an overall increase (within your classroom) of student positive or prosocial behaviors after implementing character, moral, and social emotional lessons?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5.6%)</td>
<td>(16.7%)</td>
<td>(55.6%)</td>
<td>(22.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Have you noticed a school-wide improvement in student prosocial or positive behavior due to the character, moral, and social emotional lessons?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5.6%)</td>
<td>(38.9%)</td>
<td>(44.4%)</td>
<td>(11.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 36. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.*
Open-Ended Question Responses. The third research question of the study measured teachers’ recognition of the character, moral, and social emotional learning on student prosocial and antisocial behaviors, was addressed in the open-ended question number 37. The question asked the participants to give an example of a positive behavioral interaction or behavior of a student due to the character, moral, and social emotional learning. Thirty of the 36 (83.3%) of the survey participants answered question 37.

The respondents explained various positive behavioral interactions that were due to CMSEl as explained in their responses. Respondent number five described “students collaborating and working in small groups and assisting each other more than before we worked on those skills.” Respondent 7 reflected that “students are trying to better understand and show empathy when others have difficult situations at home and in life”. One open-ended teacher participant, interview respondent 6, shared that “We have a character trait wall in our classroom that we visit daily based on student behavior both in our classroom and behaviors seen by other students in our building.” Interview respondent number 23 shared that “We review characteristics like kindness, empathy, compassion, courage often in the room and I can see the students using those traits with each other.” While 29 of the 30 responses were positive, there was one response that was the opposite of being able to share a positive behavioral interaction or behavior of a student due to CMSEL within the classroom. Interview respondent four replied to the question by writing “I honestly can't think of one. A large majority of students in the grade that I teach are monsters and terrible to each other. As if they haven't been exposed to any social/emotional learning in their life.” This response, although the opposite of the
question, was honest and reflective of the frustration felt by this educator. This type of behavior is the type of behavior that CMSEL addresses.

**Interview Responses.** The first interview question focused on research question number three (42), asked if the participants observed negative behaviors in the student population that led them to believe that there was an immediate necessity for schools to be teaching students character, moral, and social emotional lessons. If the respondents responded with an affirmation, they were then asked to share an example. IR-1 answered by saying “The kids can’t even use the restroom properly.” IR-1 then added that “Every day we have kids screaming and kicking, stuff that we would see in two-year-old tantrums are occurring every day at the elementary level.” IR-2 explained that “Yes, every day. I could write a book. From the moment that they walk in the door there is always something that can be addressed. Just reminding them to be kind humans over and over.” IR-3 shared that they had observed a student repeatedly hitting their head on their computer due to the mental and emotional stressors in their life.

Interview question number 43 asked respondents if they had observed a positive effect on student behavior due to character, moral, and social emotional learning lessons within the school. If the participant replied with an affirmative response, they were then asked to provide an example of such an observation. IR-1 shared that a little boy in class that year explained “my work is not done, but I know you told me about working hard and you don’t understand what it is like in my house, I will do this in work room today.” The student then asked for a hug from the teacher. The second respondent, IR-2 explained a handful of students approach [the teacher] after an incident and share strategies they should have utilized. The teacher sees this as showing that they are
learning, yet still unable to use the CMSEL learning in the moment of need. IR-3 answered that “within the classroom settings there are more token systems and reinforcers being given for positive behaviors like being a good friend, supporting or helping others, being resilient or persevering.”

**Data Aligns with Research Questions**

The data of this study was collected empirically to study elementary teachers’ perspectives of character, moral, and social emotional learning. The first research question of the study was designed to evaluate the teachers perceived value of CMSEL. The second research question of the study focused on learning about the frequency of utilization of CMSEL by the elementary teachers. The third research question of the study was created to understand the observations and recognitions of student actions and behaviors attributed to CMSEL. The research questions were carefully crafted to address each of the three focal points of the study. The results of the data collection aligned with the research questions and appropriately requested information from each of the participants as a measurement tool for understanding the perceptions, utilization, and recognitions of the teachers in relation to character, moral, and social emotional learning within their classrooms and school environments.

