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# Transformative Social Emotional Learning: A Call to Heal the Effects of Racial Trauma on Identity and Self-Efficacy

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Transformative Social Emotional Learning:  
A Call to Heal the Effects of Racial Trauma on Identity and Self-Efficacy

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the  
Department of Educational Foundations & Policy Studies  
West Chester University  
West Chester, Pennsylvania

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of  
Masters in Transformative Education & Social  
Change

By

Elizabeth A Clair Trostle

May 2023

## Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to anyone and everyone that needs to hear this: you are a gift, and within you is a gift, your purpose is to discover your gift and share it with the world.

## Acknowledgements

When I stepped into the role of being a graduate student it was during a pandemic, a time where I saw an opportunity. A time when my husband's career of designing events around the globe was halted. A time when my three children were set up in desks around our home. It was certainly a pivotal moment in my family's path. I could not have done this without the support of my loving family. My husband Mark has cooked, cleaned, driven, and taken on the role of chief education officer in our home. Without him I would not have had the time for my neurodivergent self to dissect and digest difficult tasks, unpack my own biases, and find within the drive to do what I would have thought unthinkable. I thank my children for sacrificing adventures and learning how to self-entertain and sometime cook so I could work on my reading and writing. I thank my professors for showing me the hidden world within education and American society. Your compassion and open-minded views on helping me learn about this world have transformed the practices and policies within my own classroom. I hope too always maintain your grace and high level of expectations. You have challenged me to challenge my own belief of myself and my own self-efficacy.

## Abstract

Growing up I was never a child that loved school. I fell in love with learning in environments that did not look or feel like classrooms. And in 2005 I learned that I had a passion for learning about pedagogy. I entered the classroom again this time as a teacher, ready to engage students in learning. What I was offered was curriculum and learning standards that left little room for experiences. Despite my efforts, and after a decade of experience, I was still baffled by the resistance to learning.

I wanted to understand this because I saw that education—when you believe in yourself—is a place of liberation and excitement. This is based on my experience as a white girl/woman whose mom and grandmother were college educated with masters degrees before they were married. I learned through critical research, however that school experience varies based on your gender, class, and race. Education in American society lacks equity and maintains the hegemonic norms of white supremacy using neoliberal policies and disenfranchising. These violent tools are systemic through institutions, structures, policies, and practices; they are systemic in American society.

Over time this oppression has obscured the identity and diminished the well-being of BIPOC communities. Transformative social emotional learning is a way to counter the hegemonic racism and empower BIPOC to seek knowledge that heals from the generational racial trauma that has disrupted the well-being and potentiality of those that have suffered.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

As a child, I was divided between being the person others wanted me to be and a child that was free to be myself. To feel free I ran in fields, rode my bike, sled down snowy hills, and splashed cold water creeks, I was free to be me. Over the course of my school experiences, I have found that being a student felt more like what people wanted me to be rather than being who I was. In school, I felt like I was not doing well, my work, at best, was mediocre, and shame was part of the educational experience. At home, I was the youngest of three girls, and the stories of my unpredictable and wild ways were told over and over. These early memories of outside-free, school-bad, and home-Lizabugs, shaped the elementary foundation of my identity.

I roamed the land around our home with an Amish farm that had 40 acres and 13 children. On that farm, I could be that free spirit, out in the fields my curiosity, creativity, and energy fit in with the nine Amish boys. The difference between my own “English” culture and their strict old-world Amish culture only felt prevalent when we were in each other's homes. I played with the boys as the girls my age were inside working with their moms. Growing up as a busybody at school creates a bit of chaos around you. I spent a fair amount of time in the hall during classes, on the wall during recess, and writing “I will not talk in class” repeatedly.

My relationship with school was one where I felt more shame than success. By 6th grade, I allowed letter grades and disciplinary actions to shape my sense of belonging and identity at school. As a child I was aware that I had an apathy towards learning. I knew the

teacher would assign work and I did not want to do the work. In retrospect I can now understand that my work resistance had a lot to do with my lack of self-efficacy, my own belief in my ability to do the work successfully. I dreaded school and found it to be a necessity rather than an opportunity. Fortunately, I had a mother that was a teacher, patient, and only ever showed me pragma love, it was unconditional love and felt endless. She supported me through my public-school years. I am sure that my graduation day was a big breath of relief for her. She stood beside me at home, school, and my extracurricular activities.

Swimming, church, and loving parents provided me with outlets to develop good habits that would all me to build a positive identity and learn that I had efficacy and agency. During High School, I was an avid swimmer and I learned about goal setting, accountability, positive identity, independence, and perseverance. In the pool, my hyperactivity translated into speed and endurance. My chatty bubbly personality was suited for being an encouraging loyal team member. My gifts that caused shame in one environment were beneficial in another. Since church behavior mimicked the expectations of school behavior, I was always waiting for the trouble to start there, and it did not.

Being an active member of an Episcopal church youth group gave me deep roots in the idea of agape and fulfillment from exposure to culture. We went on light-hearted European “pilgrimages,” touring Italy, England, and France. As I would wander in and out of cathedrals, small towns, historic sites, and museums my head was filled with wonders. I was free, like playing with the Amish in the fields, I was encouraged to wonder and wander. In both scenarios, I recall learning as a pleasurable experience. My favorite lesson from the trips was when we were in Italy, at Accademia Gallery. There I saw Michelangelo’s

sculptures and learned how he viewed a block of marble, believing that within the stone was a beautiful statue inside. He believed that each figure needed to be let out, and that was his job to extract and free the statues. These pilgrimages invigorated a curiosity like being a young child in the field. In school my curiosity was stifled, my energy was shamed, and I viewed myself as a nuisance never a class pet.

In college, I let go of my swimming and took what I had learned to challenge the “C” student label that I accepted. Once I settled at Towson University, near Baltimore, I transformed from a C student to a straight-A student. My study habits developed and encouraged a belief that I was able to become a straight-A student. Applying what I had learned from church and swimming, I challenged both my habits and my identity. Like the statues in stones for Michelangelo, I had to learn that within me was efficacy and agency, within me was a strong student.

My path from public school to college graduate was paved by my mom, grandmother, and even great grandmother. I was born into a family that had generations of women that were educated and had traveled. I did not grow up knowing that this was a privilege that came from my skin color and the fields of Virginia. Throughout my college years, I was unaware of the advantages I had, just from being born white. I started to learn about race and racism while at Towson University (TU). While at TU I lived in Baltimore City, in the neighborhood of Little Italy. The neighbors made it clear to me, that they did not want to see black people in their neighborhood. At night I would walk my black friends out of the neighborhood in case a neighbor questioned them so I could speak up for them. I continued the hegemonic systemic racism because without consent I was exposed to it in my very white world. I did not consider how my black friends felt as I walked them safely out

of Little Italy. They saw me accept racism rather than stand up to it; my silence was compliance for I knew what was right.

After seven years there I relocated to West Chester to complete a graduate certification in elementary education. From the initial stages of studying to be a teacher, I knew I wanted to work with an urban population. At the time I did not know what that meant, and I heard others also say it. I wanted to work with students that, like me, have not had the best relationship with education. I was only prepared from reading books like “Savage Inequalities” and “Why do all of the Black Kids Sit Together,” which expanded on urban schools. Those texts, however, did not even marginally prepare me for the needs of minoritized students. While growing up, we did not freely talk about race. But my childhood experiences abroad helped me be comfortable in situations different from those I was raised in. I knew I wanted to use my experiences to educate students so they could experience educational success. My plan would use my story, my energy, and my creativity to encourage students to find pride in the school.

My teaching career started in Virginia and then soon I moved to Philadelphia, PA. I wanted to carefully select my future employer. For two years I did day-to-day subbing and two long-term substitute positions. I observed and evaluated the culture and population that I felt I could find the most fulfillment in teaching. During this process, I also nurtured my first pregnancy and spent time with my terminally ill father.

I narrowed my focus to two school districts. One, Lower Merion, was known for wealth and privilege. The other, Norristown, was known for low test scores and poverty. At this same time I was pregnant and began to make my first mom friends. Even as we stood pregnant or held newborns, conversations about schools would come up often. Schools like

Lower Merion were viewed as perfect in education. The idea that they could challenge and provide the best education something the Norristown school district could not do. They based this on the standardized test scores that are released annually. What I did not hear was anyone wondering why Lower Merion test scores were high and why Norristown's were low. And so many of my friends had a clear goal to get out of Philly before their children were ready to start school. Like Norristown, Philadelphia public schools would not be best for my mom friends' kids. People would announce their impending move, and someone would always comment "Hey, you gotta' do what is best for your family." Philadelphia, PA is where I live and Norristown, PA is where I work. They are separated by 13 miles and no matter how you drive from one to the other you are passing through school districts that are so many families' goals. 13 miles apart yet the students in both Philadelphia and Norristown share more in common than the districts that border Philly.

### **Beginning to See the Problem**

I chose to teach in Norristown and as a result, I have observed, learned, and now aim to change the style in which we push rigorous state-mandated learning objectives. With fourteen years of experience, I can say I have learned more from my students than they have ever learned from me. Early in my career, I got through the tough moments by saying "when people are the hardest to love is when they need the most love." My deeply rooted foundation in agape love, the love of all people, from my mom and church has been my fuel. They taught me empathy, to embrace teachable moments, and to strive to develop positive relationships to empower students to see the inherent good within them. At this time, however, I was ignorant of the historical and systemic racialized oppression that was pushed onto students of color without consent.

Year after year, my classrooms were filled with students of color saying, “I do not care.” What is more, this apathy to learning manifested in disruptive classroom behavior. Like me, my students had a bad relationship with education. For them, school was a place where you got in trouble, you were not free or trusted, your gifts were hidden, and you believed that grades and scores were a part of your identity. I wanted to understand why there was so much anger, apathy, and frustration around learning. I initially saw the connection with state standardized tests each year. I was cognizant to their impact on my students but, ignorant of the systemic racism they perpetuated.

I was a student who struggled to understand, as I call it, “the game of school.” I got into teaching because I wanted to help students that also struggled to find success. I learned that once the No Child Left Behind Act was put into place, our schools became data-driven to perpetuate the inequity-minded, competitive, neoliberal system of accountability. Standardized tests became both federally and state mandated. Textbooks changed as you could now buy textbooks that were specific to your state's standards and teaching style. Like the ocean, education is constantly in motion, a moving target. In President Obama’s Race to the Top (2009) initiative, the standardized tests encouraged common core standards that furthered the gap between students' and parents' understanding of the content. Children became islands in the ocean, students could no longer look to their parents for help as I looked to my mom for help.

Teaching in a low-achieving Title 1 school in the neoliberal data-driven era, teachers must dance between two worlds, what the state wants and what the community needs. As I will demonstrate in this thesis, systemic racism and white supremacy have used educational institutions and policies (such as NCLB) as tools to maintain the hegemonic neo-liberal

colonial structure of American society. Because of this, schools have created an environment where student apathy supersedes student efficacy and agency, which cannot thrive when curriculums are designed to prepare students for a test that was designed for BIPOC to fail.

### **Seeking Solutions**

I began looking for a graduate degree program that allowed me the flexibility to research the root of this issue while developing my interest in a potential solution: Social Emotional Learning (SEL). In the classroom apathy, resistance, and low standardized test scores made me feel trapped and I wanted to bring positivity and love to the school community I proudly serve. A coworker and I started creating and distributing a weekly lesson that focused on spreading good throughout our halls, unknowingly we were putting a SEL framework into practice. Students looked forward to the lessons. Soon our ideas were included in the Comprehensive School Improvement (CSI) plan, and I was named the head of the SEL Committee. Our initial approach was explicit teacher-led lessons. When Covid-19 hit in the spring of 2020, we resorted to online resources that were optional to use. In my room, I could see that the consistent implicit teachable moments had more impact on the students than the explicit once-a-week lessons. I wanted to learn more about SEL and relied heavily on the Collaborative for Academic Social Emotional Learning (CASEL).

In 2020 I saw a window of opportunity and enrolled in a graduate program that I had been interested in since 2018. Classes were online and my family's after-school activities were limited. In the fall of 2020, I registered for West Chester University's Transformative Education and Social Change (TESC) master's program. This milestone moment coincided with being a virtual teacher and having weekly meetings with Pennsylvania assigning a

comprehensive support and improvement team to help me further develop Stewart Middle School's SEL initiative.

Between my own initial research on developing SEL lessons, the comprehensive philosophical and historical look at education in West Chester's TESC program, and the weekly meetings with the CSI team, I was beginning to see how SEL can not only shape the climate and culture of a school but, could also disrupt the power and oppression dynamics that thrive under neoliberal policies that use standardized tests to maintain the capitalist structure. Under these structures, human development and individual needs are marginalized and subordinated to the test data. However, at that time I was also not addressing the effects of the historical oppression experienced by BIPOC in the SEL work that I was doing at that time. Students need a space to unpack their identity and be given opportunities to develop their voice, to build self-efficacy, and to find their agency. Historical racist oppression, however, has shaped the experiences of BIPOC people in profound ways. As I have seen in my own classroom, historical racial trauma has placed stone walls around BIPOC feelings and emotions, particularly in relation to schools, jobs, and economic mobility. Like the stones Michelangelo used, these walls must be chiseled away so the individual can uncover their true beauty. Students of color should be empowered to see themselves as the artist, the stone, and the statue. In a 2018 podcast, Michelle Obama and Oprah Winfrey sat down to discuss Obama's recent release of her autobiography, *Becoming*. The two dynamic black women discussed their experiences of growing up as black girls in America.

Oprah read the following quote about Obama's understanding of her grandfather, Dandy's, cantankerous ways "Gradually he downgraded his hopes of college...discrimination altered the destinies of generations of African Americans...limiting

their income, opportunities and eventually their aspirations.” Michelle Obama, the former first lady, went on to describe her grandfather Dandy as being "a brilliant man, should have been a college professor.” She came to better understand how such a smart man could be so angry through conversations on the drive home from grandparents' house. Her parents would explain that his bitterness stemmed from the “plight of black men.” She goes on to explain that “in a culture of racism and inequity where a lot of people don’t get the opportunity even if they have the skill.” Her parents through meaningful conversation allowed her to develop an understanding and along with that came “compassion and empathy.” Obama’s words were poignant in to better understand the racial trauma of systemic racism as “there’s something that happens to a man, a person, who knows deep inside that they are more than what their opportunities allow them to be allow them to be...For Dandy it bubbled up into a discontent that he couldn’t shake.” The Young Michelle learned to be compassionate and empathetic to her the systemic racism that her grandfather faced his entire life. Oprah steps in calling this “carrying their own broken dreams,” when families are forced to carry on without the power to freely change their path because of racial oppression.

### **Identifying My Concern**

Choosing to become a teacher I never considered the relationships that I would build with so many students. From them I learned that within everyone is a genius. Over the years I have been saddened that school was not a place of unlocking gifts and talents. Rather, it was a place of discipline and apathy. This is why my thematic concern is about disrupting neoliberal policies that misguide student efficacy and identity through historical oppression and falsified cultural legacies. Coupling knowledge and research of systemic racism and

transformative social emotional practices, I will explore how schools can play a vital role in helping students learn how to use a critical lens to unpack their own identities, internalized biases, and racism. Every person is a gift and within them is a gift. Their purpose is to learn their gift and share it with the world. No matter if you are quiet or chatty, whether school is difficult or easy, whether you are black or white, whether you are English or Spanish speaking, we all have greatness within us. Since being in the TESC program I have gone on to see how BIPOC students' identities are powerfully shaped by the systemic racism that has made policies to maintain the power that hegemonically exists within the dominant group. If school communities create transformative SEL frameworks, we can disrupt the oppressive culture that impedes the identity, efficacy, agency, and voice of BIPOC students. Only then can education become a tool to disrupt the power and oppression dynamic, and truly serve all students.

### **Preview of Thesis**

Within this thesis, I will argue that neoliberal policies need to give way in the name of equity and well-being. Schools that have been financially oppressed through neoliberal policies need additional financial support to prioritize transformative practices that will allow schools communities to allocate funds to address policies and practices that will foster well-being and cultural legacy. One facet, Transformative SEL, is a school culture that explicitly and implicitly encourages the entire school community to take up the opportunity to unpack their identity, internalized biases, and racism, in order to build well-being, efficacy, and agency. This will allow students to no longer feel alienated from the rigor, rather they will shape the rigor to their strengths, needs, and cultural values. Students will be empowered through choice and leadership in what and how they learn. Adults connected to

the school will also be able to give priority to their cultural legacy and values rather than unconditionally accepting what people in positions of power have chosen for their families.

In particular, the following research questions will guide my work:

1. How have the forces of white supremacy, systemic racism, colonialism, and neoliberalism interfered with BIPOC students' development of identity, efficacy, voice, and agency?
2. How can a transformative Social Emotional Learning framework be implemented to encourage BIPOC students' development of identity, efficacy, voice, and agency?

Since equity is at the core of transformative Social Emotional Learning, there must be a critical look into how the power and oppression dynamic has perpetuated inequity, false narratives, and harmful neoliberal policies, curriculums, and discipline. This thesis will identify the oppressive systems and structures within education and then seek to shift those structures into a liberatory education. This will raise the consciousness of individuals to see that oppression ends when we raise awareness, decrease discrimination, and seek social justice. This is done when we prioritize the human development of students and shift learning from nonconsensual curriculums to those created by the community for the community.

In Chapter Two I will highlight terms that are key to understanding the critical nature of this thesis. I will then go into my philosophy of education discussing my beliefs of the role of education in the development of well-being within the scope of using a critical lens that analyzes and addresses social and racial injustices. Chapter three is an in-depth

look at the historical context that has influenced the identity and self-efficacy of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). I focused on the policies and practices that have been used to reproduce white supremacy and neoliberalism while disenfranchising and oppressing BIPOC. I conclude chapter three with looking to black leaders and their call to action to counter the racism and oppression.

Chapter four is my plan of implementing a systemic framework that utilizes transformative social emotional learning (SEL), SEL with a critical lens. This 18-month plan builds a SEL team that is community based and is driven to implement SEL that embodies diversity, equity, and inclusion. The thesis will conclude with chapter five giving a timeline and action steps to ensure that the program keeps critical pedagogy in the foreground through using critical action research to keep the power and future of the program aligned with the people that will be most affected, the parents, teachers, and students.

## Chapter Two

### Theoretical Frameworks

In this chapter I will elaborate on the theoretical frameworks that have guided my thesis. First, in my critical lexicon, I will share key concepts that have informed my research surrounding BIPOC students' development of identity, efficacy, voice, and agency. I will provide not only a definition of these concepts, but also my own analysis, describing the relationship between the concept and my thesis concern. Next, I will provide my philosophy of education, which will outline why I have chosen to research and address this issue in the first place. My philosophy of education centers key thinkers and experiences that explain what I believe education should be and what it is not now.

### Critical Lexicon

<b>Capitalism</b>	
<b>Definition</b>	An economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership of capital goods, by investments that are determined by private decision, and by prices, production, and the distribution of goods that are determined by competition in a free market (Miriam-webster, 2023).
<b>Analysis</b>	American society prides itself on the free-market capitalism that has shaped our economy. This allows corporations to sell items with little government oversight regarding the prices and profit that can be charged or earned.
<b>As it pertains to this thesis</b>	Public schools are government institutions that outsource all materials including textbooks and standardized tests to the capitalist economy. In many Pennsylvania districts, for example, the math textbooks currently used are made by Pearson, the same people that make the PSSAs. The test scores are then used to encourage property values in the market. In other words, our schools serve a key purpose in the capitalist economy.

<b>Colonialism</b>	
<b>Definition</b>	Domination of a people or area by a foreign state or nation; the practice of extending and maintaining political, cultural, and economic control over another people or area.
<b>Analysis</b>	Colonialism comes from the colonization or taking over of land, people, and resources. It is deeply rooted in practicing domination and subjugation of anyone involved in its structures or institutions. Like imperialism colonialism is centered on the European conquest of indigenous societies. Decolonization counters the dominance and subjugated hegemonic norms that exist within colonial structures and institutions (Kohn & Reddy, 2023)
<b>As it pertains to this thesis</b>	The colonial structure that exists in school has students following the directions and expectations of a dominant figure (the teacher and/or principal) much like colonized states and peoples were forced to do. Students must adhere to the rules and expectations of how to dress, walk, and what to study. The students have little voice into what goes on in school as the school's curriculum is designed to address the standardized tests administered throughout the year.

<b>Egalitarianism</b>	
<b>Definition</b>	A belief in human equality especially with respect to social, political, and economic affairs; a social philosophy advocating the removal of inequalities among people (Merriam-Webster, 2021).
<b>Analysis</b>	American society has deeply rooted systemic racism and racial biases, which are anti-egalitarian. Institutions like education, however, can counter anti-egalitarian societies and allow individuals to experience the possibilities of equality on a smaller scale so that inequities can be addressed on a much larger scale.
<b>As it pertains to this thesis</b>	Educators' style of praxis needs to include an egalitarian classroom culture and encourage our students to envision a better world, one where all policies are written to encourage equality for all.

Self-efficacy	
<b>Definition</b>	“Self-efficacy is a personal belief in one’s capability to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (Artino Jr., 2012).
<b>Analysis</b>	Self-efficacy is a belief that has placidity, meaning it can grow and shrink depending on the setting and the challenge. It evolves over one’s lifetime and is transformative when a challenge is mastered within an extraordinary experience that is physical, cognitive, and/or psychological in nature (Rodebaugh, 2006).
<b>As it pertains to this thesis</b>	To change apathy to agency students will pace through a period where they will be developing their self-efficacy. Students experience self-efficacy only when they are challenged. I argue that apathy exists because of a lack of self-efficacy. A student that does not like themselves or does not believe in themselves will not be able to reach agency.