**Summary**

The data collected in this study was devised to address the three research questions of this study. The data was collected from three rural Pennsylvania school districts located in a shared region or geographical area. The elementary teachers were identified as being kindergarten through fifth grade. All elementary teachers within the three participating school districts were sent, via email, a request to participate in this
research study. The participants totaled 36 and their responses were used to evaluate the three overarching questions of this research study. The first question evaluated the elementary teachers’ perceptions of the value in teaching CMSEL. The second question focused on the frequency of teacher implementation of CMSEL. Lastly, the third question was to learn about the teachers’ recognition of positive or negative student behaviors related to CMSEL. The results indicated that there was variation between respondents. The responses illustrated that the teachers do find value in teaching CMSEL, that there is a moderate utilization of CMSEL within the participants classrooms, overall, the participants observed and recognized that CMSEL increased the prosocial behaviors of the students. The study summary, question summaries, study limitations, and recommendations for further research are detailed in the next chapter.
Chapter Five- Discussion

Summary of the Study

This qualitative study was designed to ascertain elementary school teachers’ perceptions of the value, utilization, and observations associated with character, moral, and social emotional learning (CMSEL). Educational institutions were being called upon with increasing urgency to address the emotional development of students while simultaneously cultivating academic abilities within school systems. The outcomes of CMSEL programs and initiatives had been shown to increase prosocial traits and reduce the antisocial behaviors of students.

This qualitative study was centered on three research questions. Research question one evaluated teachers’ perceptions of value for the inclusion of CMSEL within schools. The questions posed regarding the perceived value to the teachers, students, and community to determine if the teachers believed that the value of CMSEL was both within and extended beyond the school systems. The second research question was to understand the frequency with which the educators were implementing or utilizing CMSEL. The third research question was based on teacher observation of the outcomes of CMSEL lessons as determined by student behaviors.

The data collected for this study came from three regional school districts in rural Pennsylvania. The three districts have a varying number of elementary educators and offered a potential study population of hundreds of elementary educators. Of the hundreds of educators, 36 teachers volunteered to participate in the study by taking the online survey questions and open-ended questions. Three of the elementary teachers volunteered to participate in the interview process as an extension of the research
collection. The survey data was collected and organized through Google Forms, the interview data was recorded electronically, transcribed, and organized according to the corresponding research question.

**Summary of the Results**

**Research Question One**

The purpose of research question one was to evaluate the teachers’ perceptions of the value of character, moral, and social emotional learning. The questions were created to determine teachers’ beliefs regarding the value, necessity, and importance of CMSEL within their classrooms, schools, and communities. Question number 11 asked the elementary teachers, based on their experiences as a teacher they had observed an increased need for CMSEL. Elementary education teachers unanimously concurred through responses of 16 (44.4%) agreed, 20 (55.6%) strongly agreed that they recognized an increased need for CMSEL. Question 12 had the exact same response percentages with the entirety of the survey population answering, 16 (44%) agreeing and 20 (56%) strongly agreeing, that they did find benefit in altering their teaching to address an immediate perceived need for CMSEL based on student behavior. Although their responses to 11 and 12 indicated that there was an awareness for a need of CMSEL in the school populous, there was a consistent response of four (11.1%) of the respondents that strongly disagreed with questions one through seven.

Questions three through seven asked similar types of questions to understand the teachers’ beliefs about the value they placed on teaching CMSEL. Question three asked participants if they felt that there was a need to teach CMSEL within the learning day, question four asked if there was value to the students, question five asked if there was
value to the teachers, question six asked if there was value to the schools, question seven asked if there was value to the communities in teaching CMSEL, the result of these questions had one unifying quantity; that there were four (11.1%) of the respondents that answered strongly disagree with each question. These same respondents affirmatively answered question 12. Although there was variation within the responses, the data collected to study research question one illustrates that overall, the teachers do value CMSEL as a part of the learning process in schools. The open-ended response questions focused on the CMSEL terms, goals, and values that the teachers thought were valuable to teach to students. The themes that emerged in the responses showed that the CMSEL focus was both interpersonal and intrapersonal development for the students.