Inequity	
<b>Definition</b>	A lack of fairness or justice in the way people are treated.
<b>Analysis</b>	When there is inequity, oppression exists. We disrupt the relationship between inequity and oppression by instead working toward giving people what they <i>need</i> rather than what they “earned” or merely the same as others.
<b>As it Pertains to this thesis</b>	We operate in a society that is inequitable. There is a direct relationship between equity and oppression. Educators that are invested in equity are seeing the disparities between the dominant groups and the oppressed groups. Education must be liberatory for all in both funding, rigor, and necessary supports. Educators need to challenge themselves and create opportunities for students to identify the disparities and biases between gender, race, religious affiliation, and sexual orientation.

<b>Hegemony</b>	
<b>Definition</b>	Hegemony happens when a dominate group has deemed that something is “normal and natural” it combines “force and consent to maintain an unequal system where the vast majorities of labor for the benefit of an elite few” (Malott, 2011).
<b>Analysis</b>	Hegemony happens without many people aware that it is happening. “It is what it is” or “But, that is how we have always done things” are two common sayings that reproduce a system that involves structured hegemonic power and oppression. Accepting how things are and those in power being resistant or not open to change, allows for both power and submission or oppression. Counter-hegemony can occur when pedagogy encourages educators and students to identify numerous ways that power causes oppression (i.e., through critical pedagogy).
<b>As it Pertains to this thesis</b>	Educators and students need to analyze history as it pertains to them. The hegemony that exists in American educational institutions is deeply rooted in inequity. Public education is a consensual hegemony that promotes neoliberalism (Malott, 2014). Disruption of the hegemonic institutions lies within counter-hegemonic structures within current institutions. Allowing stakeholders within school communities to have a voice in the planning, implementing, evaluating, and the adjustment to institutions encourages counter-hegemony. Counter-hegemony is imperative to critical pedagogy because it is a teaching practice that disrupts the power and restructures our classrooms based on equity. For this thesis, I will argue that counter-hegemony can occur through transformative Social Emotional Learning, which prioritizes students’ well-being over meeting the rigorous demands of standardized.

<b>Minoritized</b>	
<b>Definition</b>	When a person or group is made subordinate in status to a more dominant group or its members.
<b>Analysis</b>	Traditionally, people pushed to society's margins have been labeled as being marginalized. However, when someone is pushed to the margins because of being a part of a minority group, it is now called being <i>minoritized</i> . Minoritization in U.S. society shapes the identities of BIPOC.

<b>As it Pertains to this thesis</b>	In this paper I will research the identity development of minoritized students and how being minoritized affects their self-efficacy, voice, and agency. I argue that minoritization shapes the identity of BIPOC youth causing apathy and lack of well-being. This manifests in disengagement with education decreasing their sense of self-efficacy, voice, and agency.
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<b>Neoliberalism</b>	
<b>Definition</b>	Neoliberalism is a structure that exists within society and is governed on the principle that capital gains outweigh human needs. This structure encourages capital markets to flourish with limited government oversight. Neoliberal policies are present when smaller governments, increased taxes, and decreased government spending on social responsibilities. It looks at people as monetary value; how can the people in power grow their monetary gains from essential human activities (Metcalf, 2017).
<b>Analysis</b>	<p>Neoliberalism is a systemic ideology within society in which people are forced to live under the oppression of the capitalist free market. Because the market is a competitive arena, it limits the potentiality of a majority of the people that are not within the dominant group. Thus, neoliberal education policies that foster free market competition (i.e., standardized testing), maintain the social class structure through limiting the potentiality of the majority of students that are not within the dominant group.</p> <p>The Flint, Michigan water crisis is an example of the harmful effects of Neoliberalism structures. Nestle corporation being able to pump, bottle and eventually sell between 200-400 gallons of Michigan's ground water for roughly \$200 per year (Bach, 2018). The effects of removing and selling the water prioritized economic well-being over citizens' well-being. In April of 2014, the city of Flint decided, for financial reasons, to switch water suppliers (Denchak, 2018). The result was gallons of toxic water ran through the citizens faucets. Nestle promoted itself as saviors as they distributed free bottled water to flint residence. Nestle using Michigan's groundwater did not stop to ensure that Michigan's residence had safe water rather, they shifted to producing reports for their stakeholders and shareholders that emphasized their corporate responsibilities to water sustainability. In 2017 they acknowledge and excuse their responsibility to protecting humans "We know that human rights abuses can occur in our supply chain, but identifying such abuses may be difficult. Supply chains</p>

	are often complex, and lacking transparency, resulting in an obscure picture” (Nestle, 2017, p. 48). Eventually the free bottled water distribution stopped, and the residents of Flint were left to regain their trust in the social responsibilities within government structures.
<b>As it Pertains to this thesis</b>	Neoliberal policies and structures value economic gains over equity and human well-being. Transformative Social Emotional Learning is designed to call on education to take a stance and prioritize equity and human well-being over capitalistic agendas. This counter-neoliberal approach empowers the school community members to plan, implement, and assess their designed program to see if students are developing greater well-being is developing. In order to optimize Transformative SEL I will also argue in this paper that students are used as cogs to create capital gains for textbook and test manufactures. Seeing that with all the “reform” there has been marginal growth in low socioeconomic BIPOC communities. The federal and states centralized power over mandating standardized test increased spending to address and administer standardized tests. I call on the radical approach of eliminating the standardized tests and allowing school communities to use critical action research to create curriculum that addresses the specific educational needs for youth within their community to flourish.

<b>Oppression</b>	
<b>Definition</b>	An unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power (Merriam-Webster, 2021).
<b>Analysis</b>	<p>Oppression can only exist under power that denies equality and equity. Within a society, a dominant group creates policies, practices, and procedures that benefit the dominant group and oppresses others. It is a pattern within the system(s) that works to benefit some rather than bring equity to all.</p> <p>One structure of oppression is the separation between the teacher and the student. The teacher possesses the content and decides what will be shared with the student. This structure places a tremendous amount of power within the teacher.</p>
<b>As it Pertains to this thesis</b>	Teachers that seek to understand oppression will have a better understanding of their students, their students’ families, and BIPOC communities. Oppression has been an overlooked topic and teachers that are comfortable and knowledgeable with the topic of oppression will be able to allow a space for students to question, debate, converse, and

	research the systemic oppression that has been the foundation for American society.
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<b>Social Emotional Learning</b>	
<b>Definition</b>	“We define social and emotional learning (SEL) as an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel, and show empathy for others, establish, and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions” (CASEL, 2023).
<b>Analysis</b>	Social emotional learning is a framework that has school communities set intentional explicit and implicit lessons that address CASEL’s 5 core competencies: <i>Responsible Decision Making, Social Awareness, Self-Awareness, Self-Management, and Relationship Skills</i> .
<b>As it Pertains to this thesis</b>	SEL is a crack in schools to shift the focus of the day away from the traditional colonial structure of math, reading, writing, social studies, and science. Rather than the teacher giving the knowledge they are asking the student to study themselves and learn who they are and how they can best experience well-being and flourish.

<b>Transformative Social Emotional Learning (SEL)</b>	
<b>Definition</b>	“Transformative SEL” is a form of SEL implementation where young people and adults build strong, respectful, and lasting relationships to engage in co-learning. It facilitates critical examination of individual and contextual factors that contribute to inequities and collaborative solutions that lead to personal, community, and societal well-being.” (CASEL 2023)
<b>Analysis</b>	Using Transformative SEL with a critical lens allows students to explore who they are and how their own identity has been shaped around moments both before and during their life.
<b>As it Pertains to this thesis</b>	Transformative SEL gives students an understanding of their identity therefore helping them build a more positive sense of self-efficacy, voice, and agency.

## **My Philosophy of Education**

Education is a powerful tool for both the student and the individuals that control the culture and curriculum for children ages 5-18 in the United States. Children born into a life of intellectual or class wealth have the privilege of various private schools that can closely align with their beliefs and family manifestos. People seeking more control over students learning can select to homeschool or attend a cyber school. The final option in America is attending your local public or charter schools. Neoliberal policies govern America's public schools creating a structure that promotes free markets while minimizing government spending. Due to neoliberal policies, mandated tests require texts books that support the standards of the tests. State officials use the children's scores in part as a tool to distribute funds and they do so inequitably. The colonial power and oppression dynamics thrive in America's public and charter schools. For generations, black, indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) have been minoritized, and generations of misshaping individuals' identities. Their voice, efficacy, agency, and well-being diminish within the institutions; therefore, the dominant group upholds their power and the neoliberal structure.

## **My Experience**

Throughout my upbringing, I considered education a tool to provide me with a good life. Despite my educational struggles, I chose to carry on and attend college, believing a college degree would provide opportunities. The jobs I could get from high school did not appeal to me. In my 18-year-old mind, all I needed was a college degree, and then I could enter any industry. I could not have imagined the two moments when I expressed interest in the industry and two men looked at me and said, "women do not traditionally do these jobs." I accepted their knowledge and decided to choose another industry, allowing the hegemonic

structure of gender to shape my potentiality. With an undergraduate degree in business administration and no connections, I was entry-level at the bottom of the corporate ladder. I spent my days making copies, picking up pizzas, and answering the phones when needed. Within four years of graduating from my undergraduate degree, I returned to school for my teaching degree. My graduate-level certification made me feel I had more opportunities than my business management degree. I was certified to teach, and there were schools everywhere.

As a teacher, I would be more in control of my day, and I could use my creativity and energetic personality to power through lessons that allowed students to learn and practice new skills. I could turn my experience with disliking school into an incident where children found learning fun and fulfilling. What I found when I entered teaching was a highly structured institution. The educational content, curriculum, culture, and clear behavior expectations governed the adults and children. From the moment a child enters the school until they exit, they are monitored, managed, and corrected. The children's faces as they run out the doors at the end of the day say it all. They are ready to be free from being told what to wear, where to sit, what to read, what to learn, and what to discuss. I am a mother of three children, and all three attended their neighborhood catchment K-8th grade urban public school. In the early years, I would often refer to their demeanor after school as being caged animals in their early elementary years.

What I was hoping for in education, I learned, was not there. American schools provide a highly standardized education that addresses learning standards over student well-being. Researchers like Caroline Tomlinson (1999) found ways to address various learning needs through the concept of differentiation. Differentiation adjusts materials to meet

individual student needs. Reading materials are simplified or made to be more complex based on the student's needs. What I wanted as a teacher was to be creative and loving. What I found as a teacher, there is never enough time in the day to do all I believe is best for the students and all that is expected. With every new textbook launched, school district teachers gripe about the frustration of how to encourage student growth with the limited time for each subject. Teachers use their expertise to dissect teacher manuals and online platforms made by textbook companies offering differentiation. In some cases, the same companies that make the standardized tests also make the textbooks. Who chooses what children will and will not learn? Is it the state or the for-profit textbook companies that must remain innovative and current to the standards?

Communities are expected to accept that the material being taught is essential to their growth and prosperity; this I view as *non-consensual learning*. American schools have allowed people in power to select standards and learning goals that are expected of every child. Throughout the school year students will take a series of tests that serve as check points to monitor if and how much growth is happening. I believe, however, that public schools should be institutions that meet the community's needs rather than meeting the test's needs. The test results are marginally shared with the students. Teachers will analyze the data to address all learning standards while sculpting their craft using textbooks, differentiation, various technology-based learning platforms, and hands-on learning opportunities to have students receive the most growth possible. In turn, the student's work or responses are converted into data that creates statistics on the school's strengths and struggles. Once the state has prepared this data, it is shared with the public. This information shapes the price of homes, "segmented by the quality of public education" (Goodman &

Thibodeau, 2003). Homes in high-performing school districts cost more and sell quicker than homes in low-performing districts. Student growth on tests then, serve neoliberal policies as the children are human capital necessary cogs in the capitalistic structure that benefits test developers while maintaining the segregation of schools' structures of the 1950's (Carrillo & Salhotra, 2022). Because of this, over the past two decades, content has become more specialized, focusing on the standards. Teachers in my building have 80 or more students and are expected to focus more on content than on the well-being of students. This school year, I have been offered the unique opportunity of having 25 students all day and teaching all four content areas. It has been expressed to me that my students were selected based on their social and emotional needs coupled with their academic potential. I have found that having the same group of students is much easier to focus on and the students' strengths and needs in social, emotional, and academic arenas. I can build better relationships with the parents and understand their expectations for their children. In turn, together, we discuss what the parents want for their child, and we all have a shared goal for the children to learn how great they are. Cross-curricularly I weave SEL (Social Emotional Learning), incorporating it into the classroom climate and culture, giving them choices and a voice in their learning.

### **My Vision of Education**

Education is a process, and the rigorous content often serves as a disconnect between children, parents, and teachers. In the 7-hour school day, students are expected to focus on content without learning how to be a student. The idea is that all children can inherently sit for extended periods in chairs that are more functional than comfortable and listen to complex material that does not connect to their life. It is my belief that learning is an

opportunity for liberation and power over oneself. Through public education, students should develop curiosity in content that will allow them to explore topics that will build their capacity to believe in themselves and develop self-efficacy, voice, and agency.

By incorporating Transformative SEL frameworks into educational institutions, students can practice critical pedagogy and identify and disrupt the power and oppression of society from within the institutions. American schools were founded with colonial ideals allowing systemic racism and inequity to prevail over equality and egalitarianism and this structure must be disrupted if we want educational and social justice equity. We must look for “cracks” within the current institutions to disrupt the power and oppression relationship within society. In this thesis, I argue that the American education system must shift away from the neoliberal education structure, choosing children over capitalism. This shift prioritizes human development through encouraging educational experience that are systemically structured within a framework that fosters Transformative SEL. I will later in this chapter give an in-depth look at what SEL is when it is uses a critical, transformative, lens. In brief, a transformative social and emotional framework enhances well-being while countering neoliberalism. The school community members are creating and implementing a SEL framework. Together they are looking within their community for the needs and strengths that are present. Then groups of people come together over a three-year period to critically address the social and emotional needs of the entire school community.

This transformative approach shifts the school’s focus from “teaching to the test” (a submissive act), to empowering the people within the institutions to create a grassroots framework that is made for and made by the school community. This marginalizing for the

dominant group creates space for people that have been silenced to have a voice and people that lack self-efficacy to use their passion to build their agency.

### **The Neoliberal Education Structure**

Standardized tests aim to measure academic learning that is structured around deeply Eurocentric values and knowledge that often stand at odds with BOPIC students' cultural heritage (Au, 2022). These tests, however, are embedded in the current neoliberal structure of education in the United States. This creates an environment where students and communities of color are not co-authors of their learning, but instead subject to the agendas of others. As expressed by indigenous author Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2014), "My experience of education, from kindergarten to graduate school, was one of coping with someone else's agenda, curriculum, and pedagogy, someone who was not interested in my well-being" (p. 6). Simpson, describing her school experience as a Nishnaabeg, explains that the curriculum in U.S. schools has been designed by and for the dominant group. What is more, as stated by Simpson (2014), that dominant group did not "ask for my consent to participate in their system" (p. 6).

Simpson's experience is not unique. She, like many BIPOC students, was expected to conform to or assimilate into a white world. This hegemony within colonial structures such U.S. schools, intentionally creates an environment that "requires that people participate in their oppression" (Grande, 2015). Because in hegemonic Eurocentric societies, the dominant group inhibits both information and curiosity, the people become accustomed to the way things are and accept that way of living as the only way to live. "When a discourse has been adopted by a dominant society, it is said to have been hegemonized because it is viewed as normal and natural, that it is *just the way it is* (Malott, 2014).

This system of neoliberal standardization does not encourage questioning; thus, we create and encourage ignorance through ignoring, shaming, and/or silencing diverse cultural norms that could challenge the dominate structure. Withholding information that promotes views of who we are and the knowledge that thrives from within ourselves and in our families brings a keen sense of identity, self-efficacy, agency, and voice. Well-being can only happen in a place of belonging, curiosity, and collaborative problem solving. When structures are critically analyzed then people can identify the power and the oppression that results of the choices that are made for children. When transformative SEL is implemented with fidelity, students seek the ethical truth through historical and culturally responsive practices to understand and analyze themselves and their interactions within society.

A truly educational experience encourages students to learn about different ideologies, perspectives, and cultures. Learners should grow in a way that they and their ancestors are valued, respected, and are a part of everyone's history. The dominant structure is safe when pedagogies reinforce educative experiences that promote dominance, ignorance, and oppression while minimizing or eliminating the critical thought that values diverse cultures, perspectives, and ideologies. This mis-educative experience produces conduct, not consciousness.

### **Transformative Social Emotional Learning**

Critical theory and critical pedagogy allow deep examination of policies and hegemonic norms within human relationships and interactions. Critical theory is a view of how social systems and groups function under ideologies that establish a dominant group and how that group shows power over others. Critical pedagogy is this theory through an educational lens. When critical pedagogy exists within an academic setting, hegemonic

Eurocentric and neoliberal dominant powers can be identified and counter-hegemonic systems can be created to replace relationships of power and oppression. Critical pedagogy is grounded in the belief that through thought and action, we can *transform* a society that functions with power and oppression into a society that “demands that we put security, happiness, and freedom of all first and foremost” (Malott, 2014, p. xxv).

Allowing for critical thought and pedagogy to be part of an educational experience can aid teachers and students in disrupting the dominance and oppressive relationships that thrive within neoliberal institutions, creating an ethical educational experience. The Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), a leader in SEL research and development, created an SEL framework with five core competencies to address the human development of students. They are responsible for *decision-making*, *self-awareness*, *self-management*, *social awareness*, and *relationship skills*. See figure one below for a summary of the competencies and the lessons that fall within each competency.



**Figure 1.** SEL Learning Competencies (CASEL, 2017).

These competencies allow for discussions and learning on perspective taking, open-mindedness, cultural legacies, biases, prejudices, empathy, compassion, and just and unjust social norms (CASEL, 2023). Having this framework in place, one can see that critical theory and critical pedagogy are cornerstones to the type of educational experience that SEL can offer.

A framework like CASEL is needed in communities where individuals and the community have been historically minoritized. As mentioned before, neoliberal policies have traditionally been structured to create dominance and oppression. The system fears anyone not within the dominant group stepping up and countering the dominance. For dominant structures to exist, they rely on flipping narratives, placing blame, all to maintain control.

In the years that followed the emancipation, the shame that should have been felt by the oppressors was pushed onto the emancipated Black Americans (DuBois, 1935; Hartman, 1997). W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) was born 1868 four years after Juneteenth, and he lived until 1963, one year before the signing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Being 95 years old, his life stretched from the reconstruction after the American civil war to the American civil rights era. In 1903 he authored the book *The Souls of Black Folk*. He wrote this text for a white audience to understand how, as a black male, he was looked at as *the problem*. To survive and flourish he needed to understand his place in American society while maintaining a positive identity. However, unlike some black men, WEB Dubois did not believe the identity that others viewed of him, because he had black skin. He acknowledged a “double consciousness,” a sense of two identities within one being. To not surrender to apathy Black Americans “see themselves and the world not only through their own eyes as Black people,

but also through the racist eyes of white people (Americans)” (Gingras, 2010). This meant that he could aspire as high as he could and he would reach his true agency, however, he could not outrun his white counter parts as the “dazzling opportunities were theirs, not mine” (DuBois, 1903).

The demanding work of the enslaved black Americans was the evil economic keystone across the southern plantations. The racial violence of slavery did not end in emancipation. It manifested into forced assimilation, social injustices, inequity, and minoritization, and has stretched into every structure and institution in America.

Emancipated people were eager to be educated, but education has always been a threat to the white supremacy. For example, Sor Juana de la Cruz said it beautifully as she described her love of learning at a time when it was illegal for women to learn in Mexico. From the time she was a deeply devoted Christian girl that had an insatiable desire to read and learn. She dressed as a boy and snuck off to school, then became a nun to be able to read. Despite her persistence within her she still felt shame for she was going against the dominant power. In the back and letter styled poem Sor Juana de la Cruz questioned the person that sparked her writing. To her the belief in God’s will was to make her a girl that loved to read, she was gifted by God with a love of learning. She argued that being a woman should not stop a gift from God (Cruz, 1691).

Brave individuals like DuBois and Cruz faced the hegemony of dominant groups and countered the conduct by becoming educated and utilizing both critical thought and critical pedagogy. They followed hegemonic ways but acknowledged and spoke out about the harm they faced within the oppression the dominant groups forced upon them. Miseducation happens when we fail to develop within people an aspiration and desire flourish and make

the world as they know it better (Woodson, 1933). For the masses of oppressed people that have been unknowingly subjugated under dominant hegemonic norms, they have resided in complacency, and succumbed to believing that their identity exists within the dominant groups narrow-minded view. They forfeit their self-efficacy, do as they are told, and avoid violence and agree to being objectified. These thinkers risked it all by not validating the ideology that constructed hegemonic norms to maintain the dominant groups' place in society. They valued their own experiences and desires, therefore forming a self-reflective identity that critically challenged the structure that existed because of falsely constructed and forcefully maintained norms (Malott, 2011; Malott, 2014).

By pairing critical pedagogy with SEL based on the capacities within the five core competencies, we can create a counter-hegemonic framework in education that is truly transformative. Counter hegemony disrupts the structure of power. Both Sur Juan de la Cruz and W.E.B. DuBois faced a hierarchical order that was based on Eurocentric hegemony. Cruz was oppressed because of gender and Du Bois was oppressed because of his race. They both, through a love of learning, experienced a transformative experience when they no longer were willing to accept dominant hegemony. They began to lean into their idea of who they are and build an identity from their sense of self and agency. Critical pedagogy and SEL, we can create similar transformative education experiences in our schools. A transformative educational experience is one when the teacher and the student are learning together to empower school communities to identify areas within the educational structures that allows everyone within the school community to critically self-reflect within the constructs of identity, self-efficacy, and well-being.

### **Transformative SEL: Finding the Cracks**

So far in this paper I have addressed how throughout history the well-being, identity, and agency of BIPOC has been affected from oppression. To disrupt this, we must begin to look for the cracks, the way into the very structures that have allowed neoliberal capitalistic policies and practices to thrive. Sara Lima, a political ethnographer, interviewed Rebecca Tarlau to understand how society and our education can disrupt hegemony. In the interview Tarlau stated that “hegemony is constructed, challenged, and reconstructed” (Tarlau, 2020) in education. Tarlau goes on to discuss how the Brazilian social movement used “public schools to increase their capacities for radical social change.” Lessons were created and taught to challenge Brazil's capitalistic society; create a new way of experiencing life “in the cracks.”

This new society would be free from the bourgeoisie ideology. No longer would the insatiable desires of the upper class be the only way to live. In these cracks within the newly reconstructed hegemony, relationships would grow between teachers and students. Out in the community, students see teachers being both activists and teachers. Without these new ideologies in the state institutions, like schools, the movements could not withstand the neoliberalism dominance that has shaped our society since the time of exploration, settlement, and then colonization.

Tarlau and Malott recognized that capitalism is “an elite class war” where only those that are within the dominant group are winning. The neoliberal structure that has shaped our society is driven by Eurocentrism, but also a class perspective that believes the U.S. system is the “most advanced stage of human development” (Malott, 2011). Malott warned that those in the dominant group will never acknowledge the imbalance of power and wealth as a

problem. Those that are oppressed under this Eurocentric neoliberal order suffer the most, but society will never flourish to its full potential while this exists.

We must find the cracks” in society to disrupt the structure causing power and oppression. Urban schools should no longer be punished for the systemic neoliberal Eurocentric policies that have created “educational debts” (Ladson Billings, 2006). Educational debts are the educational deficits that have continued to grow year after year from policies that produce inequitable education for communities of color. These learning debts have been exacerbated by neoliberal policies, practices, and procedures that amplify historical inequities.

The focus on neoliberal Eurocentric standardized tests has not aided in reducing the educational debt that has caused academic deficits. Building a counter hegemonic structure within schools encourages the community to explore their identity and use critical pedagogy to question the policies, processes, and practices that maintain the structures within institutions. Disrupting race and racism lies within counter-hegemonic structures within current institutions. Teaching a student to use curiosity to find the voice that comes from passion allows learning that is grander than what a teacher can offer. With the use of Transformative SEL, the community’s voice will be echoing within a critical action plan. Power will shift from privilege to possibilities and counter hegemony, imperative to critical pedagogy, disrupts the structure allowing for a new structure within the institution.

The first thing that I would bring into the educational institutions is a systemic SEL initiative. At the core of change, schools need to increase the care and concern for students’ well-being. The trauma of being oppressed has left communities in the shadows of physical and mental healthcare. On top of the generational oppression that communities have,

students have faced racist government policies that have made schools systems places for data collection and rigid curriculums that are geared towards standardized tests. Malott (2011) calls out these tests, arguing that they have taken control and are driving the curriculum within our schools. Utilizing Tarlau's (2020) conceptualization of prefigurative politics, SEL in schools develops “autonomous practices” within “state institutions... that are a daily part of people’s lives” using the “bourgeois institutions” as the place where school communities learn to identify and denounce current oppressive practices and create alternatives that counter-hegemonic neoliberal norms (pp. 15-16). Having prefigurative politics structured into educational institutions, women had leadership roles, making them educational activists and essential to the decision-making process (Estrada, 2020). SEL similarly allows for the stakeholders, parents, students, and school leaders, to come together and create a program or curriculum that represents the community.

Through using CASEL’s resources, school communities can begin to structure both implicit and explicit lessons that meet the needs of the families, the community, and the school. It starts with SEL for adults; both parents and school staff are included in this practice. Then after a year or so lessons are developed for students, and then in a three-year period they are evaluated and reworked to ensure they foster equity and well-being within the school community. Schools provide systemic support that encourages students to explore themselves in a structure that develops their coping strategies, reshapes their subjectivity through unpacking biases, and helps them better understand the social dynamics that exist within diverse ideologies and cultures.

Within the five core competencies, schools are offered the cracks to insert critical pedagogical practices that allow students to look at; both societal and school structures, as

well as explore who they are and how their true self fits within and can bring ethical and equitable change to their community. Students should also be able to determine their path when exploring SEL. Unlike in neoliberal structures, the educational aim of SEL is aiding in the understanding and development of identity, voice, and agency that supports social changes that bring well-being, equity, and increases people's capacity to love. More importantly, SEL is transparent and created by the people that will consciously participate in the developing, learning, and teaching.

Using Transformative SEL to disrupt neoliberalism reconfigures the environment so well-being is an essential part of the education system. A transformative educational experience such as this involves the teacher stepping down as the vanguard (Tarlau, 2020) in order to expose students to the exploration of the self. This inversion of the traditional power relationship cannot exist unless the student is the expert of themselves and their experience. Thus, the culture and climate of a classroom must be student-centered rather than relying on the teacher to operate in an authoritarian role. The authoritarian role means the teacher has tremendous control or power over the students. Neoliberal societies reside in selecting people to serve in roles to control people, like authoritarian teachers. To be ruled in an authoritarian way we must submit just as educational institutions ask students to submit. The students themselves have little to no say in the daily activities or structure of the classroom or learning. This pedagogical style reproduces the hegemonic hierarchical power rather than allowing for culturally responsive teaching that is both student-centered and liberatory.

## **Undermining Racial Hierarchy Through SEL**

Based on the 2017-2018 data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) 80% of teachers are white, 8% Hispanic, and 6% black. The NCES also looks at the percentage breakdown of public-school students' races, and in the of fall 2018 47% of students were white, 15% were black, and 27% were Hispanic. In urban districts, those numbers shift even more. In the 8th largest school district in the nation, the School District of Philadelphia (SDP), their demographics show that 49% of the students identify as black while 70% of the teachers identified as white.

These racial dynamics make it even more imperative for educators to release their role as the authoritarian vanguard. Teachers of color are underrepresented in public schools. The black experience in America is vastly different from the experience of the dominant white person. Under these conditions, SEL can easily reproduce whiteness or white supremacy if educators do not actively work to decenter neoliberal Eurocentric values. SEL must ethically encourage the school community to unpack biases and unfurl the generational subjectivity of people of color. SEL cannot be used as a behavior system or conduct plan, standing in as an expert of students' experiences and acting as a vanguard striving to cram "student's skulls full of poorly digested knowledge...mouthing half-truths in order to shore up his power and the social order" (Rancière, 1991, p. 7).

In communities of color where systemic generational oppression from hierarchical power structures have shaped educational institutions, students must not be educated within hegemonic power relationships. This is miseducation, thwarting the liberatory education that allows one to freely access their knowledge (Rancière, 1991). Rancière goes on to describe how in educational institutions hegemonic power structures have trained society to believe

that they are unable to learn without a master. However, the truth is most people are made by lessons they have taught themselves. When they recognize that they can indeed teach themselves this is when emancipation or liberation begins. Teachers encourage identity exploration, all aspects, describing a method, but not supplying a concrete set of directives is honoring the student's truth and acknowledging their experience as unique, disrupting the power and oppression. This new student-centered structure disrupts the power dynamic by embodying the student as the expert to explore their own identity, voice, and agency.

Implementing educational experiences within schools that encourage critical thought and critical pedagogy disrupts the power structure within society. As school communities begin to understand the level of self-efficacy they have when given opportunities to shape programming around their needs, they begin to counter the social constructs and falsified identity dominate groups produced and maintained through policies and practices. This systemic oppression exists in all facets of society including education systems. Building knowledge school communities be able to counter the social constructs and work to development well-being. The harmful effects of capitalism that thrives within neoliberal practices and policies can no longer thrive when we use agency. Critical self-reflection allows adults and youth with school systems to participate in seeking out and disrupting the structures that produce and maintain oppression.

Creating the programs, curriculum, and frameworks educational institutions can be structured around the needs to serve the community the institution serves. Because of this, institutions across our nation will prioritize well-being with human development. People within oppressed BIPOC communities are minoritized, receiving inequitable educational experiences and suffering alienation and racial trauma. To disrupt the power and oppression

that is created within this system, educational institutions must use the cracks to create and implement transformative SEL frameworks. If done through the lens of equity and critical pedagogy, students, teachers, families, care givers, and other community members will be able to participate in the creation of an egalitarian society that values human development over neoliberal capitalistic power.

## Chapter Three

### Historical & Literature Review

As stated by Dr. Martin Luther King (1957), “In order to look to the future, it is often necessary to get a clear picture of the past. In order to know where we are going, it is often necessary to see from whence we have come.” With this in mind, I will do what Dr. King suggests, and include “a survey of past developments in the area of race relations.” In this chapter I will analyze how white supremacy has created and evolved to maintain systemic racist structures into the fabric of American society. I will connect how this oppression has worked to control identity and well-being through both hegemonic practices and racist policies. Then I will go on to identify some current research that has found BIPOC has lower well-being and efficacy and the current neoliberal policies have continued to shape the identity, self-efficacy, and agency in BIPOC communities.

### My Reflection on Race and Racism in the U.S.

I have never shied away from tough conversations; I suppose many would say I have a bold way of living. In recent years I have learned when to speak and when to listen of race and racism in America. I had a compelling morning phone call with my mom about my drive to work one day. My mom was born in 1938 in Baltimore, Maryland. She then moved to Tampa, FL, then Gainesville, FL. She spent her summers as a little girl in Lexington, Virginia on our family farm and her college years (1956 to 1960) in Lynchburg, Virginia, and Washington D.C. I happened to bring up my current reading with my Urban Education class about Jim Crow South. Since my mom experienced Jim Crow south I wanted to hear

her first-hand accounts. Then she shocked me by declaring that she had no memories of Jim Crow Laws in action.

Later that day I engaged in a casual conversation with my principal, a black woman that is proud of her PhD, talking about my phone call with my mom. She replied with a contrasting story from her dad's perspective. Like my mom, my principal's father was raised on the Gulf Coast of Florida. As an adult my principal shared that they were about to travel to Tampa, FL for work. Her father, in their phone conversation, voiced concern about her upcoming trip. He immediately warned her about the level of danger that she may encounter in Florida. He applied his experiences of racism and violence of living in Florida in the 1950's and 1960s as an imperative need to be vigilant as she navigated the streets and interacted with the people.

Her father was a Black male born in 1951 his experiences of Florida during Jim Crow era and the Civil Rights movement were very different than my mom's. His memories were filled with oppression, fear, and law. His identity of being a Black male shaped his view of the danger of white people. He gave strong warnings to not go down the wrong street and how to act in various situations. When I went to college at age 18 in Florida, my warnings were based in hope, "Work hard and call if you need anything." Despite the advancements of Civil Rights when he was a teen, the trauma caused from racial violence and oppression was ingrained into his perception of Florida and as my principal traveled to Florida for a weekend his warnings were based on fear.

My mom had no memories of the Jim Crow South because it did not affect her. Being white, she unknowingly carried with her the privilege to freely go where she wanted without fear. My mom was fortunate that her parents did not actively participate in direct

racist actions or speech. She remembered my grandmother taking her to an all-Black church. As she told the story I questioned why, what was the connection, and those questions were emotionally difficult for her to work through. For the first time my mom was able to understand and face the truth, without using the hegemonic excuse, that her great grandparents owned slaves and owning slaves was wrong and went against Christian values. What I have learned from having these necessary conversations with my mom—me at the age 46 and her at the age 84—is that I must “call people in” and have more difficult conversations with other white people to encourage dialogue and learning that will disrupt racism from those that historically constructed white supremacy in the name of enhancing well-being of BIPOC (AWARE-LA, 2023).

The comparison to my principal’s father’s experiences, my mom’s experiences show the legacy of white privilege. He acknowledged the false identity that white America had made of being a Black male. He had to think what I can do, what I cannot do. His sense of self-efficacy and agency was shaped by racist policies and practices. My mom grew up with a cultural legacy of having college educated women on both sides of her family. She went to college where her mom went to college. Institutionalized racism has created two worlds, not only during slavery, but during my lifetime. We have an ideal world that is shaped by living, full of freedom and well-being. And a real world shaped by law, where racial violence creates fear, oppression, and trauma.

Over the past six years I have purposely worked to better understand how to encourage better well-being for my students. What sparked me to get my master’s in Transformative Education and Social Change was seeing year after year students that had learning debts based on policies that were written by people in power that did not have care

or concern for the lives of BIPOC students (Ladson-Billings, 2006). This year specifically I have had conversations with students addressing their academic levels, self-efficacy, and well-being. I saw this in my classroom students using their behavior to disrupt the place where their cultural legacy was disciplined rather than understood (Gladwell, 2008; Love, 2014). Bettina Love, an elementary teacher turned University of Georgia professor, calls on teachers to counter any policies that “demonize innocent children” (Love, 2013).

### **Historical Review**

Our nation has been deemed the land of the free because Europeans came here seeking freedom from oppressive monarchies. Here they could practice religion as they choose, but the truth behind the land of the free was short lived. The first successful English settlement, Jamestown, began in 1607 and by the time puritans arrived in 1620 the institution of slavery was already here. Slavery began in 1619 and lasted 246 years in America. From America’s onset of colonization, the European settlers declared that their way was the best way. This Eurocentric view disregarded the culture and customs that allowed the indigenous people of the land they now called America to continue to thrive. Although it has been taught that the native people died out due to disease and war that is not true. They were pushed out further west as the eastern border became more profitable from plantations that were worked by enslaved men, women and children who were forced into growing cash crops like tobacco and cotton.

In 1606 a group of English men and women arrived on the shores of a place we now call Virginia. Shortly after in 1619 the first 20-30 enslaved Africans, men, women, and children arrived at the hands of the English. This was the start of America’s greatest atrocity. As Hannah-Jones (2019) stated, “those that survived were chained to others that

had been stolen from their land, families, and culture. They were forged in trauma. They had been made Black by those that believed themselves to be white.” Their purpose was to be human capital and work to establish great wealth for the colony and then eventually America. They were kidnapped and then forced to play an assigned role in the foundation of American society. Their purpose and identity were shaped by those that forced them to work in the fields and in the homes of whomever had purchased or inherited them.

The first time I learned of slave inventory I was living in Baltimore, and I wandered around the Maryland Historical Society while my husband did research. The walls were lined with bookcases and windows. In the center of the room several bar height flat tops bookcases housed large horizontal laying books, one shelf one book. Intrigued, I pulled one out and began thumbing through it, I then realized what I was looking at. In my hands were meticulously handwritten inventories of people’s possessions. Listed were everything from household items, to animals, farm equipment, and enslaved Black Americans. After a slave owner had died their belongings would be cataloged in a handwritten document called an inventory.

In 2015 I reached out to the historical society and in a few days, they emailed 2 digital files, one was the inventory of Valentine Bryan, a Marylander that lived from 1782-1848. His belongings were listed item by item, starting with household, then farm equipment, farm animals and finally at the bottom of the list, his slaves. Each identified by their first name, age, and monetary value. The names began on page 7 and stretching to page 10 of Bryannt’s inventory, 102 names are listed and valued at \$5623.50.



emerged. They were resilient and used songs and food to unite them, and they had a yearning for education.

Frederick Douglass, born into slavery, was enslaved in Maryland and had a deep desire to become educated. He was eventually freed, and in 1845 he wrote an autobiography, *Narrative Life of Frederick Douglass*. He described the songs that were sung by slaves as being their coping mechanism for dealing with the “soul-killing effects of slavery” (Douglass, 1845, p. 12). In his early life he was a slave on a farm and recalled the brutal bloody whippings and violent murders white men were never charged for. Once he was moved from the farms into Baltimore city his new master Mr. Auld warned Mrs. Auld the risks of educating a Black boy. In that stern sentiment Douglass learned that white men feared an educated slave. He saw a slave that can read would have power and “there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master;” learning how to read was the “pathway from slavery to freedom” (p. 29).

He was sold again, and in this home, Douglass learned to read. His time was short there, but he learned that being a slave in a city meant you were treated better and had more freedom. Like Sur Juana de la Cruz (1691), Douglass had to hide his desire to become educated and could only allow it to surface for the purpose of growing or deepening his faith (p. 70). Through this he was able to help other Black men, slaves and freedmen learn to read. Douglass later escaped to gain freedom and served as a key speaker in the abolitionist movement. In 1838 Douglass found freedom in New York and began to speak and write about slavery.

Douglass was not alone in understanding that education was the foundation of one's ability to gain wealth and power. Christopher Span, a professor for educational policies, has specialized in researching education in the south prior to the 1900's (Chamberland, 2007). In his research he has found that 90% of all enslaved Black Americans lived in the Chesapeake Bay region. And they had witnessed first-hand how education was a tool used among the people in power to oppress the enslaved people. After the Emancipation Proclamation was signed by Abraham Lincoln those slaves that had gone against the law and learned to read were ready to teach others. Span goes on to explain to the interviewer Cumberland that freedman set up schools and during the years "1870-1885, their attendance rates were equal to, if not greater than, whites. And by 1900, the illiteracy rate among African Americans under the age of 40 was "virtually non-existent" (Chamberland, 2007, p. 1).

These statistics drastically counter the belief that slaves were illiterate and lacked the tenacity to become educated. In fact, Span explains that the desire that freedmen had to be educated sparked Southern states to revamp their constitutions to include public schools. This took control away from Black communities and gave it states. Despite this, Black communities during the reconstruction era were resilient and determined to gain knowledge for they saw education as a transformative tool.

During the 245-year span of slavery, enslaved Black Americans were viewed as being, in some cases, less valuable than an animal. Despite this, they developed their own rich culture that valued hope within education. Collectively they were responsible for the back breaking work that built America's great economic wealth. They knew the land and felt connected to the place in which a generation of enslaved Americans dreamt of freedom

and prosperity. As the civil war erupted, the south hung onto their desire to maintain slavery. Slavery guaranteed that they could maintain the wealth, power, and white supremacy. On April 9, 1865, the Civil War ended and then December 6th, 1865, the 13th Amendment was ratified. Black enslaved Americans were free to leave their masters and America both North and South would start to rebuild. That historic document did not end racism; it only meant that Black Americans were no longer owned, fed, housed, or clothed by their masters.

### **Reconstruction: America's Nadir**

To understand identity, self-efficacy, and agency in America, we must look at the fine details of the systemic racism that has shaped our nation. Those details were laced with trauma and oppression even as Black Americans were freed their worth and identity were maintained under white supremacy through policies and practices that altered their potentiality and well-being. It started immediately with the Black Codes. The Black codes shaped what type of work Black Americans could do and kept the highly profitable fields producing crops. Under this system of subjugation, the amount of freedom and power that Black Americans could have in the South was limited. Southern politicians also used the 13th Amendment Loophole to create laws within the Black codes that had while also creating laws that were specific to Black Americas (Nittle, 2021). For example, in some locations it was illegal to be unemployed or for four Black Americans to be standing around talking.

Despite the Black Codes the newly freed Black Americans were ready for their freedom. Within three years of liberation the south had over 700,000 registered Black voters and 2000 Black men serving in elected positions. The federal government in 1875 passed a

civil rights Act that outlawed discrimination in schools, housing, transportation, and jury services (Robinson, 2021). Emancipation to Civil Rights is often only remembered as the time of segregation and the moments leading up to the Civil Rights movement (Gilmore, 2023). However, Robinson points out that the early part of Reconstruction was going well, Black Americans were using their freedom to become involved in politics and education (Robinson, 2023 DuBois, 1903; Davis, 1986).

From 1865 to 1877 Federal troops had been placed in the south to maintain the peace. In 1877 after President Rutherford Hayes inauguration, he withdrew federal troops out of the south, a promise he made to ensure southern votes. In doing so the Black Codes transformed into Jim Crow laws. The Jim Crow Laws established segregation in the south, split it into two worlds. This time was America's nadir, it is lowest point (Hannah-Jones, 2019; Gilmore, 2023). With the withdrawal of federal troops white politicians were able overtly use their power through implementing practices and policies that determined the potentiality, identity, and well-being of Black Americans.

In 1903 WEB Du Bois published an article "Training the Negro for Social Power." The opening paragraph heeds the call for the Black community to have "the freedom and power to strive." He points out that to overcome ignorance, poverty, and crime requires that Black Americans have the right to an education, get good jobs, and "control over social forces which produce crimes." The last part addresses that a crime is a construct by people in power.

The inherent desire to be free and educated was part of Black history, "This unquenchable thirst for knowledge was as powerful among the slaves in the South as among their "free" sisters and brothers in the North" (Davis, 1986). However, during the nadir,

American society narratives and policies shaped the identity of how Black Americans were viewed. Hence, agency diminished, self-efficacy declined, and apathy emerged. WEB Du Bois's book *Reconstruction in America* (1935) dedicated a chapter to education titled, "Founding the Public Schools." He acknowledged each states number of Black schools, the population of Black students, and highlighted the policies that hindered or thwarted the advancement of these schools. Southern states quickly seized control over educational institutions. In turn schools would become another structure to produce and reproduce white supremacy "We are the rulers; you are the servants! We know what is best for your children" (p. 663).