**Research Question Two**

Research question two was designed to assess the teachers’ frequency of utilization of character, moral, and social emotional learning. Through analysis and understanding of how often the teachers were implementing, utilizing, reviewing, and assessing their use of CMSEL the responses generated specific data to evaluate the usage of the CMSEL traits and skills throughout the regional elementary classrooms and schools. This research question was to determine the frequency of implementation and utilization of CMSEL for the elementary educators that participated in the study. The results illustrated that there is a variation within the teachers reported utilization. The majority of teacher responses were sometimes and often throughout each question of the survey pertaining to research question two. The frequency of utilization responses of sometimes, often, daily were answered by a preponderance of the teachers participating in the study when respondents reported their utilization of CMSEL. Each of the eleven
questions had a larger percentage of respondents answering with sometimes, often, daily. The less frequently reported terms of never and infrequently were in the minority of responses for each question, illustrating that overall the teachers are utilizing CMSEL within their classrooms. The response of never being selected by two (5.6%) respondents for questions 13, how often do you intentionally incorporate CMSEL into your lessons and 16, which was how often lessons were solely focused on CMSEL, and four (11.1%) responding with never for question number 18 which was how often you assess the effectiveness of CMSEL. Infrequently was also used as a response by the participants but at a lesser rate than the more frequent responses of sometimes, often, daily. Infrequently was used as a response for nine of the 11 questions and was in the minority of responses for each of the nine questions. The participating elementary teachers were utilizing CMSEL with moderate frequency, based on the responses to the questions pertaining to research question two. The open-ended question responses also indicated that the teachers had been using these techniques to teach their students prosocial traits in the classrooms prior to the implementation of CMSEL programs and initiatives within the schools.

Research Question Three

The third research question focused on learning about the teachers’ observations of the students’ CMSEL behaviors. The teachers were asked to indicate, using a Likert-scale response system, if they had observed prosocial or antisocial behaviors that had been observed through student actions due to CMSEL. The first three questions designed to address research question three, questions 24, 25, and 26 asked if the teachers found CMSEL resonated with their students determined by their social interactions, vocalizations, and behaviors respectively. Question 23 and 24 each had four (11.1%)
respondents strongly disagree, four (11.1%) disagree, and the other 28 (77.8%) combined to agree and strongly agree which indicates that the majority of the teachers observed positive CMSEL interactions and vocalizations due to CMSEL utilization. Question 26 had four (11.1%) of the respondents indicating that they strongly disagreed, eight (22.2%) disagreeing, 16 (44.4%) agreeing, and eight (22.2%) strongly agreeing. Although there is a shift of the responses, two thirds, or 24 (66.7%) of the participants agreed that they had noticed positive behavior due to CMSEL. Question number 29 indicated that 28 (77.8%) of the teachers had observed a negative behavioral outcome due to CMSEL lessons, which is an outlier of the other positive indications of CMSEL impacting student behaviors, actions, vocalizations, and interactions. Question number 29 responses indicated that CMSEL appeared to have the opposite of the intended effect on student behavior and increased antisocial behaviors. Overall, the responses to the 11 questions pertaining to research question three showed that the teachers have recognized an increase in student behaviors prosocial or positive behaviors due to CMSEL. The results also indicate there is more work to do to address the CMSEL need of every student. The open-ended questions also indicated that many of the respondents saw positive interactions and actions within their classrooms that they could attribute to their efforts to teach CMSEL.

Limitations Found in the Study

One limitation of the study was that the study data was collected from a regional area within Central Pennsylvania. Potentially, the regional cultural and social norms accounted for the student behaviors. Similarly, the regional impact of what the
elementary educators believed to be “positive behavior” or “negative behavior” based on their regional status may vary from a more diverse study area or population of the study.

Another limitation of the study was that of the hundreds of teachers within the three school districts the number of study participants was 36 which is a small representation of kindergarten through fifth grade educators within the regional Pennsylvania area for study. A larger study area or a larger representation of the teachers in the area would create a better understanding of the value, utilization, and observations of CMSEL within elementary schools.

A third limitation of the study is the teacher’s personal interpretation of character, moral, and social emotional learning. The teacher’s individual utilization of both formal and informal CMSEL varied from teacher to teacher. The occurrence or frequency utilization, the value placed on CMSEL, and the teachers’ observations may be affected by their individual expectations, efforts, and experiences. The personal approach and valuation of CMSEL created variation within the study population.