WEB DuBois, the first Black PhD graduate from Harvard, was a founding member of the NAACP. DuBois believed that the Black schools that emerged after the emancipation were the driving force that kept Black Americans out of slavery. However, the schools that were run and operated by Black educational leaders could not stand up to the power that came from racist Jim Crow policies and practices. Jim Crow laws were "developed to legalize subjugation" (Trent et al., 2020).

Within the 13th Amendment there is a loophole that excludes prisoners from this inalienable freedom (Duvernay & Moran, 2016; Nittle, 2021). Black Codes and Jim Crow transitioned Black America communities from being enslaved to being imprisoned. During the nadir the number of criminals were increasing at rapid speeds (DuVernay, 2016). Freed African American men were incarcerated in large numbers and forced to work, rebuilding the south as a "prisoner." This transition from slave to criminal allowed a false narrative of Black males to be propagated throughout media and social circles. In print and in motion pictures the Black man was portrayed as being violent stoking the fear for white women

leading to people using words like” out of control...rapacious, menacing, Negro male evil, that had to be banished” (Cobb as cited in DuVernay, 2016).

February 8th, 1915, release of the Birth of a Nation furthered the image into the eyes of the American people that Black men were dangerous and inferior to white men. One of the largest effects was the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan, this is evident as the producer envisioned the cross burnings for the film and then it became a symbol for the white hooded society (DuVernay, 2016). Black Americans were inhumanely treated even as freed Americans as unequal and were violently forced to accept this oppression as a hegemonic norm. The image of Black men being dangerous and being a criminal was systemic institutionalized to create fear and thwart their potentiality, all in the name of maintaining the plantation labor force that established capitalism and white supremacy. Under Jim Crow Black people feared the violent power of white supremacy and white people were afraid of a falsified image of Black people.

The mental or “internal colonization” that oppressed people face festers in the oppressors pushing on prescribed identities that allow those in power to remain in power and those that are oppressed to follow along with the “prescribed behavior” (Freire, 2000). To not succumb to the false narratives that are produced and reproduced by people within places of power the oppressed must have a strong sense of identity, self-worth, and an amount of power to foster self-efficacy.

W.E.B. Du Bois’s (1930) *Souls of Black Folk* DuBois educates the reader that emancipation did not mean freedom. He begins by acknowledging that people indirectly question him with “How does it feel to be the problem” and DuBois, a socialist believed embraced a “double-consciousness.” Black American must live a duality of being

American, free, and Black, oppressed. “Two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings: two warring ideals in one dark body.” DuBois knew white supremacy had stripped him of opportunities and led other Black Americans to become “tired climbers.” The structure of American society led Black Americans to doubt their efficacy and worth. DuBois believed in separate but equal called for Black unity, to celebrate their “traits and talents” that benefit the American and uphold the “human spirit of the Declaration of Independence” and promote “human opportunity.”

This bias not only spread to white Americans it also seeped into the psyche of Black Americans. In the 1920’s a social worker and writer Brun Lasker first wrote that children were not born with biases or prejudices, both develop over time from social experiences as early as the age of 5 (Kendi, 2022). In the 1930’s and 1940’s Dr. Kenneth Clark, and associate professor and Mamie Clark, a director at a Child Development Center, researched the racial consciousness of preschool children. Their groundbreaking doll test was a social experiment to learn the skin tone preference of Black children. They tested 260 Black children ages 5-7 and noted if the children had light, medium, or dark skin tones. 66 of the children were from a segregated school in Arkansas and 94 were from an integrated school in Massachusetts (Kendi, 2022). Clark stated that when the topic of race was brought up “expressions are indicative of negative attitudes towards the Negro race” (Clark as cited by Kendi, 2022, p. 1). As the child goes from age 5 to seven Clark found that from age 5 to 7, they developed a stronger sense of their own “racial self-image” while developing a “negative social evaluation of his skin color” (p. 350). He also noted that no matter what age the child was or if they were from the south or the north, the darker the skin the more they preferred white skin (p. 349).

The doll test received great attention from civil rights groups and was fundamental in the *Brown v. Board of Education*. This study proved that separate, but equal, was affecting the development of BIPOC identity as early as age 5. DuBois, a founder of the NAACP, did not believe in integration but the NAACP sided with the majority of Black Americans and advocated for integrated schools. White Supremacy, institutional racism, and race-based trauma were all Eurocentric centered and unconsciously lowering efficacy, marginalizing, and othering the identity of Black youth.

In 1948, Clark, and two other psychologists, Max Deutscher and Isidor Chein went to Washington DC to make a call for change due to the harmful effects of segregation. Deutscher and Chein had surveyed 517 social scientists and concluded that both segregated and desegregated communities were causing a sense of superiority for the whites causing false or depressed sense of self for Black children. Their claim that the effects of segregation “potentially damage the personality of all children” was a pivotal part in the desegregation of schools (Kendi, 2022).

### **Civil Rights & Education**

On May 14th, 1954, the United Supreme Court ruled in favor of *Brown* in the infamous case of *Brown Vs. The Board of Education*. Schools across the nation could no longer be segregated; the response to this ruling was emotional. Many Black communities hoped this ruling would bring equal funding, facilities, and services equality. Transition into desegregated schools was emotionally brutal on Black children. White communities responded with crowds of people that insisted that Black children were harming their schools and needed to leave. Although *Brown v the Board of education* was monumental it did not end racism within educational institutions, in fact the ripple effects closed schools in

Black communities. Finding schools for the Black children fell onto the shoulders of Black parents and the Black communities' call for equal funding, better facilities, and current textbooks went unheard. Integration resulted in the closing of Black schools and Black teachers and administrators no longer had jobs. Integration was not a step towards equity it was another sidestep into the murky waters of American racism.

The 1960's was a time for the civil rights movement to continue to strive for ending racial oppression and violence. In 1966 two years after the Civil Rights Act was signed, the Coleman Report, an extensive study identifying inequities within American public schools was released (Coleman, 1966). The report found “American public education remains largely unequal” (p. 3). The report exposed that white students were educated in facilities that were well equipped, had trained and educated teachers, and the students themselves come from good neighborhoods and have parental support that contribute to their child’s “education and growth.” While Black students come from “a dismal tenement area who may come hungry to an ancient dirty building that is badly ventilated, poorly lighted, overcrowded, understaffed, and without sufficient textbooks” (p. 8). The wording within the Coleman Report showed partiality to the cultural legacy of white families while ignoring that these disparities were caused by white supremacy therefore making the disparities a white problem (Gladwell, 2008; Anderson, 2019).

The public-school experience for Black students meant less teachers, less extracurricular activities, less intelligence testing, less accredited schools, and parents who have had less access to higher education. All of this inevitably led to disparities of academic success between Black and white students on a nationwide standardized test administered in 1965. The impact of oppression that existed since 1619 could not be erased by the poor

efforts of the policies and practices that emerged after *Brown v Board of Education* or the signing of the Civil Rights Act. And the window of time post-civil war and pre state educational institutions was too short for Black Americans to experience the extent of their educational freedom. The results of this standardized test furthered and exposed the effects of systemic racism. Without supportive measures and improved facilities, learning debts intensified over the years. The Coleman Report found two main indicators of academic success for Black students, small class size and functioning science labs. The Coleman Report was then used as the catalyst for both student bussing and white flight.

Students that once attended their neighborhood schools would now have to take a bus to a white school. Integration was the integration of Black children, who choose to travel, into white schools. It was never the integration of white children into Black schools. The effects of Black school closing were destructive and dehumanizing to Black communities. Black communities were not asking for their schools to be shut down or for their children to be bussed, rather they were asking for equal funding and equal facilities (Delmont, 2016). In urban school districts like Philadelphia School not only did they institute busing but, they also started looking at the ratios of Black to white teachers (Mezzacappa, 2018). And they adjusted those over the years but, within bussing was a system that did not allow students to create a positive relationship with education, the education of Black children was taken out of the Black communities and placed at the hands of white schools. In fact, according to Delmont the Black communities did not want integration or busing, they wanted the same books, same class sizes, and facilities that allowed children to focus on learning.

The bussing of students also caused white flights in cities across America. Erika Kitzmiller (2022) in her story about Germantown High School in Philadelphia, PA describes how the school transformed during the 1960s and 70s. The school began as a point of pride for the city. With bussing the population shifted from being all white to being predominantly Black. Urban school districts have and still are historically underfunded causing school communities to depend on fundraising efforts from within the school community. When the white families moved out of the city, they also took with them their dollars and connection to dollars. As the image of Black Americans was portrayed as violent white flight was an instant response to facing bussing allowing increased segregation. The level of mobility was a white privilege, BIPOC families faced racist policies that made bussing the only choice in a time of few choices.

American leaders developed a pattern of Black advancement and were met with new racially oppressive policies and practices that maintained the social structure of white supremacy. Philadelphia students protested the need for their schools to better address the well-being and potentiality of all students. On November 17, 1967, schools across the city walked out of class in peaceful protest. 3,000 student protestors gathered outside of the Board of Education building only to be met with an hour later with the police commissioner, Rizzo, bringing 300-400 police officers and gave the call "Get their Black asses!" With a single call officers used violence to break up the protest. The horrified crowd dispersed, and reports of violence spread across the city. Soon fear of the violence coming from Black Philadelphia's became the primary concern (Sigmond, 2011). The violence lay in the actions of the police, yet the warning of a threat was about the students. The students took to the streets protesting for four things: a) A call for more 'Negro' teachers and principals, b) A

need for ‘Black history’ to be taught as a major subject by Black teachers, c) More ‘Negro’ representation on the School Board, and 4) Exempting all ‘Negroes’ from saluting the flag because liberty and justice did not exist at all.

### **Civil Rights Movement & Housing**

In the 1930’s after the Great Depression and under Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal the National Housing Act set the stage to oppress Black Americans mobility in their housing options. Under the Homeowner’s Loan Corporation (HOLC) the worthiness of a property to receive a loan depended on the zone in which it was in. A property within the red zone, hence the name Red Lining, that property was labeled as hazardous, and banks were advised not to provide property loans in those areas (Mitchell & Franco, 2018; Robinson, 2021). According to Robinson (2021) redlining was “a deliberate policy of the federal government. The Federal Housing Authority (FHA) drew reline maps of every major city in America.” He went on to describe what each red zone meant (see figure 4 below).

Zone	Color	Ranking	Description
A	Green	Best	The neighborhood was homogeneous.
B	Blue	Still Desirable	Expected to remain stable
C	Yellow	Definitely Declining	Beginning to be integrated bordering on Black neighborhoods
D	Red	Hazardous	Any Black Presence at All

Figure 4. Redlining Zones

This policy embedded racist practices in the housing structure of America. The idea was that if a Black person bought a home in a green or yellow area then the values of the homes in that area would decline (Gross, 2017). Gotham (2000) explains how within the New Deal the language encouraged racism and racial discrimination while benefiting corporate and state structures and policies. Your ability to purchase a loan to buy a home was determined by the color of your skin. The effects of redlining-maintained segregation and has affected urban communities' ability to grow and flourish (Blumgart, 2017; Gross, et al. 2017; Mitchell & Franco, 2018). The idea of busing was not unanimous with Black Civil Rights Leaders. As I mentioned before WEB DuBois favored strengthening Black community schools while others like Jesse Jackson supported integration and busing.

### **Civil Rights Movement & Adult Education**

Black Civil Rights Leaders unified, and education became the pulse of the oppressed. The Highlander Folk School, founded by Myles Horton in the mountains of Tennessee, aimed to educate adults on matters that would help them gain education to assist with transitioning from unemployment to being employed. Horton was also an anti-segregationist and openly opposed segregation in the labor force (Highlander Center, 2023). The school's focus shifted in the 1950's to aiding in the education necessary to disrupt race and racism. Horton believed "educational work during social movement periods provides the best opportunity for multiplying democratic leadership" (Horton, 1997).

The Highlander Folk school became a destination for people to travel and participate in educational programs that were aimed to counter the inequity and increase the number of voters. Horton started with educating people in how to take the Black voter registration test (Freire, Horton, 1990). The attendees of the Highland Folk School then returned to their

home communities to share what they had learned. This was like how education was passed from slave to slave in the Chesapeake Region (Robinson, 2021). At The Highlander Folk School education was at the core of empowering the people to flourish and thrive. A well-known student Rosa Parks was selected to be the person that would make a stance on the Racist Jim Crow Laws. In Montgomery, Alabama on December 1<sup>st</sup> she finally said to a white man “I’m Tired” – It was not just her who was tired. All Black Americans were tired.

The Civil Rights Movement was organized, educated, and had the perseverance to get it done. Once Parks was arrested the word quickly spread and Black Americans across the south united in solidarity to boycott buses. Then the freedom rides began; white and Black college students from all over the US united to desegregate the lunch counters in the south. Dr. Martin Luther King delivered a speech (1957) at the Highlander Folk School on its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. He identified three stages that shaped the Black experience in America. The first part of the Black American experience was from 1619- 1963, “the Negro was an “it” ...merely depersonalized cog in a vast plantation machine”. The second part stretched from 1863-1954 and was shaped by Black codes and segregation. A time when Black Americans were “being plunged across the abyss of exploration where he experienced the bleakness of nagging injustice.” The film, Birth of a Nation (1915) roused the KKK, their presence and organizing (Robinson, 2021). The sitting president, Woodrow Wilson, praised the film for highlighting the accomplishment and mission of the KKK and the Southern Council (Vaught, 2003).

Black and White Americans begin to use their voices to deliver clear demands for equality white supremacy groups like the KKK and the Southern Council the Black identity was clearly dehumanized, degraded, and demoralized Black Americans; their mission was

to uphold white supremacy through instilling fear. The Civil Rights movement took centuries of oppression that had beat down so many Black Americans and allowed within them a sense of identity that included self-efficacy, power, and agency. The hegemonic white supremacy was being challenged.

### **Marching and Black Power**

Dr. Martin Luther King's peaceful ways are indisputable and common American knowledge of the civil rights movement. Dr. Martin Luther King was not met with peace, and neither were those that walked with him. He preached agape love, the love that one feels that is God like, unconditional and endless, loving our neighbors as ourselves. King himself was a Christian preacher, from the pulpits he preached about peace and a call to the American Federal government to act and bring equality to all Americans. Black and White Americans joined in with his efforts and called out the oppressive segregation, inequities, the hegemonic norms, and government policies that degraded their identity, opportunity, and well-being. They were met with violence, but by 1964 the Civil Rights Act was signed. With the stroke of a pen Johnson made it unconstitutional for anybody to be discriminated against because of their race, color, religion, sex, national orientation.

The following year the March on Selma had activists protesting the right to vote; a democratic right that gives you a voice in shaping the future and the power within society. Against the governor's orders, 600 people peacefully marched across Edmund Pettus Bridge. A bridge that was named after a prominent KKK leader in Alabama (Bloody Sunday, 2016). At the end of the bridge the marchers chanted "I ain't gonna take it no more!" and then were met with billy clubs and officers on horseback moving through the crowd using any means that would stop their advancement (Bloody Sunday, 2016). They

used violent force and tear gas, all in the name of silencing the vote. The votes that wanted to be the voice to end segregation and allow the Constitution to live up to its word that all people are created equal and should have the right to pursue happiness.

It took 5 days to complete the 54 miles March and, in the end, Lyndon Johnson signed the 1965 Voting Rights Act and declared “We shall overcome” the phrase synonymous with MLK’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Congressman John Lewis was in the leader of this March and acknowledged this March as being pivotal in creating a sense of community. Coretta Scott King discussed how the movement had transformed from being all Black to being a diversified people coming together to demand justice (Bloody Sunday, 2016).

Another prominent Civil Rights Movement leader, Malcom X, was an organization of the Black Panthers. I was raised to understand that MLK was good, and Malcom X was bad. I accepted this hegemonic view and never questioned why MLK was good, and Malcom X was bad. I can in no way say that Dr. Martin Luther King's practices and passions were not worthy of the recognition that has lasted for over 70 years. However, his role as a Christian preacher and his peaceful tactics were easier to understand and more culturally relatable than Malcolm X. As a Muslim, part of the Nation of Islam, he had to continually explain his stance on violence and explain his religious beliefs. Like MLK he used his voice and agency to challenge and dismantle the power within white supremacy through educating, organizing, and leading Black Americans.

As an inequitable labor market forced 1940’s Black migration west communities grew (Duvernay, 2016). At the time California higher education was free for anyone that had a high school diploma (Murch, 2021). From within those communities in the 1960’s a

Civil Rights group emerged from a study group that believed in Black Nationalism and with Huey Newton's help, “education was at the heart of the party” (Murch, 2021). Like MLK’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Black Panthers emerged well educated and organized. Their meetings started as study groups of college educated Black Americans that wanted to stand up to imperialism, the American force that uses diplomacy and military force to attain power.

On June 16th, 1966, Stokley Carmichael gave a speech in Mississippi and used the phrase “Black Power!” as a rally cry. The Martin Luther King Education and Research Institute at Stanford quoted Carmichael as saying “When you talk about Black power you talk about bringing this country to its knees any time it messes with the Black man ... any white man in this country knows about power. He knows what white power is and he ought to know what Black power is.” In the late 1960s and 1970s Black Power became synonymous with the Black Panthers. And it worked to rebuild the identity and efficacy of Black Americans. In 1964 Philadelphia experienced race riots and at the 50th anniversary of the 1967 student walk out Mary Seymour discussed how the view of the Black panthers as a violent group was “the original fake news”. She recalled how their support after the 1964 race riots in Philadelphia provided food, schoolbooks, and tutoring. They also educated Black youth on their “right to protect themselves from the police” (Murphy, 2017).

I have only highlighted a snapshot of the events that took place during the civil rights movement. The Civil Rights Movement connected Black Americans to education and fostered identities that showed the strength, courage, and resilience of Black Americans. Throughout America’s history Black American have been full of grit, possessed a desire to be educated, were and peaceful, and BIPOC would hold America accountable to the words

that are held so dear to the foundation of the human rights within America “All men are created equal...Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” (Declaration of Independence, 1776). The final noted quote that MLK said before his assassination “I am scared all I did is throw my people into the burning house.”

### **Neoliberal Policies Maintain the Power Oppression Structure**

In 1971 President Richard Nixon declared a “War on Drugs,” however, the reality of America’s drug addiction began after the American Civil War. Wounded soldiers became addicted to morphine, and it was labeled as a “moral dilemma” rather than a physical ailment (Lewy, 2014). Nixon war on drugs enforced laws in a police state that was focused on drug arrests, convictions, and imprisonment. Ronald Regan intensified the policing of drugs, and his wife Nancy Regan was the spokesperson for the people in her “Just Say No” campaign which began in 1981 (Landmark Recovery, 2018). America’s prison population grew and the portrayal of Black Americans as being violent drug addicted criminals evolved into an image that was accepted not only with the white community but also the BIPOC community (Duvernay). During this time, the term super predator began to spread, and the American population soared from during the 1970’s mass incarceration era. In the 1970’s there were 196,441. By 1985 that number rose to 508,507, it peaked in 2017 at 1,615,487 in 2017 at 1,615,487 and to today's 1.9 million and there are 79 million Americans with a criminal record and 113 million people that have or had a family member in prison (Delaney et al., 2018; Sawyer & Wagner, 2023). Wagner highlights that while both Black Americans and White Americans each represent 38% of Incarcerated Americans 13% of America’s population is Black and 60% is white. America has between 20-25% of the world's population (Duvernay, 2016; Sawyer & Wagner, 202) locked up in prison systems. The land

of the free has knowingly used the judicial and prison systems to maintain the White Supremacy system of economically disadvantaged people. The US constitution loophole that strips prisoners of their freedom has continued to be used and exploited for political and capitalist power (Duvernay, 2016).

Nixon initiated the increased use of prisons to control and isolate “criminals.” Political leaders created policies to target and identify what constitutes a prisoner. Nancy Reagan's “Just Say No” hit schools while her husband President Regan was declaring that we are a Nation at Risk. In a six-minute radio address Regan shared the results of an 18-month study on the state of the American education system. He generalizes that the study found students in 1982-1983 were less educated than previous generations. He pointed out that over a twenty-year span literacy rates and writing had declined. That time would have been from 1962-1982. The time of integration, the civil rights movement, women’s liberation, and the Vietnam War. Throughout the radio broadcast he calls on parents to become the organizers and implementers of this reform while also saying that their detachment from encouraging children to be academically driven has contributed to the decline. Like desegregation where Black parents were responsible for finding their children a school again solving the problem fell onto parents' shoulders. “Use common sense as our guide” and “parents as the rudder” yet deny that the federal government will provide any money for addressing the problem (Regan, 1983). This is the start of justifying student success or failure to school budgeting. He finished with a direct comment to students addressing the opportunities that will be coming from the advancements in technology. Throughout the 6 minutes one must wonder who he is addressing. In 1983 there was still a great segregation between the Black experience and the White experience. His encouraging

sentiment “You must earn the rewards of the future with just plain hard work” did not apply to those that would face systemic institutional racism. Through lumping together all students and only differentiating when addressing the literacy rates Regan is not acknowledging the historical context of his alleged educational decline. He also calls on students to use schools to attain the necessary skills to flourish in the modern economy. In 1983 schools were still segregated due to white flight, unequal and inequitable funding, and a racist labor market. Regan’s *Nation at Risk* did not produce a plan; it was merely a rally cry to begin educational reform.

In 2002 George W Bush furthered Regan and Clinton’s education agenda by implementing the No Child Left Behind. This educational policy addressed the concerns that were highlighted in Regan’s 1983 statement. Most notably the notion of competition and holding schools accountable for educational growth were at the propagated core of Bush’s No Child Left Behind. A large component of Bush’s No Child Left Behind, standardized testing became a mandated part of the American education system (Anyon, 2005). After Bush, President Obama’s Rise to the Top also stressed mandated testing and rewarded schools for student’s growth and expanded the charter schools forcing public schools to close (Lipman, 2015). The practice of standardized tests was not new and became a widespread practice after the Coleman report shared results of tests that measured students “ability to learn and perform in the American environment” (Kozol, 2012). These tests do not reduce the disparities, learning gaps, or inequalities that are prevalent in urban schools (Ravitch, 2014). Neither was a true plan to encourage student success or address the real needs of our urban students. Today’s standardized tests are mandated by neoliberal policies to maintain the social structure in America. They were first introduced to the United States

from Germany to “propagate racism,” a means to provide the desired evidence that white men were superior to Black people, women, and poor people, similarly in the 1920’s Carl Brigham, a Eugenics Professor at Princeton introduced the SATs as a college entry exam (Kendi, 2019). Policies and practices like No Child Left Behind and Rise to the Top allow standardized tests to increase the education debts rather than bridging the gaps. Thus, lowering the students' self-efficacy as teachers would continually give negative reports on student’s performance.

American schools have a role in creating frameworks and values that support the antiracist movement and allow healing from the race-based trauma that has affected BIPOC communities. This trauma is both generational and systemic. The oppression has affected the identity, efficacy, and well-being of BIPOC communities. Using resilience to survive, rather than thrive, in a social structure and school system(s) that are designed to keep them in poverty has created apathy toward colonial structured education (Ladson-Billings, 1995). From the time of slavery white supremacy has been striving to minoritize and encourage hate of their own race (Wilson, 1921). Standardized tests have linked test scores to dollars and created test driven instruction rather than focus on the well-being of students (Lipman, 2015). This messaging is clear that a student's worth is determined by their data points and the tests are designed for and by the dominant group. Teachers have accepted the tests while students endure the test; a new hegemonic practice that reproduces neoliberal policies and white supremacy.

### **Current State of BIPOC Identity, Self-Efficacy and Well-Being**

In May of 2020 as our country was going through a pandemic that had scared and separated us after almost four years of enduring a sitting president that outwardly reinforced

and sided with White Supremacy, I drove into Philadelphia on 76 West bound to see smoke billowing from the streets. The day before it was videotaped and shared on social media that a 46-year-old Black man was arrested and murdered by a police officer that had his knee on his neck for over nine minutes. George Floyd's murder sparked outrage across America, on camera, in a calm manner another Black American Man is murdered on a sidewalk in the light of day for no good reason. The image is clear that one-man, white police officer, without care used his force and power to take the life of George Floyd, a son, a father, a brother, an uncle.

I remember news reports early on as this story broke making claims on the past and the character of George Floyd. They pulled a police report to tell us about a man. In August I went to the Get Your Knee Off My Neck protest in Washington DC. When I walked into the crowd the chanting of Black Pride was uplifting, a woman from behind a podium yelled out great strengths of Black Americans and at the end of each trait she said Black Power and the Crowd responded with fists in the air "Black Power." That statement said first June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1966, now said August 2020, on the anniversary of MLK's I Have a Dream Speech. In that moment it clicked for me, and my eyes welled up thinking of the students that I have had that I could see their power even when they did not. Or the students that their apathy towards education for me manifested into classroom disruptions because their learning debts that are generational are not their fault, and not their parents' fault. This apathy to learning and low self-efficacy was created by society and loving them was not enough. I was to guide them to finding the fire that is generational and has been silenced in their soul. I needed to allow their power of self-aid in building schools that are made to build them up rather than tear them down.

## **Current State of Identity, Efficacy, and Well-Being**

Historically race and racism have shaped the identity, efficacy, and the well-being of BIPOC in America. In more current times author Ibram X. Kendi (2019) has declared that white supremacy is a “domestic terrorism” that is gaining traction within America. If the statement history repeats itself is correct, then the increased presence of White Supremacy in America stems from an advancement in the organizing, education, and efficacy of BIPOC. In 2012 Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi started the Black Lives Matter Movement (BLM) as a response to address the acquittal of police officers (Carney, 2016). This Civil Rights movement came as a response to the unjustified and unpunished police violence against Black Americans. During the same time social media became a platform to quickly spread news, protests, and opinions weighing in on the facts, opinions, and perspectives. According to Carney’s study on the evolving role in social media found “youth of color actively engaged in debates over race in the nation” and in this engagement they “discovered some amount of power over public discourse to express their experiences and viewpoints” (p. 17). Throughout the study Carney’s findings show that social media played a vital role in engaging youth in conversations about race, racism, and power learning about it not from a local perspective but also from a global perspective. Black pride, the rally cry of the 1960’s and 1970’s did not die out, it grew. BLM marches like, Get Your Knee off my Neck, continue using Black Pride as a call to improve the identity of Black America’s. As I walked around vendors had shirts that all uttered images and phrases supporting the self-awareness needed to counter the 400 years of race and racism that has been inflicted on BIPOC. The chants “BLACK LIVES MATTER” and “BLACK PRIDE” are filled with

emotions and solidarity in the call to America to recognize the problem, however, it is the duty of white Americans (Anderson, 2019).

In June 2020 “scholars and crowd-counting experts” agreed that the Black Lives Matter Movement is the largest movement in American history (Buchanan et al., 2020). Currently in 2023 the movement has a global mission to work “inside and outside of the system to heal the past, re-imagine the present, and invest in the future of Black lives through policy change, investment in our communities, and a commitment to arts and culture” for the purpose (their vision) of all people living in “a world where Black people across the diaspora thrive, experience joy, and are not defined by their struggles. As stated, “By achieving liberation, we envision a future that is fully divested from police, prisons, and all punishment paradigms to be replaced with investment into justice, joy, and culture” (BlackLivesMatter.com, 2023).

Groups like White People 4 Black Lives (WP4BL) and Black Lives Matter at School have started in alliance with the Black Lives Matter movement to encourage education and organizing around the BLM cause or moving individuals along the pendulum to become anti-racist and aiming for us all to live in a world without racism. While WP4BL is calling on white people to stand up for racial justice it is also acknowledging the need for white people to “call in” and have the tough conversations that ask white people that have biases or are racist to “take risks, make mistakes, learn, and keep going” (*White people 4 Black lives - aware-la*, 2023). Black Lives Matter at School is a group that is calling on racial justice in schools. They have four demands: a) End “zero tolerance” discipline and implement restorative justice, b) Hire more Black teachers, c) Mandate Black history and ethnic studies in K-12 curriculum, and d) Fund counselors, not cops (BLM at School, 2023).

These demands echo those of the students in the Philadelphia 1967 Walkout (Murphy, 2017).

In 2020 The American Academy of Pediatrics released an evidence-based policy statement that:

revealed the role of racism in child and adolescent development and health outcomes. By acknowledging the role of racism in child and adolescent health, pediatricians and other pediatric health professionals will be able to proactively engage in strategies to optimize clinical care, workforce development, professional education, systems engagement, and research in a manner to reduce the health effects of structural, personally mediated, and internalized racism and improve the health and well-being of all children, adolescents, emerging adults, and their families. (Trent et al., 2020)

This policy statement clearly identifies racism as playing a role in the well-being of children and their families that have been directly or indirectly exposed to racism. Throughout Trent's "call in" to pediatricians he acknowledges the existence of structural, personally mediated, and internalized racism within housing, income, food security, birth disparities, mental health, juvenile justice, policy funding, and educational disparities. It is important to mention that Trent identifies that race is a human construct originated to control social class was originally falsified through "flawed science." In modern science under Dr. Francis Collins, scientists have proved that all humans share 99.9% genomes, and we continue to find racial disparities within the .01%. For the basis of this paper, I will focus on Trent's findings identifying education as a key determinant of identifying the well-being of adolescents.

Trent's policy statement identifies three types of racism, institutional, personal mediated, and internalized. Institutional racism in education stems from practices and policies that offer BIPOC students' inequitable access, facilities, curriculum, and opportunities. Personal mediated racism is fostered when educators apply racist views and implicit biases onto their students. Student teacher relationships that have implicit biases lead to poor views on students' discipline and academic efficacy. Although Trent does not discuss internalized racism, I would argue based on my experiences that standardized tests create internalized racism for BIPOC and white students. Internalized racism are racist views developed about one's own group. I would argue that standardized tests create a social norm within communities on the level of academic ability. As a teacher in a predominately BIPOC school, we (teachers) are comfortable that our data points are mostly in the red.

To reduce testing apathy, I have helped my students understand the result of standardized tests. They have seen that their focus and resilience can help in building their academic success and efficacy. As a class we have all been working with each other to understand reading levels and math levels. My heart breaks knowing students are the source of income for the test makers. It is a cycle of students producing data points, teachers and school leaders analyze them, and parents and students are in the dark about the results. Unless students have efficacy and interest/care the data points are minimally valid. So, together, I, parents and students have learned how to read the results, learning their strengths and weaknesses. In this an awareness has been created that they have been identified as being "below grade level" and find this to be normal because in their eyes, everyone is below grade level, because most in their community are. This is not new information for my

students. They are very aware that academic success is not part of their community. What I do not know is if they know white schools have more academic success.

My hope is that through building knowledge about the hegemonic neoliberal standardized tests students and parents will feel empowered to either challenge or build efficiency around students' ability to gauge and celebrate their own academic growth. My vision is that students will challenge the institutional racism and personally mediated racism that is produced and reproduced through standardized tests. Trent sees that the role of schools to prevent internalized racism is that children need “a positive, strong racial or ethnic identity.” Also, having parents involved in all aspects of school the “negative effects of racial discrimination on academic outcomes” are mitigated.

The desire to learn, the ability to learn and excel, and resilience are all proved to be part of the BIPOC cultural legacy. However, BIPOC communities still suffer from lower graduation rates and income levels while having increased incarceration and chronic diseases rates (Richardson et al., 2021; Delaney et al., 2018). Using education as an indicator of well-being along with health, wealth, and freedom it is clear using statistics and demographics that the well-being of BIPOC is lower than that of predominantly white communities. CASEL’s transformative SEL (Social Emotional Learning) addresses the need to use SEL as a systemic framework that empowers schools to use a critical lens while addressing responsible decision making, self-awareness, social-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills (Jagers et al., 2019). The five core competencies of SEL use critical examination of the causes of inequality to foster positive identity and build well-being. What differentiates SEL from Transformative SEL is “that identity, agency, belonging, and engagement as transformative expressions of the five core CASEL

(Collaborative for Academic Social Emotional Learning) social and emotional competencies. Under Transformative SEL, identity is viewed similarly to DuBois's double consciousness. Using self-awareness and social awareness within as the work to unpack internalized biases and racism students can examine their identity and the intersectionality of their identity. Agency and efficacy are points to examine and build within self-management and relationship skills. Belonging and engagement fall within lessons of social awareness and responsible decision making. Using a critical approach of SEL's five core competencies will allow identity, agency, efficacy, belonging and engagement to grow resulting in "collective actions" for equity and excellence in education.

Transformative SEL provides students with the opportunity to critically examine the five core competencies within themselves; however once those skills have been utilized and practiced students will begin to look at all facets of systems and structures with a critical lens and analyze how stakeholders are either receiving privileges or oppression. Through understanding the historical cultural legacy that made them who they are they will learn to reimagine the systems and structures that oppressed the people that walked before them, the people that paved the way with brutal racist oppression that has altered their potentiality and well-being (Halgunseth et al., 2022). It is when we have critically examined our history and our identities that we can begin to envision and create a society in which all people have equality and agency in the pursuit of happiness.

## Chapter Four

### Critical Action Research Program Proposal

Real education means to inspire people to live more abundantly, to learn to begin with life as they find it and make it better.

Carter G. Woodson, 1933

Thaddeus Stevens, an abolitionist from Pennsylvania and well-known education activist saw education as a tool of liberation. In a speech he delivered in 1835 opposing the Pennsylvania repeal of the Common School, the state's first public school system, he identified that school was indeed essential to well-being. He said that education was “salutary,” promoted positive effects and good health. Denying education is “oppressive to the people” and allows ignorance within society (Stevens, 1904). Stevens was like others that I have listed throughout this paper, who saw education as essential to the well-being of individuals and society. He called on the US government to liberate itself by allowing “all citizens to participate in the formation and execution of her laws.” He commonly spoke out regarding the equality that he believed both black and white men deserved (PBS, 2002). Stevens, a white man, another historical reference, solidifying how white supremacy thrives when education, voice, and efficacy were denied from the onset of the formation of the American education system.

Stevens’s correlation of education and well-being, identifying that liberation requires political participation, identifies that racial trauma partly comes from educational inequity

and political silencing. School communities need plans to address BIPOC student well-being through calling for education equity and programs to observe strategies to heal from racial trauma that has affected the identity, voice, and agency of BIPOC communities. Within this chapter I will discuss the methodology of bringing the school community together to devise a plan that would address prejudices, biases, and well-being of BIPOC and those that serve or are connected to minoritized communities. This approach requires a fluid methodology that allows for new knowledge to shape future steps. I will provide a detailed one-year plan and two more years that serve as broad plans. The plan that I propose is based on an action plan from Collaborative for Academic, Social, Emotional Learning's (CASEL). Their website is loaded with CASEL utilizing an action research plan to empower school communities to build a framework that target's needs. I have taken this a step further by identifying when to provide surveys and host focus groups that will provide vital input that shape revisions and the next steps in developing the program. The surveys and focus groups allow their framework to be more collaborative and increase participation to transform their action plan into a 3-year Critical Action Research (CAR) program.

This CAR program allows the community (parents, students, teachers, and community members) to work together to strive for equity, inclusion, and well-being. CAR began to empower teachers to use their classroom as a learning lab to further develop problem solving capabilities in the context of their classroom experiences (Koshy, 2010). Teachers using a spiral or cyclical process of planning acting, observing, and reflecting can independently gain knowledge within their institution. Their knowledge is gained from observing social situations within educational settings and requires collaborative and reflective parts that drive future steps (Kemmis et al., 2014). CAR observes that teachers are

continually learning to better their craft and improve the educational experiences through procedures that aim to address transformative processes, “a clear process for achieving...a blue- print for emancipation” (Carson, 1990). This CAR team research/learn, plan, implement and revise, as a continually process to shape the direction of the Transformative SEL plan. They will depend on collaboration, surveys and focus groups to learn the participants' views on the program and/or its effects. Within the framework I will be calling on identity work through SEL and Transformative SEL. The goal is to empower school communities to address the strengths and needs that have evolved due to the systemic racism that has shaped BIPOC’s relationship with education, it is essential that they are calling in input from a wide scope of school community members. Using CAR allows for fluidity within the program that acknowledges the purpose of Transformative SEL work is to decrease or eliminate inequality while building inclusion and belonging and that there is not a clear way to do this. Since many of those that have been most affected have suffered several types and degrees of racial trauma and oppression. The direction of this program must address the community and be able to change as they become more conscious and educated. It also allows for the community to be equipped with a team to respond to unfolding racial and social injustices that arise.

### **School Community Transformative Social Emotional Learning**

In Chapter 3 I discussed how BIPOC Americans have historically and systematically been affected by policies and practices that have oppressed and altered their well-being. This Transformative SEL program addresses how a school community can create a SEL program that prioritizes healing racial trauma that has caused BIPOC students to form a falsified sense of identity, harming their well-being and self-efficacy. As Stevens pointed

out, education and voice were tools that were used to harm the well-being and identity of BIPOC. For this plan we are observing that the oppression and disenfranchisement manifested into a low sense of identity and agency and lowered self-efficacy into apathy.

This program allows schools a framework to guide a collaborative group of school community members to identify a shared vision that prioritizes equity, belonging, and well-being. From this program the entire school community will have opportunities to participate in learning about Transformative SEL. They will understand CASEL's five core competencies and how adding a transformative lens allows a deeper impact in development of identity, self-efficacy, and well-being. The SEL Team(s) will work to build an adult SEL program. Within the adult SEL program there will be a historical analysis of how policies and practices have affected BIPOC's self-efficacy, voice, and agency within the American education system. This will lead to an investigation of student apathy that can understand the correlation between education and power. The program will encourage adults to develop a more positive identity, address, and develop self-efficacy, and well-being in educational institutions. This approach of teaching the adults first will then allow them to be the support for the children of all ages that will also have the opportunity to develop their well-being in a systemic transformative SEL school-wide program.

My interest in this work came from my own curiosity to understand student apathy in school settings. I observed a resistance to learning that in my own mind was more of an emotional response to efficacy that seemed to stretch generationally and caused a lot of frustration between parents, teachers, and students. In a hope to help students see the good in their community and in themselves I inadvertently started down the path of integrating SEL into the school. I teach in a Title 1 school that is 35.1% black and 42.2% Hispanic

(*District Profile / NASD, 2023*). Over my fourteen years I have seen the district focus their professional development time on addressing the state mandated test, Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) and cultural proficiency.

To be clear, a community collaborative transformative SEL program has goals.

- Counter Neoliberal policies and practices within the school by building a SEL Team that has established a shared vision to improve well-being through education and outreach.
- Provide critical learning for children and adults centered on cultivating and developing well-being, positive identity, self-efficacy, equity, and inclusion.
- Counter hegemonic norms within casual learning environment(s) to call in a diverse school community SEL team to use their own personal experience along with historical context in the planning, implementation, and revision of a Transformative SEL plan.

### **What Matters to Make this Happen**

When working as a white teacher with a BIPOC community it is essential to be intimately invested in the development of the community. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics most current data from 2018 shows 79% of America's teachers are white while 7% are black. This contrasts the public-school student population of 2020, 46% white students 15% black students 28% Hispanic students. The 2030 predictions show that the percentage of black and white students will drop while the percentage of Hispanic students will rise. Our schools remain segregated; urban communities continue to employ white educators (Blumgart, 2017, Carrillo & Salhotra, 2022). White Americans have not

faced the racial trauma of BIPOC communities and as Bettina Love (2019) explained, African American History for educators is not mandated as teacher prep and PD minimally addresses the demographic disparities and can often “white-splain” racism. To “undo a lifetime of racist thinking and of learning in racial isolation” (Love, 2019, p. 14) takes a deep dedication to allowing classrooms to be both transformative and restorative. I believe that in school communities everyone has a significant role, vision, and voice that can bring positive changes to the climate and culture. This egalitarianism increases race and racism being prioritized within conducting research, making decisions, and finding resources based on cultural legacy and inherent desires to help the community flourish and matter. This empowers those that have been othered and reduces the hegemonic whiteness that happens daily in educational institutions. The colonial structure of learning can evolve into places that encourage people to unpack hegemonic norms, oppression, and disenfranchisement. Teachers can step back and listen to learn how families within their community have been impacted from racial and social injustices. When we are all equal, no one must have the answers. We are all working together to understand how racial trauma(s) and educational debts takes have harmed the potentiality of American Society (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019; Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Growing up in a white world I was not exposed to and was unaware of the level of law that was inflicted on BIPOC. I see Transformative SEL being an awakening of the potentiality of American society. It is where healing meets well-being for all people within the educational community. Well-being is a human right and for us to deny that schools need to include this in everyday lessons and activities denies us dignity.

## **Building Better**

Throughout my career as a teacher, reflection has been an integral part of how I have learned what works and does not work. What I know to be true based on my own experiences as a teacher and a student, without positive student-teacher relationships that include compassion, acceptance, trust, and belonging, learning is hindered. During the Covid-19 Pandemic students showed that we can radically make changes to schools. In weeks, we shifted to students with Chromebook who could not hop online and receive a lesson. Schools pushed for teachers to incorporate SEL to address the isolation and uncertainty. Teachers were trusted to use their talents, knowledge, and creativity all in the name of education (Love, 2020). I thrived in this setting and furthered my own understanding of student apathy, efficacy, and agency. With the return to school in September 2021 my focus remained on SEL. The previous seventeen months proved well-being mattered and standardized testing could be optional, for me it was like a dream-come true.

I was given the opportunity to be an SEL teacher in the 2021-2022 school year. In addition to teaching 7th grade social studies, I would teach every 5th and 6th grader for 6 weeks. 6th grade had it first thing in the morning, 5th grade had its last thing of the day. I could tell immediately this plan was not going to work, for starters it was not systemic, and it lacked fidelity. I was able to have the 6th grade students build an SEL book keepsake journal however, 5th grade was done by the time I had them. I used both grades and all classrooms to implement CAR.

CAR is broken into four components: plan, observe, reflect, improve I looked for ways to connect with students and help them see that they mattered (Flett, 2021). I did learn

that SEL needs to be a partnership not an authoritarian role, the students need to know that they matter and when they are spoken at rather than being spoken to, they are defensive rather than open. Schools are institutions that can use counter hegemonic practices to empower BIPOC students. In the 5th grade and 6th grade I saw how time of day changed the experience. A rigid schedule from a sole provider could not address self-efficacy. School leadership must challenge the neoliberal policies in schools. No longer can we prioritize PSSA prep first thing in the morning. However, during covid, my children at their catchment Philadelphia schools started every day with SEL check ins and lessons. It takes courage to stand up to racist and neoliberal policies, but it is essential in schools that serve BIPOC students. Implementing the Transformative SEL program allows SEL to be done with a critical lens. Addressing how systemic racist policies and racist practices have prioritized neoliberalism and white supremacy.