A fourth and final limitation observed in this study was the interview methodology of data collection. The request to continue participation by answering questions via a Zoom video conference netted a small number of participants. Three (8.3%) of the survey respondents agreed to participate in the six-question optional interview as an extension of their participation in the research study. The number of respondents may have been higher in an essay question format at the conclusion of the survey form in lieu of an additional time commitment.
Relationship to Other Research

This qualitative research study was created to learn about elementary school teachers’ perceptions of the value of CMSEL, the frequency of utilization of CMSEL by the teachers, and the observed responses of students due to CMSEL. Throughout the research on character, moral, and social emotional learning there are similar calls for schools to be the place to address and cultivate CMSEL skills and traits in the student populations of the world (Abdi, 2018; Anwar, 2015; McGrath, 2018; Nadelson et al., 2019). Survey question number eight asked the educators to indicate their level of agreement with the statement that schools are the proper societal placement for teaching social emotional, character, and moral development. The results of that question illustrated that 18 (50%) agreed, 10 (27.8%) strongly agreed, four (11.1%) disagreed, and four (11.1%) strongly disagreed. The results indicate that eight of the 36 (22.2%) believed that CMSEL expectations at school are misplaced and the majority of teachers, 28 of 36 (77.8%) were in agreement that schools are the appropriate placement in society for the development of CMSEL within the youth. Elias (2018) explained that the need for prosocial interventions in school was severe. Survey question number 10 asked the teachers, based on their teaching experience, to indicate their agreement they have observed a need for CMSEL in the students they teach. The results were that 18 (50%) of the teachers agreed and 18 (50%) strongly agreed that the students were displaying a need for CMSEL.

Research has found that the use of CMSEL in schools reduced the negative behaviors of the students (Diggs & Akos, 2016; Greenberg et al., 2017; Thompson et al., 2020). Within this research study, the respondents were asked in question number 32 if
the teachers had observed a reduction of negative behaviors after CMSEL implementation, the results of the question show that two (5.6%) strongly disagreed, 6 (16.7%) disagreed, 18 (50%) agreed, and 10 (27.8%) strongly agreed. This result indicates that eight (22.2%) teachers did not notice a decrease in negative student behaviors and that 28 (77.8%) teachers did notice a decrease in negative behaviors after CMSEL.

Covaleski (2016) asserted that what teachers teach about CMSEL impacted the students less than what they showed them, describing the importance of educators modeling CMSEL traits and skills to the students. Question 19 asked teachers how frequently they were modeling the skills and traits of CMSEL to their students. The results of that question were unanimously answered with affirmative responses with four (11.1%) of the teachers answering sometimes, 12 (33.3%) indicating often, and 20 (55.6%) responding that they model CMSEL daily.

Anwar (2015) noted an increased student learning of CMSEL traits and skills when CMSEL was reviewed and reiterated to the students. Question number 17 asked teachers to identify the frequency with which they reviewed and revisited CMSEL traits and skills. The results were reported as four (11.1%) infrequently reviewing and revisiting, 14 (38.9%) responded sometimes, 14 (38.9%) answered often, and four (11.1%) said they revisit and review CMSEL daily.

According to the research of Khazanchi et al. (2021), they asserted that CMSEL increased responsible decision making, social awareness, self-management, and was foundational for positive character, moral, and social development of individuals. In this study, the results of questions number 28, 31, 33 which measured the positive behavioral
outcomes of the students based on teacher observations received mixed results. Question 28 asked teachers to report their observations of positive outcomes in social interaction after or due to CMSEL. Four (11.1%) of the teachers strongly disagreed, two (5.6%) disagreed, 22 (61.1%) agreed, and eight (22.2%) indicated that they strongly agreed. In question 31 the respondents were asked about observing a single student showing positive behavior due to CMSEL and four (11.1%) disagreed, 22 (61.1%) agreed, and 10 (27.8%) strongly agreed. The results indicate that 32 of the 36 (88.9%) of the teachers did recognize or observe a positive outcome for at least one student after or due to CMSEL. The survey question number 33 also asked about teachers if they recognized an overall classroom increase in positive or prosocial behaviors. The responses were two (2.6%) strongly disagreed, six (16.7%) disagreed, 20 (55.6%) agreed, and eight (22.2%) strongly agreed. Overall, the number of teachers that did not find a positive behavioral outcome in their classroom due to CMSEL was eight (22.2%) and 28 (77.8%) did notice positive behaviors of the class due to CMSEL. The results indicate that there is a positive effect to CMSEL although it is not a uniform experience of the teachers.