### **A Community Approach to Systemic Transformative SEL**

In my search to understand academic success I learned that the answer lies in understanding the context of educational inequities that have been manifested from policies and practices. In learning that the newly emancipated slaves sought education goes against the biases and prejudices that I have heard in my very white world. Diving into the field of SEL I saw opportunities for learning how to help my students understand the inherent capabilities to flourish. The racial tensions in the summer of 2020 and violence on the rise in my home city of Philadelphia I came to understand that schools of BIPOC communities need more help to heal from policies like Redlining, the War on Drugs, and No Child Left Behind. To do this, I call on BIPOC communities to abandon their participation in neoliberal policies like standardized tests. And ask for that money to be used for critical

well-being work. I also call on the schools to work on developing a partnership that allows the community to develop and implement with the support of the district a three-year CAR plan that focuses on developing well-being through Transformative Social Emotional Learning.

For this thesis, I am outlining a one-year plan that utilizes CASEL's Action Plan (CASEL District Resource Guide, 2020). Throughout the program's 1st year, resources from Panorama will serve as benchmarks for survey questions aligned with CASEL's framework. Panorama (2023) is a for profit organization that started in 2012 and offers a variety of surveys that assess student academic success, SEL, behavior, and school climate, among many other topics that center around student well-being. Panorama prioritizes SEL, equity, student voice, and well-being check-ins. For a fee, subscribers receive instant data that they claim leads to increased graduation rates, reduces teacher burnout, increases family engagement, and encourages positive school climate. They also offer free surveys and webinars, within this program for this thesis, Panorama will serve as a resource that the SEL program guide will use and adapt for the first year of the SEL team's foundation for gaining input and feedback.

I have taken a school year and separated it into four 8-week sections. This allows for wiggle room and breaks, if the SEL team needs them. It also allows for time at the end of the school year to assess the progress and devise changes that will better the program for the following year. To ensure that each goal addresses diversity, equity, and inclusion there needs to be a magnifying glass that identifies oppression calls in awareness to the effects of hegemonic and historic systemic racism. Each section of the plan includes a way to ensure that the focus, purpose, and action steps have the capability to be transformative. It is up to

the SEL Team to continue this work in Years 2, 3, and beyond. Some of the general steps are:

- Equity and inclusion are included in all aspects of the program. This systemic approach weaves mattering, participation, and self and community efficacy, and agency.
- SEL Education allows for analysis and self-reflection regarding oppression, racial traumas, prejudices, biases, cultural proficiency, and systemic inequities within society. Because of this equity is essential for well-being; worth is based on existence not on education level, personality, income, age, race, class, or gender.
- Identify cultural legacies that are not honored in colonial education systems and structures yet, have potential to encourage well-being through belonging and mattering (Love, 2019; Gladwell, 2006).

<b>PREPARING TO INIATATE SEL</b>			
<b>TIME NEEDED</b>	<b>GOAL</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>STEPS</b>
3-5 months	Build a SEL Portal	Provide a Place of Learning and engagement for SEL Stakeholders (Staff, Students, Parents/Caregivers, and Community)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have an access site for each group</li> <li>• Have google form for those that are interested to get their contact information, level of</li> </ul>
		<b>Transformative SEL</b> -The portal needs to be accessible and manageable to navigate by a variety of academic and	

2-5 Months	Increase Awareness and Interest	To call in a diverse population from the school community to initiate and build systemic SEL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through all types of communication announce the school needs parent involvement in</li> </ul>
		<p><b>Transformative SEL</b>-Produce and distribute a variety of concise and attention-grabbing information that promotes the aim of building a team of individuals that mirror the school community demographics. Use languages and outlets that allow anyone that is interested in the opportunity to participate. Go into the community, advertise, and connect with people that are interested in participating in building well-being.</p>	
1 week- 3 weeks	Initial Meeting	<p>Introducing the topic of Social Emotional Learning is and how it can help the school community.</p> <p>Offer a variety of times and outlets to hear the messaging of What SEL is and how parent involvement can shape and build the culture of the SEL school. Grow a SEL team that is diverse and represents the school community.</p>	<p>Assemblies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evening Event(s)</li> <li>• Daytime Event(s)</li> <li>• Live Online Event(s)</li> <li>• Recorded Video segments of the meetings</li> <li>• Notes with parent questions and comments posted</li> </ul>
		<p><b>Transformative SEL</b>-Calling the meetings assemblies will create a less formal approach. Using the ideology of Miles Horton's Highlander Folk School meetings should be a place of equality, belonging, and dialogue (Horton et al., 1997).</p>	

### AGENDA FOR INITIAL ASSEMBLY

- This meeting needs to take place in a casual conversation setting and people should be free to move around, sit in a comfortable conversation setting.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responses from the Live poll will be shared on the portal and will help the SEL team(s) address the start of SEL</li> </ul>	
Topics	Live Poll Questions - 5 pt scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain the overall idea of well-being and how SEL encourages well-being           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 minutes</li> <li>Have presentation &amp; or use handouts (print and/or digital)</li> <li>Print Out with key ideas, notes section, questions, and QR code for portal.</li> <li>Show student testimonies of how systemic SEL has helped them flourish</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Participants can rate their sense of their own mastery in each area - all questions optional. Select no more than 5. (Appendix C)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identity</li> <li>Voice</li> <li>Emotional Intelligence</li> <li>Efficacy</li> <li>Agency</li> <li>Ability to Thrive</li> <li>Ability to Survive</li> <li>Overall Well-being</li> <li>Health</li> <li>Understanding Historical Context</li> <li>Understanding School Policies           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal, State, and District Level.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Allow time for dialogue and movement.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positionality of SEL Building Leader           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 minutes</li> <li>Discuss identity</li> <li>Why systemic SEL</li> <li>Experiences that led you to SEL</li> <li>Vision of systemic SEL</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>How are we alike (choose 3- 5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender</li> <li>Race</li> <li>Education Level</li> <li>Early Education Experience</li> <li>Post High School Education Experience</li> <li>Current Living Status</li> <li>Challenges</li> <li>Successes</li> <li>Thoughts on School Experience</li> </ul>
Allow time for dialogue and movement.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce CASEL           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5-10 minutes</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>How willing are you to learn more about CASEL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look into it on my own</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Framework (5 core competencies)</li> <li>• Rubric</li> <li>• Transformative SEL</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Come to another meeting to learn more</li> <li>• Transformative SEL How important</li> <li>• Using CASEL as a guide</li> <li>• Having Transformative SEL in the Schools</li> </ul>
<p>Allow time for dialogue and movement.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather data to form Team(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 minutes</li> <li>• Diversity - mirror district demographics</li> <li>• Purpose of involvement - use build knowledge, efficacy, voice, and agency in the name of well-being and improving the school experience.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Students</li> <li>• Community</li> <li>• Staff</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>What would be your interest in involvement (choose 3- 5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend Meetings</li> <li>• Frequency of Meetings</li> <li>• SEL Team Leadership Role</li> <li>• Small group Leader</li> <li>• Give input on topics and lessons</li> <li>• Give input on community needs</li> </ul> <p>Feedback on meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge</li> <li>• Gratitude</li> </ul>
<p>Allow time for dialogue and movement.</p>	

<p><b>YEAR ONE - PART 1 - FIRST 8 WEEKS OF SEL - BUILD THE TEAM</b></p>	
<p><b>WHO</b></p>	<p>Adults connected to the school in some capacity and interested in growing their well-being and impacting the well-being, equity, and inclusion within the school community.</p>
<p><b>WHAT</b></p>	<p>Through community outreach build a team and begin SEL Team understanding of SEL and Transformative SEL. Meetings in a casual setting that allows for discussions and learning where equity and diversity are experienced by all, and racial and language equality is addressed.</p>

<b>WHEN</b>	Meeting times will need to fit the community's needs and should include a variety of responsibilities and health needs.	
<b>FOCUS</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>STEPS</b>
SEL Team	Build a committed SEL team that represents the diversity of the stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold bimonthly meetings</li> <li>• Brainstorm potential Roles and Responsibilities</li> <li>• Brainstorm growing stakeholders' involvement</li> <li>• Brainstorm Teacher Involvement</li> <li>• Identify individual's role and responsibility</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Transformative SEL-</b> establish norms that diversity is essential to success. It allows an honest voice on perspective, experiences, and cultural proficiency systemically into the framework of the SEL programming. Thus, reducing the chance or eliminating SEL reproducing whiteness or hegemonic colonial structured norms into schools.</p>	
Foundational Learning Opportunities	Learn the foundations of SEL and how the resources on CASEL can help with the navigation SEL team to establish a cohesive framework that can aid in the well-being of the school community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assigned readings and webinars.</li> <li>• Modeled lessons to start meetings</li> <li>• Identify the importance of SEL for the school community</li> <li>• The school's role in SEL (policy and practice)</li> <li>• Schools' role in promoting SEL (policy and practice)</li> <li>• Everything is posted on the portal.</li> <li>• The program guide (staff) will supply information for participants to read, watch, or listen to that will grow their understanding of the program's purpose and goals.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Transformative SEL-</b> Provide broad examples of readings (Spanish, English, and listening) that come from a place of empowering BIPOC to develop well-being from where they are and looking within to discover the greatness that is within them. Some examples would be Ghouldy Muhammed’s Cultivating Genius (Muhammad, 2021) , CASEL Cares: SEL As a Lever for Equity and Social Justice (CASEL CARES, 2020), Dena Simmons 2019 SEL Exchange: Building a</p>	

	Culture of Equity through SEL (Simmons, 2019), Developing Positive Self-Images & Discipline in Black Children (Kunjufu, 2000), Chapter 2 in Building Equity- Social-Emotional Engagement (Frey et al., 2017).	
Two-Way Communication	Establish communication between stakeholders and the SEL team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify best ways to communicate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings/Assemblies</li> <li>• Learning Opportunities</li> <li>• Input requests</li> <li>• Purpose and Progress</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<b>Transformative SEL- Identify</b> barriers that would reduce communication and find ways to address them so that communication is inclusive and promotes involvement and belonging.	
Shared Vision	What is the guiding reason for implementing systemic SEL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin brainstorming essential elements of the shared vision.</li> </ul>
	<b>Transformative SEL- Input on the vision of the SEL program must strive to encompass all identities present within the school community.</b> This builds positive identity and encourages equality among different races, sexualities, class, and ethnic identities.	
Planning	Begin making lists of needs and resources as they pertain to the development and implementation of the SEL program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social</li> <li>• Emotional</li> <li>• Equitable</li> <li>• Financial</li> <li>• Resources and Supports</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Assess resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within the school community</li> <li>• People that provide knowledge, or input that increases positive outcomes for the program's success.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<b>Transformative SEL-</b> Address racial traumas, prejudices, biases, cultural proficiency, and systemic inequities within SEL education. Observe how oppression causes additional needs.	
Professional Learning to Strengthen Staff Expertise	A few staff members should be included in the initial SEL Team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aim to have a guidance counselor or other staff member that has a role within the school</li> <li>• Teachers/Staff are welcome in all aspects of the SEL Team.</li> <li>• Teachers/Staff will play vital roles in focus groups and in two-way communication as they have access to building and district resources.</li> </ul>
	<b>Transformative SEL-</b> School community members working alongside teachers and developing a program for the school bring equity while also sharing in the responsibility of educating the children within the school.	

<b>YEAR ONE - PART 2 - Weeks 9-16 of the school year</b>		
<b>WHO</b>	SEL team will grow to create a school based SEL team, adult SEL will be implemented into Professional Development (PD), which will include students and teachers that are interested in developing and influencing systemic SEL	
<b>WHAT</b>	Meetings in a casual setting that allows for discussions and learning where equity and diversity are experienced by all, and racial and language equality is addressed.	
<b>WHEN</b>	Meeting times will need to fit the community's needs and should include a variety of responsibilities and health needs.	
<b>FOCUS</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>ACTION STEPS</b>
SEL Team	Have regularly scheduled meetings as agreed on by the SEL team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify ideal frequency and duration of meetings.</li> <li>• Roles and Responsibilities have been established.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All meetings are open to anyone that would like to attend (virtual or in person). Agendas, time, place, and notes are shared in multiple languages with the school community.</li> <li>• Create Target teams, smaller groups that work on specific projects then present at meetings to get feedback, further ideas, and</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Transformative SEL-</b> Meeting times and days will need to be agreed upon by the SEL Team. Each person should have an active voice in the decision of the meeting frequency and duration. Members have created roles and outlined the responsibilities within those roles. Target teams are created to focus on needs within the community.</p>	
<p>Foundational Learning Opportunities</p>	<p>SEL team members will seek their own information and share it at meetings. As knowledge deepens and widens, begin developing outreach to school community staff.</p> <p>Team members will devise a way to share resources that they believe will address equity and build self-efficacy and well-being.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share information found that relates to SEL</li> <li>• Have in depth reviews and conversations about each of CASEL's five core competencies.</li> <li>• Call in interested stakeholders, this is also a means to build awareness of the general understanding of SEL.</li> <li>• Brainstorm instruction on SEL for staff PDs</li> <li>• Begin developing staff PD curriculum.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Transformative SEL-</b>Provide opportunities for team members to learn how and where to go for research that will broaden their understanding of CASEL's five core competencies and what resources fit the needs of the community.</p>	

Two-Way Communication	Establish consistent communication between SEL team and stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a communication role(s) within the SEL team.</li> <li>• Identify avenues of communication.</li> <li>• Brainstorm and conduct community outreach to establish clear lines of communication.</li> <li>• Establish consistent communication with building leaders.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Transformative SEL-</b> Clear and consistent communication allows for the school community to feel connected and in the loop of aims and progress of the SEL Team. Communication increases involvement through active listening to perspectives, experiences, ideas, and knowledge.</p>		
Shared Vision	Identify and revise the core values and purpose of SEL for the school community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather from stakeholders needs and strengths within their community.</li> <li>• Establish through collaborative dialogue the shared vision of the systemic SEL purpose. Include individual experiences and critical research that shows understanding of community needs.</li> <li>• Honor cultural legacies within the community as a starting point for the foundation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Transformative SEL-</b> Constructed a shared vision based on the needs within the diverse school community. Consider the aims and visions of groups like BLM. Aim to incorporate other prominent social groups' visions of the role schools play in equity and well-being. To reduce the reproduction of colonial structures, the facilitator of this conversation needs to be a minoritized person that values inclusion and belonging. Consider including cultural legacies that are not present in colonial school structures that instill social and emotional strengths (Gladwell, 2019). The group must preserve through the task and review along the way to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion are attained while oppression, hegemonic and historic systemic racism are eliminated. With even the best intentions, this staggering task of creating counter-hegemonic systems and structures will become overwhelming and groups will have to resist reverting back to the hegemonic ways of white supremacy and neoliberalism (Malott, 2014).</p>		

<p>Planning</p>	<p>Identify needs and resources that are present within the SEL team.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs and Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review, discuss, and revise</li> <li>• Create a sharable format that is paired with a survey to learn about additional needs, resources from individuals within the school community</li> <li>• Budget - begin thinking of financial needs</li> </ul> </li> <li>• S.M.A.R.T. v S.M.A.R.T.I.E. goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce</li> <li>• Compare and contrast</li> <li>• Begin brainstorming</li> <li>• Create a survey to gather input on goals</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Transformative SEL</b>-The needs of the people, equity, and being addressed and by using S.M.A.R.T.I.E goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely, Inclusive, and Equitable) include Inclusive and Equitable whereas the more mainstream S.M.A.R.T goals do not include the incorporation of Inclusive and equitable.</p>		
<p>Professional Learning to Strengthen Staff Experiences</p>	<p>Introduce Staff to the SEL Learning Portal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEL Program Portal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer information for teacher to gain an understanding of how they can address their own</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Provide an overview of each of the 5 core competencies and show where in the portal teacher can learn more and find exercises/activities for adult SEL</li> <li>• Also on the portal are input surveys and areas to request more information or how to get involved.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Transformative SEL- In</b> CASEL SEL and their transformative SEL the programming or process always begins with adults assessing and learning about their own well-being. This allows teachers to learn the five core competencies and can begin to incorporate implicit SEL into their classroom. Regarding transformative this early work will also need to address their biases and prejudices regarding BIPOC communities and students. Using articles like Simmons (2021) “Why</p>		

	<p>SEL Isn't Enough", within the teacher section of the portal reminds teachers that the social and emotional needs of BIPOC students are different than white students. Simmons is an anti-racist educator that has focused her previous work at Yale University and her current foundation, LiberatED within SEL's role in addressing the needs of BIPOC youth. She has called awareness to SEL's capabilities to be a tool that reproduce dominant ideology as "white supremacy with a hug" (Simmons, 2019; Simmons, 2021)</p>	
Adult SEL and Cultural Competencies	<p>Use Malott's concept of self-reflection (Malott, 2011).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin conversations about the role of education in addressing cultures and structures within society.</li> <li>• Through surveys and focus groups identify teachers' ability to observe their place in society and their biases, self-efficacy, and aspects and intersections within their own identity.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Transformative SEL- In CASEL Transformative SEL</b> there is an awareness of the levels of power within society. To use Malott's self-reflection there needs to be conversations followed up with reading materials about the intersection of race, class, and gender in the hierarchy of structures within American society.</p>	

<b>YEAR ONE - PART 3 - Weeks 17-24</b>	
<b>WHO</b>	SEL team now includes community adults, school staff, students, and others that are interested in building well-being within school communities.
<b>WHAT</b>	Implement regular staff PD, call in through engaging activities and meaningful learning opportunities on the SEL portal.
<b>WHEN</b>	SEL Team will work with building/district leadership to find a regular schedule that provides enough time for addressing CASELs five core competencies within adult SEL.

FOCUS	PURPOSE	ACTION STEPS
SEL Team	SEL Team is now meeting regularly includes students, reporting by target teams, and includes community input on planning and decisions.	<p>Whole group monthly assemblies</p> <p>Target groups (see below) present data, followed by a discussion of the data/findings and how the data/findings will shape future planning and actions.</p> <p>The Students SEL Team is now joined in with the adult team.</p> <p>Decisions are made on the next steps and agenda items for the next assembly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted teams meet as needed on for their target focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult PD Team - Teacher &amp; Families <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult SEL has been implemented for school staff and community members</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Surveys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short 5-10 question surveys are available weekly for all groups (student, teacher, and adults).</li> <li>• Address the goals of the SEL program - (equity, wellbeing, self-efficacy, identity, agency, cultural proficiency, cultural legacy, inclusion, belonging)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Focus groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 focus groups to address goals, target teams, and needs/resources.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student SEL Team &amp; Student SEL Curriculum Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These two teams will work together to begin to plan student SEL curriculum</li> <li>• Provide input for surveys necessary to have information to best serve the student's needs.</li> <li>• Research lessons, curriculum ideas, practices that align curriculum to the program's goals and shared vision.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p><b>Transformative SEL</b>-Meetings start with reviewing the aims and goals of the program. Reviewing, discussing, and revising the shared vision. Surveys should always include equity and identity (all types) questions that are in any language needed to build inclusivity and belonging. Focus groups need to model casual conversations that are welcoming and accepting to encourage participation. In this environment equality exists and power is not determined by gender, age, education level, employment, or economic status. All people involved are both knowledge providers as well as knowledge gainers.</p>	
Foundational Learning Opportunities	SEL team members will create learning opportunities for teachers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use current methodology that addresses identity, well-being, efficacy, voice, and agency.</li> <li>• Creating and implementing teachers' introduction to SEL.</li> <li>• Brainstorm instruction on SEL for staff PDs</li> <li>• Begin developing staff PD curriculum.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Transformative SEL</b>-Prior to planning, gather insight through surveys on the teacher's knowledge of SEL and their experience with oppression and cultural proficiency. This information will shape the direction of the PD.</p>	