Recommendations for Further Research

The rationale of this qualitative study was to learn about and understand elementary educators’ perceptions of character, moral, and social emotional learning (CMSEL). The results of this research have indicated that there is more to learn regarding elementary teachers’ perceived value, utilization, and observations of student behaviors due to CMSEL within their school experience. The results of this study lead to a recommendation of a continuation of research regarding CMSEL and teachers’ perceptions:
1. The data collected was specific and limited to grades kindergarten through grade five. Future research to include or focus on grades six through 12 would expand the research to encompass all grade-level educators.

2. Participants of this study were regionally located in central Pennsylvania and due to that restricted location of the study the cultural, social, and regional implicit and explicit attitudes may have affected the expectations and judgement of the teachers. Expanding the study to educators that are not located in a regional area or locale the data would not be affected by local social norms and mores.

3. The observations of the k-5 teachers within this study were to determine if there was a perception of effect due to CMSEL efforts by educators. In future research, in a quantitative study, there may be more to learn about disciplinary referrals and implementation or utilization of CMSEL based on micro-studies based on single student behavioral data or using macro-studies or analyzing school-wide behavioral data.

4. This research collected data from three school districts that are utilizing and expecting various levels of implementation of CMSEL by the teachers. Research that focused on schools that are utilizing and expecting a standardized use of CMSEL or districts that follow a strict CMSEL program or structure would offer a more prescribed and uniform approach to teacher utilization which would reduce or eliminate the variation of subjects’ utilization based on personal preference and experiences. Controlling the variable of utilization would allow future research to more precisely focus on
how they are utilizing CMSEL which would be a useful study for directing the CMSEL processes within schools.

5. Survey questions 29 and 30 indicated that the participants had observed negative outcomes due to CMSEL. Studying the misuse of CMSEL lessons or terminology, by students, and learning how or why it has been linked to increases negative behaviors and interactions within the student population could be used to address or revise the CMSEL approach used in classrooms and schools to elicit the intended prosocial results.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this qualitative study was that the teachers in the study did indicate, overall, that they perceived value in teaching CMSEL, the teachers were regularly utilizing CMSEL within their classrooms, and they recognized positive behaviors of the students attributed to CMSEL. The study results were not unanimous and clearly indicated that there was an approximate steady four (11.1%) participant negative response that they did not see value, utilize, or observe positive behavioral outcomes for students because of CMSEL. The study results illustrated the dichotomy of perception within the teacher populous. There were also several areas of further study which were illuminated during this research data collection. The variation of teacher utilization of CMSEL creates a varying level of student exposure and expectation from classroom to classroom within the school buildings. This variation may have impacted the students’ experiences of CMSEL, which may have then impacted their behaviors. This difference in exposure to CMSEL lends itself as an additional topic of research. The survey results of questions of 29 and 30 indicate that there are times where the CMSEL
may be creating an adverse behavioral reaction, which also leads to another research study. This study improved the understanding of elementary teachers’ perceptions, utilization, and observation of CMSEL within their classrooms and school environments.
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APPENDIX A

Request to Conduct Study

Re: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear School Administrator:

I am presently pursuing an Educational Doctorate at Immaculata University. The dissertation study that I would like to pursue is entitled “Elementary School Teachers’ Perceptions of Character, Moral, and Social Emotional Education” This proposed study is focused on measuring regional elementary school teachers’ perceptions, implementation, and observations regarding social emotional, character, and moral education. I would like the teachers of kindergarten through fifth grade to participate in a survey about their perceptions, utilization, and outcomes of character, social emotional, and moral learning. All information will be reported without identifying the school district, teachers, or students and will follow all anonymous and confidential protocols. The study will use the generic title of “elementary schools in rural Pennsylvania” throughout the dissertation. All identifying citations and appendices information will be redacted to protect the anonymity of the school districts and teachers.

The method of data collection will be an online survey of 33 questions, 30 of which are based on a Likert scale of reporting, with the three remaining questions being open-ended. In addition to the survey the teachers will be asked if they would like to participate in an extension interview. The interview will be recorded using Zoom software and will be comprised of six additional questions. Zoom and Microsoft Forms software will collect and store all data. All data collected will remain anonymous and confidential.

I am hereby requesting your permission to request the participation of the K-5 teachers within your school district. If you desire, the results of the study will be provided to you. The results of the study will be provided to you upon completion of the study.

If you agree, kindly sign below and return the signed form via email to my contact address, troush@mail.immaculata.edu. Your approval of this dissertation study will greatly be appreciated. Thank you for your time and consideration.

You have my permission to conduct the study as proposed.

Signature of approval _________________________________ Date _________

Sincerely,

Taylor Roush
troush@mail.immaculata.edu
January 18, 2023

Immaculata University
1145 King Road
Immaculata, PA 19345

RE: Taylor Roush

Dear Research Ethics Review Board:

As Superintendent of the , I am granting Taylor Roush approval to complete her dissertation study entitled “Elementary School Teachers’ Perceptions of Character, Moral, and Social Emotional Education” in our district. I understand that Mrs. Roush will be asking teachers of kindergarten through fifth grade to participate in a survey about their perceptions, utilization, and outcomes of character, social emotional, and moral learning, and, if they choose to do so, to participate in an interview. I also understand that all participants and school district information will be kept confidential.

Sincerely,
January 27, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

I approve the request from Taylor Roush to conduct research study to complete her doctoral dissertation at Immaculata University.

It is my understanding that the focus of this research will focus on measuring regional elementary school teachers' perceptions, implementation, and observations regarding social emotional, character, and moral education.

Sincerely,

District Superintendent
Re: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Hello, my name is Taylor Roush, I am a secondary social studies teacher in the Selinsgrove Area School District, and I am presently pursuing an Educational Doctorate at Immaculata University. The dissertation study that I would like to pursue is entitled "Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions of Character, Moral, and Social Emotional Education". This proposed study is focused on measuring regional elementary school teachers' perceptions, implementation, and observations regarding social emotional, character, and moral education. I would like the teachers of kindergarten through fifth grade to participate in a survey about their perceptions, utilization, and outcomes of character, social emotional, and moral learning. All information will be reported without identifying the school district, teachers, or students and will follow all anonymous and confidential protocols. The study will use the generic title of "elementary schools in rural Pennsylvania" throughout the dissertation. All identifying citations and appendices information will be redacted to protect the anonymity of the school districts and teachers.

The method of data collection will be an online survey of 33 questions, 30 of which are based on a Likert scale of reporting, with the three remaining questions being open-ended. In addition to the survey, the teachers will be asked if they would like to participate in an extension interview. The interview will be recorded using Zoom software and will be comprised of six additional questions. Zoom and Microsoft Forms software will collect and store all data. All data collected will remain anonymous and confidential.

I am hereby requesting your permission to request the participation of the K-5 teachers within your school district. If you desire, the results of the study will be provided to you upon completion of the study.

If you agree, kindly sign below and return the signed form via email to my contact address, troush@mail.immaculata.edu. Your approval of this dissertation study will greatly be appreciated. Thank you for your time and consideration.

You have my permission to conduct the study as proposed.
Signature of approval

Sincerely,

Taylor Roush
Taylor Roush
troush@mail.immaculata.edu
Name of Researcher:  Taylor Roush

Project Title:  Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions of Character, Moral, and Social Emotional Learning

Reviewer's Comments:

Your proposal is Approved. You may begin your research or collect your data.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS APPROVAL IS VALID FOR ONE YEAR (365 days) FROM DATE OF SIGNING.

Reviewer's Recommendations:

Exempt  Expedited  Full Review

X  Approve  Conditionally Approved  Do Not Approve

March 29, 2023

Marcia Parris, Ed.D.,
Chair, Research Ethics Review Board
APPENDIX D
Letter of Recruitment

March 2023

Dear Elementary School Teacher,

A requirement of the doctoral program at Immaculata University is a survey designed to assist researchers in their proposed study. I am requesting your support by participating in the survey. I am studying teachers’ perceptions of character, moral, and social emotional learning. The survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The survey includes two demographic questions, 32 Likert scale questions, and three short answer questions.

The survey will be available to you online through Google Forms. This online survey site ensures that your answers are collected anonymously. Your confidentiality as a research subject is also protected as you will never be asked to provide personally identifiable information. If you choose to be a part of the optional extension interview you will be directed via a link to a second Google Form to protect your survey confidentiality and anonymity. Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to continue participation at any time during the survey.