Two-Way Communication	Establish consistent communication between SEL team and stakeholders. A student SEL Team member should be present in all aspects of communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building/district leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding - 1 year budget</li> <li>• Time allotment - PD and school activities</li> <li>• S.M.A.R.T.I.E goals alignment with school/district goals</li> <li>• Staff PD and Adult SEL</li> <li>• Student SEL program outline</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Communication - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review, discuss and revise the SEL teams' goals and visions of communication.</li> <li>• Solidify and post for input</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Transformative SEL-</b>The role(s) of communicators need to include people from various groups within the school community. Communication should be inclusive and welcoming, setting the tone that we care about well-being and building efficacy of individuals that have been minoritized into apathy. The goal is to emphasize that schools are a place to feel empowered and belonging.</p>		
Shared Vision	Solidify and share the core values and purpose of SEL for the school community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share the core values and the purpose of SEL.</li> <li>• Provide how data, personal stories, and cultural legacies were used to come to this shared vision.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Transformative SEL-</b> SEL is transformative when it addresses equity, equity, inclusion, belonging. The work of this program (theory and practice) sees that in addressing these aspects efficacy and well-being develop through critical self-reflections and engaging lessons encourage participation through personal interests.</p>		
Planning	Identify needs and resources that are present within the SEL team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise and solidify needs and resources that will aid in the delivery and program success.</li> <li>• S.M.A.R.T.I.E. Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review, discuss, revise</li> <li>• Create a sharable format that is paired with a survey to learn about additional needs, resources from individuals within the school community</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create 1-year SEL plan             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use surveys to bring community voice and needs to the plan</li> </ul> </li> <li>•</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Transformative SEL-</b> Shaping the planning through collaborative efforts that are coming from the people participating in dialogue and review and applying a diverse community input dissolves hegemonic neoliberalism within the program. Continually having areas for school community input is both disrupting neoliberalism and empowering the community through efficacy and agency.</p>	
Resources	Identify needs and resources that are present within the SEL team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish Funding             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss with building and/or district leader(s) available funds</li> <li>• Request funding for learning opportunities and resources</li> <li>• Transportation for community individuals that are traveling for meetings. (Public transport or uber)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Begin planning one year budget</li> <li>• Identify Time Allocated for             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff PD</li> <li>• School-wide activities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p><b>Transformative SEL-</b> When looking at district and building leaders remember that resources are often a tool that cause disenfranchising. Meaning resources (funding and time) are used to prioritize dominant objectives. In schools, this means resources are used to promote programs and practices aligned to the neoliberal policies that promote disciplinary actions rather than human development. The school experience has responded by transforming into a place where learning and success is narrowly aimed at addressing standardized tests (Lisovoy &amp; McLaren, 2003). Children and teachers are cogs within the capitalist structure. Be strong in the program's work and be prepared to cite evidence supporting the purpose and goals.</p>	

Professional Learning to Strengthen Staff Experiences	Staff will have at least one PD provided by the SEL Team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The building/district will designate time within schoolwide PD that addresses the SEL Program</li> <li>• Staff will receive instruction and learn about the roles, responsibilities, shared vision, participation, survey and focus groups results, needs/resources, S.M.A.R.T.I.E goals and any other information the SEL Team deems pertinent.</li> <li>• A short 5-10 question survey will be offered for staff to participate in future SEL PD.</li> </ul> <p><b>Transformative SEL-</b> In this meeting be sure to address the difference between SEL and Transformative SEL. Provide CASEL Cares (CASEL CARES, 2020) - Leverage for Equity summary and access to the online seminar on the portal.</p>
Adult SEL and Cultural Competencies	The Adult SEL class focuses on dissecting the historical and/or modern norms of the world, the USA, and their community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The topics for this will need to come from the SEL Team and address the cultural norms and diversity within their community.</li> <li>• Discuss the different ways that people do everyday activities</li> <li>• Complete a 5-10 question survey on the belief in our own culture and willingness to try or integrate other cultural norms.</li> <li>• Find individuals that are interested in developing learning, build a Cultural Competency Team</li> </ul> <p><b>Transformative SEL-</b> Begin the discussion to understand that there are many ways to do everyday activities. How do we know that the way we do things is the best way? How do we honor culture and cultural legacy?</p>
Staff Collaboration	Focus efforts on the goal of improving the work climate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish norms for meetings</li> <li>• Problem solve implementation of Student SEL</li> <li>• Create survey(s) that address the work climate.</li> </ul>

	<b>Transformative SEL-</b> Norms need to address the sensitivity in topics that will arise centered around diversity, equity, and inclusion to maintain a positive work climate that is inclusive, and all staff have a sense of belonging.
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<b>YEAR ONE - PART 4 - Weeks 25-32</b>		
<b>WHO</b>	All aspects of the SEL Team are working independently and collaboratively to develop a systemic SEL framework	
<b>WHAT</b>	The focus on this point is in delivering and reviewing Adult SEL and in the creation phase for Student SEL that will begin being implicitly rolled out in Year 1 part 4 and then Explicitly in Year 2 Part 1.	
<b>WHEN</b>	Meeting times and place depend on the SELs Team review and discussion that have transpired over this school year. The goal is that the place and the time are all for optimal inclusion and equity.	
<b>FOCUS</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>ACTION STEPS</b>
SEL Team	SEL Team meets regularly, includes students, reporting by target teams, and includes community input on planning and decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole group monthly assemblies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue like in Part 3.</li> <li>• Review, Discuss, and revise any structures, systems or practices that will increase equity or inclusion.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Targeted teams additionally meet weekly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult PD Team - Teacher &amp; Families <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to create and revise Adult Learning</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Surveys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to use and review surveys to address the goals and progress of the SEL program.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Focus groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to use and review to address the goals and progress of the SEL program.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student SEL Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to be active participants in all aspects of the critical action plan</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Teacher Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate with SEL Team on the goals and climate findings</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p><b>Transformative SEL - Throughout the process, those marginalized will need to be active in leading SEL teams.</b> It would also be recommended to encourage reverse stack, that is when those that are most marginalized speak up first. For instance, you could ask a Spanish speaking woman or black woman to start a discussion on a topic that they feel needs to be brought up.</p>	
Foundational Learning Opportunities	SEL team members will create learning opportunities for teachers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At this point, the SEL Team will need to create learning opportunities based on the observations and feedback/data received from the previous 8 weeks.</li> <li>• Use google scholar to continue seeking current research that dresses community specific needs</li> <li>• At this point, the team can also begin to seek seminars and workshops that can help them get outside information that</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Transformative SEL- Research</b> will continue to focus on looking for the context of the communities needs and resources and plans that can address community needs through SEL and activism. Creating the curriculum from within and focusing it on the community disrupts the neoliberalism that comes from reform and curriculum development. Although this is a lot of work, when there is an engaged team, the work is fulfilling and intimate.</p>	
Two-Way Communication	Establish consistent communication between SEL team and stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building/district leadership communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue meeting to discuss the program's progress.</li> <li>• Interview to get input</li> <li>• Continue to request finances to enhance the effectiveness of the</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

		<p>SEL Program. Gain support willing to have the support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do an outreach to provide a review and a look forward of the SEL Program.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p><b>Transformative SEL-</b> Create a checklist for all communications that must be aligned with the shared vision and be inclusive and equitable.</p>	
Shared Vision	<p>Identify and revise the core values and purpose of SEL for the school community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create the first shared vision for the SEL Program. It needs to be created in a collaborative fashion and have well-being and community needs at the core of it.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Transformative SEL-</b> Give a survey that addresses or seeks to understand how this shared vision is perceived on the topic's diversity, equity, and inclusion. Do</p>	
Planning	<p>Identify needs and resources that are present within the school community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share the needs and resources that are necessary in the delivery and program success.</li> <li>• Solidify and share S.M.A.R.T.I.E. Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide surveys for people that would like to give feedback or input</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Create and implementation plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review, discuss, revise</li> <li>• Create a sharable format that is paired with a survey to learn about additional needs, resources from individuals within the school community</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Curriculum - Make a list of lessons and activities that can be used in the student and adult curriculum development.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Transformative SEL-</b> Creating an online portal with information, videos, and notes is all a way to let the community become a part of the process. Whenever oppressed people are empowered in places that are known for systemic racism and oppression, we are transforming the narrative.</p>	
Resources	<p>Identify needs and resources that are present within the school community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish Funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fundraising</li> <li>• Secure funds from school or district budget</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 1 year budget <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review, discuss, revise</li> <li>• Create a sharable format that is paired with a survey to learn about additional needs, resources from individuals within the school community</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Identify Next School years' time Allocated for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff PD</li> <li>• School-wide activities</li> <li>• Explicit student lessons</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p><b>Transformative SEL-</b> Part of the funding can go beyond the building and the district. The problem of low academic success is not from being a BIPOC it is from systemic racism and oppression that was caused by neoliberal and racist policies and practices. Calling on state and federal fund as reparations acknowledges that the awareness of the trauma and begins the financial steps needed to consciously heal.</p>	
Professional Learning to Strengthen Staff Experiences	<p>Staff will have 1-2 PD provided by the SEL Team during this. Plan for the following year as students will begin having SEL curriculum.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask building/district leadership for monthly scheduled PD time for SEL program</li> <li>• Begin looking into SEL programs that are effective in other schools and/or school districts.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

	<b>Transformative SEL-</b> Teachers will hear and learn from parents. This is a shift in PD, and it empowers the parents to have expectations that the well-being of their children is being addressed at school.	
Adult SEL and Cultural Competencies	The Adult SEL class focuses on dissecting the historical and/or modern norms of the world, the USA, and their community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The topics for Cultural proficiency will need to be developed by the SEL Team.</li> <li>• Develop a one-year plan for integrating cultural competencies to the SEL program plan.</li> <li>• What happens in the second 8 weeks of Cultural Competencies</li> </ul>
	<b>Transformative SEL-</b> Begin the discussion to understand that there are many ways to do everyday activities. How do we know that the way we do things is the best way? How do we honor culture and cultural legacy?	
Staff Collaboration	Eight-week plan for SEL and climate to start the school year. This will need to be presented to the SEL Tea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalize the first 8 weeks plan for introducing SEL to students.</li> <li>• Support is developed for teachers and students that were found in surveys from previous year.</li> <li>• Make a list of concepts, lessons, and activities that can be used in the student SEL curriculum.</li> </ul>
	<b>Transformative SEL-</b> In developing a plan for the following school year teachers will collaborate with students and then present to the SEL Team their 8-week student SEL introduction. This process has teachers and students working together addressing school community well-being. Teachers are role models and influencers on the future of their school.	

Once the pre-program initiative and the four-part program have concluded the SEL Team will review the year. Within that year they will celebrate the collaboration, knowledge, self-efficacy, and well-being that developed throughout the process. There will be many challenges, the biggest getting school community involvement. I would like to

point out that I am frustrated that to solve the problem of inequity, racial trauma, and apathy I am writing a plan that involves people from within the community to develop and carry out a plan. It would be best for the people that are electing to participate to be compensated in some way. It seems unfair that they must use their time and energy to fix something that was not created by them. However, the alternative is that current leaders would develop the plan and in doing so a significant risk arises that white-ness, hegemonic norms, and neoliberal policies will prevail as they are so ingrained into the dominant group. From my own experience of running a SEL committee for two years the cries from the committee members for “Let’s just buy a program” were repeated in times of initiating curriculum or lessons. I knew from my own children that having a mass-produced program is flat and reinforces a SEL out of compliance rather than SEL out of concern and hope.

## Chapter Five

### Implementation and Evaluation

In chapter 4, I presented a comprehensive plan that initiates and implements a systemic Transformative SEL program into a school or a school district. A program of this nature develops well-being while building equity and inclusion. SEL focuses on well-being and Transformative SEL focuses on diversity, equity, and inclusion. For Social Emotional Learning to be most effective it requires intense dedication from staff members. Ideally this would be a district or building lead position that strives to foster well-being, inclusion, and equity in all aspects of the school experience. I utilized a staff member within my program and that position is best if it has the sole responsibility of initiating a systemic Transformative SEL program.

This hired position, SEL program guide, would begin with about 12 weeks to lay the groundwork for their role as the initial education provider. I propose that a learning portal, accessible by teachers, students, and community members would serve as a place for the school community to go to learn about anything SEL related. The SEL Portal will grow with the program; housing literature, webinars, activities, surveys, opportunities for focus groups and ways to get involved. The program guide would need to work closely with IT to create an online instructional design portal. Meaning anyone that is interested in gaining knowledge about the district/school's approach to SEL could access this digital front. This establishes transparency and independent learning experience for school community members that need or value flexibility.

In that initial 12-week period the SEL program guide will also create a plan to build awareness and interest for school community members to get involved in the SEL initiatives. Since SEL has been an important part of my research and my classroom culture I start each school year giving background on why I became interested in SEL, what SEL is and how I weave it into our daily classroom culture and activities. Through these presentations I have observed parents' interest and enthusiasm of their children having the exposure to this style of pedagogy. From this I realized that the community in which I teach parents is interested and would like to work on their own well-being. To begin gaining interest the best first step would be to have a social media push that identifies that an SEL program is in the works and that parent involvement is essential to the program's success. Since the program depends on diversity that represents the school demographics in many BIPOC communities having teaching staff that represents their community that is often not the case. A timeline is below and within the timeline action steps, goals, roles, and responsibilities are outlined for the first 18 months for both the SEL program guide and the SEL Team.

In using CAR along with CASEL's vast resources, once year two approaches it will be up to the SEL Team to set up plans for the following year. Based on the Transformative SEL program's framework in Chapter 4 the SEL team will begin planning for year two in the 3rd part of year 1. In each part of year one their surveys and focus groups are used as ways to gather input and feedback to shape the direction of the SEL Program. The surveys were adapted from Panorama (2023) an online resource for schools in utilizing research backed surveys that provide data that aids in designing action steps in addressing SEL, Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS), SEL and Well-being, Student Check

Ins, Family engagement, Equity and Inclusion, as well as PD. The team will go through their surveys that are offered online and select questions that will help guide the success of the SEL program. Surveys will be written for adults, teachers, and students and data should be gathered from each stakeholder group. Focus groups should be run several times allowing adults, staff, and students to interact. This may cause a problem as groups may be more reserved. If this is a problem then separate focus groups need to be run for students, adults, and school staff. It should be encouraged that the three groups could do focus groups together to be able to hear first-hand the different perspectives and approaches that each group has to offer.

<b>PRE- PROGRAM INITIATIVE</b>	
Pre-Program Initiative  3-5 Months prior to the SEL Program Launch	<b>SEL Program Guide (staff member) - Role, goals, and Responsibilities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a learning portal – Website for the school community to access Transformative SEL materials</li> <li>• Create a social media push to inform the school community about the SEL program that will begin next school year.</li> <li>• Host information sessions - May 17th is an ideal start day, as it is the anniversary of Rosa Parks saying, “I’m Tired”.</li> <li>• Attend school events that parent, or community members are present</li> <li>• Visit local organizations that support children and parents.</li> <li>• Create and maintain a database of school community members that are interested in learning, participating, and/or providing feedback.</li> <li>• Develop Monthly newsletters that deliver information to build knowledge and interest on Transformative SEL.</li> <li>• Gather data that will guide the Learning Opportunities for the first 8 weeks of the SEL Team Foundational Learning Opportunities.</li> <li>• Role becomes a member of the SEL Team and works to transition a SEL community member into this role over a 1–3-year process.</li> <li>• Secure money for necessary materials and technology</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Feedback &amp; Input</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preassembly survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-Being Check-In – this will be used throughout the year and available on a google form to access changes in wellbeing throughout year 1(see Appendix A)</li> <li>• SEL and Transformative SEL knowledge, importance of 5 core competencies in your daily life, role of school in SEL, importance of SEL being done with a critical lens. (see Appendix B)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Post assembly survey- (see Appendix C) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure of the Assembly- welcoming, inclusive, and easy of knowing about the assembly, trust within the program guide.</li> <li>• Knowledge gained</li> <li>• Potential Involvement</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Focus Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the environment of the assembly, trust within the SEL program guide, what they thought was the most essential item covered, what was least essential, was it inclusive, did people feel like they belonged. Use questions from the Post assembly survey and allow for free conversation.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>YEAR 1 – BUILDING A TRANSFORMATIVE SEL FOUNDATION</b></p>	
<p><b>Part 1 -</b> 8 Weeks To 10 Weeks  September To October</p>	<p><b>SEL Program Guide - role, goals, and responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure a variety of meeting places and times</li> <li>• Build a SEL Team - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff members (2- 5% of staff population)</li> <li>• Adult community members (3-10% of the student body)</li> <li>• Team diversity matches the school community demographics</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Build SEL team’s SEL knowledge - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use CASEL and other sources that address input from the initial assembly from the previous year and from any input gathered post- assembly meetings.</li> <li>• Offer readings, podcasts, and videos in multiple languages.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Posting, monitoring and sharing surveys and data from surveys and focus groups.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>SEL Team - goals and actions steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create surveys that seek to identify needs within the community</li> <li>• Gain Foundational knowledge about SEL and Transformative SEL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the role well-being, equity, and inclusion have on human development.</li> <li>• CASEL Five Core Competencies</li> <li>• Begin navigating the portal and CASEL.com</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Develop Communication Norms</li> <li>• Initiate the development of a shared vision</li> <li>• Attend meetings and provide feedback that enhances well-being, equity, and inclusion.</li> <li>• Select from Panorama’s Surveys questions that learn about the staff members understanding and commitment to SEL.</li> </ul> <p><b>Feedback &amp; Input</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys - to be created by the SEL Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General survey offered after each meeting - addressing inclusion, equity (voice, idea(s), environment), self-efficacy, belonging, and meeting time and place, and pertinence of topics and materials (Appendix D)</li> <li>• Staff Members - understanding of SEL and importance of SEL and Transformative SEL.</li> <li>• Needs and Resources of the school community (teacher, student, adults))</li> <li>• Bimonthly check-ins with all groups - this will be used to create lessons and support for Year 1 part 2 and Year 2 part 1.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Focus Groups – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult - Needs and resources of the school community</li> <li>• Teacher - Needs and resources of the school community</li> <li>• Student - Needs and resources of the school community</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Part 2 -</b> 8 Weeks To 10 Weeks</p> <p>November To January</p>	<p><b>SEL Program Guide - role, goals, and responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure locations to meet the needs set out by the SEL team</li> <li>• Utilize CASEL as a resource for the SEL team to build a systemic Transformative SEL framework.</li> <li>• Provide learning opportunities - 4-8 times 30–90-minute sessions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S.M.A.R.T. goals and on S.M.A.R.T.I.E. goals (Management Center, 2023)</li> <li>• Malott’s self-reflection (Malott, 2011)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with SEL Team on CASEL’s five core competencies and begin to outline staff PD</li> <li>• Build and educate a student SEL Team</li> <li>• Present and post in the SEL portal current and pertinent: literature, webinars, podcasts, and videos that address teachers about well-being, efficacy, diversity, equity, and inclusion.</li> <li>• Posting, monitoring and sharing surveys and data from surveys and focus groups.</li> </ul> <p><b>SEL Team - goals and actions steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has regular scheduled meetings - assembly and learning opportunities</li> <li>• Establish SEL team member roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Members share learning they sought out that is specific to community needs.</li> <li>• Begin writing the shared vision through identified core values and purpose of the SEL program</li> <li>• Identify how CASELs 5 core competencies will address community needs</li> <li>• Collaborate to identify goals of teacher PD on CASELs 5 core competencies.</li> <li>• Use Panorama to create surveys for feedback and input from suggestions below.</li> </ul> <p><b>Feedback &amp; Input</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey - to be created by the SEL Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post assembly meeting survey - (SEL, equity, and inclusion)</li> <li>• Parent Interest Check-in</li> <li>• S.M.A.R.T and S.M.A.R.T.I.E - understanding, value, preference, SEL program goals needed</li> <li>• Needs and Resources - identified and compiled needs and resources, ranking importance.</li> <li>• Based on Needs and Resources - Target Teams Target Teams (need and participation interest)</li> <li>• Teacher specific- SEL Interest, involvement, and Portal exploration</li> <li>• Teacher specific- Self-efficacy, cultural competency, and identity</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Focus Groups - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S.M.A.R.T and S.M.A.R.T.I.E</li> <li>• Needs/Resources and Target Teams</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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<p><b>Part 3</b> 8 Weeks To 10 Weeks</p> <p>January To March</p>	<p><b>SEL Program Guide - role, goals, and responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guiding Student SEL Team - roles, SEL knowledge and self-efficacy</li> <li>• Securing space for assemblies, meetings, and activities.</li> <li>• Provide a database on the portal of SEL lessons (teacher and student) and effective research based SEL curriculums</li> <li>• Provide a blank template to aid in creation of Teacher PD</li> <li>• Provide a blank template to aid in the creation of Student SEL</li> <li>• Posting, monitoring and sharing surveys and data from surveys and focus groups.</li> <li>• Provide budget template</li> <li>• Provide Learning Opportunities on Cultural Proficiencies</li> </ul> <p><b>SEL Team - goals and actions steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create Target Groups within the SEL Team</li> <li>• Begin planning for Year 2 student SEL</li> <li>• Create Staff PD 1 year plan</li> <li>• Create student SEL curriculum</li> <li>• Solidify Goals and Shared Vision</li> <li>• Prepare 1 year budget</li> <li>• Identify allotted time for Staff PD and Student Learning/activities</li> <li>• Staff PD- SEL Team Information Session</li> <li>• Develop a Cultural Proficiency Target Team</li> <li>• Host a Year closing assembly - show data and review efforts and outline Year 2</li> <li>• Use Panorama Surveys to create survey suggestions below</li> </ul> <p><b>Feedback &amp; Input</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey - to be created by the SEL Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student SEL Team- general meeting check-in</li> <li>• Meetings and Assembly - Time and place - effective, convenient, accessible, other suggestions, online options.</li> <li>• SEL Team Communication - goals and vision are we meeting those, are they effective, other ideas.</li> <li>• SEL Program - Purpose, goals (S.M.A.R.T.I.E.), and shared vision. Assess understanding, interest, trust, and belief in the program's outcome.</li> <li>• Community needs regarding growing well-being through SEL.</li> <li>• Planning future PD and Adult SEL</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural Competencies - knowledge, biases, and open-mindedness</li> <li>• Identify roadblocks in systemic Transformative SEL with fidelity</li> <li>• Focus Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEL Team communication and Shared Vision</li> <li>• Cultural Proficiency and Curriculum - Year 2 (student and adult) what are the needs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Part 4</b> 8 Weeks To 10 Weeks</p> <p>April To May</p>	<p><b>SEL Program Guide - role, goals, and responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guiding Student SEL Team - roles, SEL knowledge and self-efficacy</li> <li>• Securing space for assemblies, meetings, and activities.</li> <li>• Manage SEL learning opportunities for SEL Team on the portal</li> <li>• Posting, monitoring and sharing surveys and data from surveys and focus groups. Follow directives from SEL Team on making a year in review data presentation</li> </ul> <p><b>SEL Team - Goals and actions steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEL Team works with students on SEL Curriculum - First 8-week student introduction to SEL</li> <li>• Use data from Part 3 to shape Adult SEL</li> <li>• Seek learning opportunities in SEL, diversity, equity, inclusion, cultural proficiency,</li> <li>• Continue working on the budget - Post 1 year budget, needs and resources.</li> <li>• Plot the plan staff PD, adult SEL assemblies, student SEL learning and School wide activities.</li> <li>• Develop a 1-year cultural proficiency curriculum and/or lessons/information</li> <li>• Use Panorama to create surveys for input and feedback from suggested topics below.</li> </ul> <p><b>Feedback &amp; Input</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys - to be created by the SEL Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose and goals of the program- address follow-up questions to see if changes helped with clarity, addressing well-being, inclusivity, and equity.</li> <li>• School Climate - All groups - general information</li> <li>• SEL Plan- Looking forward</li> <li>• SEL Yearly Review - What worked what did not work</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEL Curriculum - all groups what you need most</li> <li>• SEL Curriculum - what interests you the most (learning style and content)</li> <li>• Resistance to Transformative SEL</li> <li>• Focus Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First 8 Weeks of Year 2 SEL Curriculum - all groups</li> <li>• First 8 Weeks of Year 2 School Climate - all groups</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Remaining Weeks and Summer Months	<p><b>SEL Program Guide - role, goals, and responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and post all data for school/district stakeholders</li> <li>• Construct a district/school plan for SEL lessons, assemblies, and activities.</li> <li>• Prepare and deliver an official budget request</li> <li>• Look for grants to fund the Community Approach Transformative SEL</li> <li>• Create within the portal a lesson an easy-to-follow database of suggested SEL Team lessons. Include ways to integrate SEL into all aspects of learning.</li> <li>• Identify school/district specific common SEL language based on the work done by the SEL Team.</li> <li>• Lead Focus Groups</li> </ul> <p><b>SEL Team - goals and actions steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review accomplishments and setbacks.</li> <li>• Use data and CASELs District Wide SEL Action Planning Workbook to create a framework for year 2 and 3</li> <li>• Plan surveys for Year 2</li> </ul> <p><b>Feedback &amp; Input</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEL Team - review their experience of being on the team</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Focus Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEL Team - review their experience of being on the team</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

As I stated before, this is the pre-program initiation and year one because the goal of a community approach systemic Transformative SEL program entails that the program encourages participants to become active leaders in sculpting the direction of the program.