If you are willing to volunteer, at the beginning the survey indicates that you agree to participate in this study. If you have any questions pertaining to my study, please feel free to contact me by phone at (484) 467-5579 or via email at troush@mail.immaculata.edu. You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Jonathan Graf by phone at (215) 721-0606 or email at: jgraf@soudertonsd.org. This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Review Board of Immaculata University. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please direct your questions to Dr. Marcia Parris, Research Ethics Review Board Chair, at mparris@immaculata.edu or (610) 647-4400 Ext: 3210.

Thank you for your time and consideration in supporting my research.

Sincerely,

Taylor M. Roush

Taylor M. Roush
APPENDIX E

Informed Consent for Survey and Open-ended Questions

This research is being conducted for a dissertation research study by a student attending Immaculata University. This research is designed to study “Elementary School Teachers’ Perceptions of Character, Moral, and Social Emotional Learning”. There are a total of 37 questions in the survey. At the completion of the 37-question survey, you may choose to extend your participation in an extension interview utilizing the program Zoom. There will be six interview questions for the interview portion of the study. All responses and participation in the survey will be anonymous. If you choose to participate in the extension Zoom interview your identity will remain confidential and no personal information will be collected. By participating you are consenting to participate in this anonymous study. The questions will take approximately 20 minutes to answer.
Appendix F
Survey and Open-ended Questions

Please indicate that you have read and understand the information and consent letter and are giving consent to be a part of this anonymous study by choosing “Yes” below.

Yes

No

Please read and answer the following questions.

1. Please identify the grade that you teach:

K  1  2  3  4  5

2. How many years have you been a Kindergarten through grade 5 teacher?

  1-5  6-10  11-15  16-20  21+

Please answer each of the following questions using the options available.

3. There is a need to teach social emotional, character, and moral lessons within the academic learning day for students.

   Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

4. There is value for the students in teaching character, moral, and social emotional learning.

   Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree
5. There is value for the teachers in teaching character, moral, and social emotional learning.

   Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

6. There is value for the schools in teaching character, moral, and social emotional learning.

   Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

7. There is value for the communities in teaching character, moral, and social emotional learning.

   Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

8. School is the proper societal placement for teaching social emotional, character, and moral development.

   Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

9. There should be a strict implementation of social emotional, character, and moral education in schools today.

   Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

10. Based on your experiences as a teacher, do you observe/have you observed a need for social emotional, character, and moral education in the student populations you teach?

    Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

11. Based on your experiences as a teacher, have you observed an increased need in the student population for teaching character, social, and moral development throughout the school process?

    Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree
12. Based on your experiences as a teacher, do you find benefit in altering your teaching to address an immediate perceived need for social emotional, character, or moral direction based on student behavior? (Utilized a teachable moment)

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

13. How often do you intentionally incorporate or focus on prosocial character, moral, or social emotional traits within your lessons?

Never  Infrequently  Sometimes  Often  Daily

14. How often do you unintentionally (authentically) incorporate or focus on prosocial character, moral, or social emotional traits within your lessons?

Never  Infrequently  Sometimes  Often  Daily

15. How often do you use learning materials to teach prosocial (positive) traits, characteristics, and/or skills to your students?

Never  Infrequently  Sometimes  Often  Daily

16. How often do you focus on or have a lesson that is solely focused on character, social emotional, or moral learning, exclusive of other learning material?

Never  Infrequently  Sometimes  Often  Daily

17. How often do you review/revisit prosocial (positive) traits, characteristics, and/or skills after the initial learning of the trait or skill?

Never  Infrequently  Sometimes  Often  Daily

18. How often do you assess the effectiveness of the character, social emotional, and moral lessons and adjust the lessons or material based on your perception of need within your class?