In fact, the SEL guide position could be entirely phased out by year 3. The reason for this is to address the historical narratives of BIPOC asking for control of their schools. In times like desegregation black leaders announced that they did not want integration, they wanted equality in curriculum, facilities, and staff salaries. The idea of this approach to SEL disrupts colonial structures, neoliberalism in our schools, and hegemonic oppression based on race, class, or gender. However, there are several hurdles that the school SEL guide will have to overcome. The first will be in having the school district create a position such as one of the seven that Panorama Education has written full job descriptions (Panorama Education, 2021). These descriptions are frameworks that can serve as either a benchmark or can be a guide for someone that is seeking to request a position be made to better serve the school community.

The second hurdle lies in getting a large enough number of community members that want to participate in such an undertaking. With people stretched thin and worn down asking them to take on learning a new set of skills it is not easy to sway someone into. I believe this work should not be volunteer and that through securing grants some compensation could be available. Paying participants is both ethical and equitable. For many community members they are the experts of the needs and strengths of their community. Their knowledge and commitment to their community is worthy of compensation. But even attaining that compensation will be a major feat.

Providing engaging lessons and dialogue around well-being and equity will hopefully encourage community members to want to help in shaping the future of their community. Adult assemblies will also help adults in the community hope to make positive changes in their own life. The learning opportunities will start with focusing on CASELs

five core competencies and as you build knowledge and strategies on each competency you take steps to improving your well-being. The surveys throughout the SEL program will be used to shape all parts of the program. In hopes of sharing survey results and showing how the results shaped the program's direction will encourage transparency and connection between input/feedback and changes.

Another hurdle lies in the fact that right wing conservative groups have identified SEL as being a partner in Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT is a theory that analyzes how race is a human construct that has both historical and systemic been used as a source of power (Crenshaw, 2010). This is only a hurdle if the school community has an active voice of not allowing diversity, equity, and inclusion to be a part of the SEL program. Since throughout this thesis I have focused on how the oppression of BIPOC has affected the identity and self-efficacy within educational institutions, I am not denying that I see Transformative SEL as a means to disrupt the power and oppression dynamic that is woven into the fabric of American society. This means that if opposition comes, it must be met with the school community demanding that race be part of the work in identity and social-emotional learning. This program is community based and the SEL program guide is there to support and help gather the necessary materials and funds to help them establish systemic SEL that meets the needs of the community.

### **Limitations and Looking Ahead**

This program is aimed at aiding community members that will have a range in academic levels and language needs. Going into this not knowing who will be on the team, you are instantly going to face clear gaps in the team's capabilities. For one, it is important to know that SEL is not a mental health program. It helps with mental health issues, but it

cannot replace the work of trained mental health professionals and if someone needs mental health services, seeks those services over seeking help from the SEL team or assemblies.

Another limitation of this program is that the people that are doing the work, essential work, are not being paid for their time and efforts. Going into this first year without any funding creates a situation where the community members that are stepping into the SEL teams are participating in a grassroots effort without being paid for their efforts. The dedication that this program entails would benefit greatly from being able to provide some type of compensation for their time, creativity, and knowledge.

The final limitation that I am going to point out is that in this plan academics are not integrated into being an important part of the school experience. I see this as an extension for further investigation within transformative SEL. Ghouldy Muhammed (2021) in *Cultivating Geniis* shows how critical historical analysis builds racial and cultural proficiency in both social studies, reading, and writing. I see that often math is not discussed in how to integrate SEL into math education. There is a greater need to find ways to bring both explicit and implicit SEL lessons into all grades and curriculums. Having students begin to create their own memoirs allows them to learn how to write about something that they are experts of themselves.

SEL allows us to take time and prioritize our own well-being. It allows us to examine our positionality and celebrate who we are while beginning to create the path that leads to the dream of who we can be. Like in airplanes where you put the mask on yourself first, systemic Transformative SEL starts with the adults learning and analyzing how their biases and self-efficacy aid in their well-being. Using CASEL five core competencies communities are transformed to see that within every individual there is a good decision

makers, strong social and self-awareness, people that can build meaningful relationships, and agency. Identity, our understanding of who we are is shaped over time and that means it can be molded to understanding that there is more to us than we know. Through challenges and passion we can find our worth when we are the architects of our future. Transformative SEL takes the power of education, identity, and well-being and places it into the hands of experts, the community. This community based transformative SEL program empowers the people to identify their needs and their strengths. Through their expertise they will create a grassroots SEL program that is grounded in authenticity, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

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## Appendix A

# Well-Being Check In

Adapted from Panorama Education Adult SEL Measures

During the past week how often did you feel _____.					
engaged	almost never	once in a while	sometimes	frequently	almost always
excited	almost never	once in a while	sometimes	frequently	almost always
exhausted	almost never	once in a while	sometimes	frequently	almost always
frustrated	almost never	once in a while	sometimes	frequently	almost always
happy	almost never	once in a while	sometimes	frequently	almost always
hopeful	almost never	once in a while	sometimes	frequently	almost always
overwhelmed	almost never	once in a while	sometimes	frequently	almost always
safe	almost never	once in a while	sometimes	frequently	almost always
stressed out	almost never	once in a while	sometimes	frequently	almost always
worried	almost never	once in a while	sometimes	frequently	almost always
When I am facing a challenge I tend to _____.					
face it head on	almost never	once in a while	sometimes	frequently	almost always
Find a way to escape	almost never	once in a while	sometimes	frequently	almost always
I do nothing	almost never	once in a while	sometimes	frequently	almost always
I appease the person that is challenging me	almost never	once in a while	sometimes	frequently	almost always

## Appendix B

CASEL's 5 Core Competencies defined by CASEL on their interactive framework wheel (CASEL, 2023).

**Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Core Competencies**

Form description:

What is your First and Last Name (optional)

Short answer text

How are you connected to the school community? \*

Parent/Caregiver  
 Teacher  
 Student  
 Neighbor  
 Business Owner  
 Politician  
 Grandparent  
 Other...

Using the scale below show how important it is to learn about Self-Awareness. \*

**Self-awareness: The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.** This includes capacities to recognize one's strengths and limitations with a well-grounded sense of confidence and purpose.

Very Important - I want to grow a lot in this area  
 Important - I could use some help growing in this  
 Somewhat Important - I am interested but feel self-aware  
 A Little Important - I am not sure how I feel about this  
 Not Important At All - I am very self aware, I know my strengths and weaknesses

Using the Scale below how important is it to learn about Self-management? \*

**Self-management: The abilities to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations.** This includes the capacities to delay gratification, manage stress, and feel motivation and agency to accomplish personal and collective goals.

Very Important - I want to grow a lot in this area  
 Important - I could use some help growing in this  
 Somewhat Important - I am interested but good about my ability to self-manage  
 A Little Important - I am not sure how I feel about this  
 Not Important At All - I am very self disciplined, I know easily achieve my goals

Using the Scale below how important is it to learn about Responsible Decision Making? \*

**Responsible decision-making: The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.** This includes the capacities to consider ethical standards and safety concerns, and to evaluate the benefits and consequences of various actions for personal, social, and collective well-being.

Very Important - I want to grow a lot in this area  
 Important - I could use some help growing in this  
 Somewhat Important - I am interested but good about my ability to make good decisions  
 A Little Important - I am not sure how I feel about this  
 Not Important At All - I am very good at making decisions that help my well-being

Using the Scale below how important is it to learn about Relationship Skills? \*

**Relationship skills: The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.** This includes the capacities to communicate clearly, listen actively, cooperate, work collaboratively to problem solve and negotiate conflict constructively, navigate settings with differing social and cultural demands and opportunities, provide leadership, and seek or offer help when needed.

Very Important - I want to grow a lot in this area  
 Important - I could use some help growing in this  
 Somewhat Important - I am interested but good about my ability to maintain healthy supportive relations...  
 A Little Important - I am not sure how I feel about this  
 Not Important At All - I am very good at maintain healthy supportive relationships.

Using the Scale below how important is it to learn about Social Awareness? \*

**Social awareness: The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.** This includes the capacities to feel compassion for others, understand broader historical and social norms for behavior in different settings, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

Very Important - I want to grow a lot in this area  
 Important - I could use some help growing in this  
 Somewhat Important - I am interested but good about my ability to understand the perspectives of an e...  
 A Little Important - I am not sure how I feel about this  
 Not Important At All - I am very good at understanding the perspectives of an empathize with others, incl...

## Appendix C

### Post SEL Program Kickoff Assembly

Adapted from Panorama Education USER GUIDE Family-School Relationships Survey  
(2023)

How involved have you been involved with group(s) at this school?	almost never	once in a while	sometimes	frequently	almost always
Given your cultural background, how good of a fit is this style of meeting?	not good at all	slightly good	somewhat good	quite good	extremely good
Were you able to connect with other adults at the assembly?	almost never	once in a while	sometimes	frequently	almost always
How confident are you in your ability to impact the school's ability to meet the community's social emotional learning needs?	not confident at all	a little confident	somewhat confident	mostly confident	very confident
How fair or unfair is the school's system of evaluating children?	very unfair	somewhat unfair	neither fair or unfair	somewhat fair	very fair
Do you feel sure or unsure on how to communicate with the school?	very unsure	somewhat unsure	neither sure or unsure	somewhat sure	very sure
Did the meeting feel welcoming to you?	not welcoming	somewhat not welcoming	neither welcoming or unwelcoming	somewhat welcoming	very welcoming
Did the school communicate well with people from your about the purpose of this assembly?	not well at all	somewhat not well	somewhat well	mostly well	very well
Did you feel a sense of belonging at the assembly?	almost never	once in a while	sometimes	frequently	almost always
Did you feel that you understood the information provided at the assembly?	no	so	sometimes	frequently	almost always
Did you feel that the information was interesting?	almost never	once in a while	sometimes	frequently	almost always

How likely are you to participate in the SEL program?	almost never	once in a while	sometimes	frequently	almost always
How likely are you to become an SEL Team member?	definitely not	If I have time I will	Not sure	I plan to attend	Most definitely
How important is SEL for adults in the community?	not important	slightly unimportant	somewhat important	mostly important	very important
How important is SEL for teachers in the school(s)?	not important	slightly unimportant	somewhat important	mostly important	very important
How important is SEL for children in the school(s)?	not important	slightly unimportant	somewhat important	mostly important	very important

## Appendix D

### General Group Assembly Check Ins -

Were you able to freely communicate your thoughts and/or ideas?	almost never	occasionally	sometimes	frequently	almost always
Did you feel that the ideas covered were	not important	slightly unimportant	important	mostly important	very important
Did the conversations spark ideas within you?	almost never	occasionally	sometimes	frequently	almost always
Was the environment of the meeting comfortable?	not comfortable	slightly unimportant	comfortable	mostly comfortable	very comfortable
Do you believe that you can make a positive impact in your home based on what you learned today?	almost never	occasionally	sometimes	frequently	almost always
Do you believe that you can make a positive impact in school based on what you learned today?	almost never	occasionally	sometimes	frequently	almost always
Did you feel like you belonged at this meeting/assembly?	almost never	occasionally	sometimes	frequently	almost always
Was the location of this meeting easy for you to get to?	very difficult	slightly difficult	Neither easy or difficult	slightly convenient	Very convenient
Did the time of this meeting fit your schedule?	very difficult	slightly difficult	Neither easy or difficult	slightly convenient	Very convenient
The length of this meeting/assembly was	Too long	Too short	somewhat long	somewhat short	Perfect amount of time
Were the topics important to creating positive change in your life?	almost never	occasionally	sometimes	frequently	almost always
Were the topics covered important to create positive change in the school?	almost never	occasionally	sometimes	frequently	almost always
Were the materials that were shared interesting?	almost never	occasionally	sometimes	frequently	almost always
How likely are you to attend the next meeting?	very unlikely	somewhat unlikely	Not sure	somewhat likely	very likely

<https://schoolguide.casel.org/uploads/sites/2/2019/08/Tool-for-Developing-SMARTIE-Goals-for-SEL-OST-7.21.22-1.docx>



## TOOL: Developing SMARTIE Goals for SEL



The purpose of this tool is to help the SEL team develop and document goals for SEL implementation and outcomes.

### How to Use this Tool

This tool presents the "SMARTIE" goal-setting process and includes a template that can be used to document goals. It is designed to be used in conjunction with the SEL vision statement to prioritize clear, motivating goals for SEL.

After defining the SEL goals using the reflection questions in this tool, the SEL team can get input from the rest of the school community to refine and finalize the goals.

SMARTIE goals are a useful link between a needs and resources assessment and an action plan. We recommend integrating the SEL goals with other school priorities and improvement plans.

### SMARTIE Goals for SEL\*

Answers to these questions will help to ensure that goals are SMARTIE:

**Specific:**

Does each goal clearly state what is to be accomplished? Where appropriate, does it specify where and by whom activities should be carried out?

**Measurable:**

Does each goal refer to a measurable outcome? Does it set a standard that will allow the team to know whether or not the goal has been met?

**Attainable/Ambitious:**

Does the goal seem reachable given where things are now? At the same time, is it challenging enough that success would mean significant progress?

**Relevant:**

Will attaining this goal make a difference in the quality of young people's lives? Is the goal aligned with other goals?

**Time-bound:**

Has a timeframe been established for achieving the goal? Have shorter-term benchmarks been set so progress can be monitored along the way?

**Inclusive:**

Does this goal invite traditionally excluded individuals to make decisions and contribute in a way that shares power?

**Equitable:**

Does this goal include an element of fairness or justice that seeks to address systemic injustice, inequity, or oppression?

\* adapted from: The Management Center – learn more at [managementcenter.org](http://managementcenter.org)

- What would your school community like to see change as a result of SEL implementation?
  - How will SEL enhance young people's social and emotional skills, competencies, and mindsets?
  - How will it enhance academic performance?
  - How will it positively impact climate?
  - How will it lead to more equitable outcomes?
  - How will it impact educator effectiveness?
  - How will it strengthen partnerships between the school, OST program, and families?
  - Will it decrease undesirable outcomes, such as suspension or dropout rates?
- Who is supposed to change as a result of SEL?
  - Are changes expected for young people?
  - Are changes expected for other members of the school community? Staff? Leadership? Families? Community members?
- How much change is expected?
  - What magnitude of change would indicate that a difference is being made?
- When will the change occur?
  - How long would the desired changes take (e.g., six months, one year)?
  - By what specific date would the change be projected to happen?
- How will the changes be measured?
  - What are any existing measures (e.g., surveys, administrative data) that can aid in measuring change?
  - What would signify that "change happened" (e.g., integrating SEL into daily activities and structures, staff using an evidence-based SEL program or practices, staff interacting more positively with each other, stronger relationships between youth and adults)?

#### Examples of SMARTIE Goals for Schoolwide SEL Implementation:

Goal for Building an SEL Team	
What will change? ( <i>specific</i> )	Our school community will have an SEL team that meets regularly to drive the work of our SEL action plan.
For whom? ( <i>specific</i> )	Leadership and staff from both the school and OST program
By how much? ( <i>specific, measurable, attainable/ambitious</i> )	The SEL team will meet every three weeks throughout the school year and will consist of six or more members including leadership from both the school and OST program, and each meeting will end with clear action steps to be completed between meetings. This would represent a significant improvement from previous teams that met irregularly with poor participation and will require intentional recruitment and culture-building within the team.
When will the change occur? ( <i>specific, measurable, relevant, time-bound</i> )	Recruitment of the team will occur throughout September. Regular meetings will begin in October and continue through June, to be scheduled on days/times that the team selects together in October.
How will it be measured? ( <i>specific, measurable</i> )	Each SEL team meeting will be documented within an agenda/note-taking template that includes the date, members present, agenda items and next steps. This will provide data showing whether we met our goal.

For more information, tools, and resources, visit [schoolguide.casel.org](http://schoolguide.casel.org).

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How will the process or outcomes address equity and inclusiveness? <i>(inclusive, equitable)</i>	The six+ member team will include leadership and staff from both the school and OST program, and a designated family liaison. This liaison will lay the groundwork to include family representatives on the team the following year. In the past, our teams have often excluded family and OST program voices.
<b>Example of a metric that incorporates all of the SMARTIE criteria:</b> We will recruit a six+ member SEL team with representatives from core stakeholder groups by September 30. The full team (at least six members present) will meet every three weeks between October 1 and June 15 and maintain a record of meetings and action steps.	

Goal for Evidence-Based SEL Programs and Practices	
What will change? <i>(specific)</i>	Our school community will adopt an evidence-based SEL program and all staff will implement the program within the next three years.
For whom? <i>(specific)</i>	All staff that work directly with youth, including non-instructional staff and OST program staff.
By how much? <i>(specific, measurable, realistic)</i>	All staff will use core program practices and language to a degree that youth will be able to recognize and explain how they apply the five SEL competencies in different settings.
When will the change occur? <i>(specific, measurable, realistic, time sensitive)</i>	The SEL team will narrow a list of programs to present to school community by Thanksgiving break. One to two programs will be selected to be piloted by at least two teachers in each grade band by the end of February. Program selection will be finalized. Professional learning for all staff will occur in fall of next school year for all staff, so that non-instructional staff and OST program staff align language, expectations and practices. Implementation will be monitored quarterly, and targeted support will be provided to result in full implementation by all staff within two school years (not including selection/pilot year).
How will it be measured? <i>(specific, measurable)</i>	Implementation monitoring tools from program provider (observation and self-report), a focus group tool to be designed by the SEL team and administered in staff meetings, meetings for non-instructors, and with randomly selected youth. Focus groups will be conducted in May. Data from other monitoring tools will be reviewed by the SEL team once per quarter.
How will the process or outcomes address equity and inclusiveness? <i>(inclusive, equitable)</i>	Our selection process will gather input from the full school community --- options will be presented to all staff teams and will be prominent and available for review at all family events. The pilot process will allow us to gather youth feedback which will help us select the program that is the best fit for our school community. Youth feedback will be disaggregated by subgroup to ensure that the selected program is a strong fit for all students.
<b>Example of a metric that incorporates all of the SMARTIE criteria:</b> The school community will select an SEL evidence-based program by the end of the school year, collecting input from staff, families and youth. In preparation for full implementation, all staff are beginning to apply core practices and language from the program and becoming familiar with the program monitoring tool.	

### SMARTIE Goals for Schoolwide SEL Implementation

<b>Goal Category:</b>	
<b>Goal Statement:</b>	
What will change?	
For whom?	
By how much?	
When will the change occur?	
How will it be measured?	
How will the process or outcomes address equity and inclusiveness?	
<b>How will this goal be achieved?</b>	
<b>Goal Category:</b>	
<b>Goal Statement:</b>	
What will change?	
For whom?	
By how much?	
When will the change occur?	
How will it be measured?	
How will the process or outcomes address equity and inclusiveness?	
<b>How will this goal be achieved?</b>	

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