Never  Infrequently  Sometimes  Often  Daily
19. How often do you model character, moral, and social emotional skills, and behaviors to the students?
Never    Infrequently    Sometimes    Often    Daily

20. How often do you intentionally incorporate social learning, character, or moral learning terminology into your teaching?
Never    Infrequently    Sometimes    Often    Daily

21. How often do you review and enhance social emotional, character, or moral education learning in your lessons?
Never    Infrequently    Sometimes    Often    Daily

22. How often do your students request or show a need for lessons in character, social emotional, and moral education?
Never    Infrequently    Sometimes    Often    Daily

23. How often do you choose individual traits to focus on within your teaching that are a part of character, social emotional, or moral development?
Never    Infrequently    Sometimes    Often    Daily

24. Do you find that the character, moral, and social emotional lessons resonate with the students in your classes, as determined by their social interactions?
Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

25. Do you find that the character, moral, and social emotional lessons resonate with the students in your classes, as determined by their vocalizations?
Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

26. Do you find that the character, moral, and social emotional lessons resonate with the students in your classes, as determined by their behaviors?
27. Have you observed positive behavioral implications due to the social emotional, moral, and character lessons implemented in your classroom?

28. Have you observed positive outcomes in social interactions within your classroom after or due to the social, emotional, character, and moral lessons shared in your class?

29. Have you observed negative outcomes in social interactions within your classroom after or due to the social emotional, character, and moral lessons shared in your class?

30. Have you observed a single student showing negative behavioral outcomes due to the social emotional, moral, and character lessons implemented in your classroom?

31. Have you recognized or observed a single student showing positive behavior after the teaching of character, social emotional, and moral learning?

32. Have you noticed an overall decrease (within your classroom) of student negative behaviors after implementation of character, moral, and social emotional learning?

33. Have you noticed an overall increase (within your classroom) of student positive or prosocial behaviors after implementing character, moral, and social emotional lessons?
34. Have you noticed a school-wide improvement in student prosocial or positive behavior due to the character, moral, and social emotional lessons?

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

Please type your response to the following open-ended questions.

35. What prosocial characteristics, traits, or terms that are a part of social emotional, character, and moral education, do you believe are the most valuable to teach to the student population?

36. Prior to the school-wide implementation of character, moral, and social emotional educational program within the school what prosocial concepts, terms, and lessons were you already teaching to your students?

37. Give an example of a positive behavioral interaction or behavior of a student due to the character, moral, and social emotional learning within your classroom.

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey questions.

If you are interested in participating in an online interview regarding your perceptions of character, moral, and social emotional learning please click on the following link to provide a contact email address to schedule a Zoom online interview with the researcher. Utilizing the link below will maintain your anonymity and confidentiality for purposes of the survey you just completed.

https://forms.gle/NcGQDJXfaVXv3XLA7
Appendix G

Interview Informed Consent

Dear Elementary School Teacher:

A requirement of the doctoral program at Immaculata University are interviews which are designed to assist researchers in their proposed study. I am requesting your support to participate in a research interview. I am studying teachers’ perceptions of character, moral, and social emotional learning.

The interview will be using the online meeting program, Zoom and will consist of six questions. This interview will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The interview will be recorded using screencast-o-matic software and then stored on a password protected zip drive for a period of five years.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. You may refuse to answer questions or discontinue participation at any time during the interview. All of your responses will remain anonymous and confidential. There are no known risks from participating in this study. The benefit of completing this study is participating in academic research.

If you have any questions pertaining to my study, please feel free to contact me by phone at (484) 467-5579 or using email at troush@mail.immaculata.edu. You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Jonathan Graf by phone at (215) 721-0606 or using email at jgraf@soudertonbsd.org. This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Review Board of Immaculata University. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please direct your questions to Dr. Marcia Parris, Research Ethics Review Board Chair, at mparris@immaculata.edu or (610) 647-4400 Ext: 3210.

Thank you for your time and consideration in supporting my research.

Sincerely,

Taylor M. Roush
Appendix H
Interview Questions

Please answer the following questions as completely as possible.

1. What are your thoughts on teaching character, social emotional, and moral learning within a school day?

2. Do you believe it is appropriate for schools to take on the task of socioemotional development in addition to academic development of the students?

3. How does teaching character, social emotional, and moral learning throughout your day impact your planning?

4. Would you like to have more or less time within your teaching to focus on social emotional, character, or moral lessons, please explain your answer.

5. Have you observed negative behavior in the student population that leads you to believe that there is an immediate necessity for schools to be teaching students character, moral, and social emotional lessons, and skills schools today, can you share an example?

6. Have you observed a positive effect on student behavior due to character, moral, and social emotional learning lessons within the school, can you share an example?