AN IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION OF RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

Schools provide the opportunity for children to learn not only academic skills, but social and emotional skills as well. Programs within schools that target childrens' emotional needs and social skills, lead to an increase in academic achievement and self-regulation skills as well as a decrease in maladaptive behaviors and mental illness risk factors (Fraser, Thompson, Day, & Macy, 2014; Wong, Li-Tsang, & Siu, 2014; Zhai, Raver, & Jones, 2015). Social emotional programs also help to increase teachers' self-efficacy, confidence, and discipline in the classroom (Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2004). Responsive Classroom (RC) is a social emotional classroom program designed to help teachers create a collaborative and safe environment within their classrooms to promote student learning and growth (Center for Responsive Schools, Inc., 2017). In order to evaluate implementation of RC in an elementary school, a survey was completed by all teachers who had implemented RC in their classrooms. Questions about implementation of RC practices and principles and teacher perceptions of program effectiveness and competence to implement the program were included. Teachers also completed open-ended questions designed to assess their knowledge of RC practices and principles and their thoughts about program barriers and facilitators. Results included both quantitative and qualitative data about the program. This implementation evaluation of RC identified implementation barriers within an elementary school as well as provided recommendations to the stakeholders. Implementation barriers included lack of training and time. "Closing Circle," was rated by teachers as the least useful practice, and teachers also felt least competent in implementing it. Teachers' ratings for RC practices and principles' usefulness, and knowledge of RC were not significantly different across overall years of teaching experience and years of using RC. Recommendations for the elementary school included continued implementation of RC, providing training to all staff and first year teachers, applying for grants for extra resources,

providing mentoring opportunities for new teachers, reviewing "Closing Circle" during faculty

meetings, allowing time during the school day for teachers to implement RC practices, and

having the principal of the school join each classroom's "Morning Meeting" and "Closing

Circle."

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I'll be finishing my time at GSAPP as I did starting it, crying my eyes out. From being scared to speak at interview day to proudly inviting my family, friends, classmates, and mentors to my dissertation defense. These last four years have truly changed my life. I have grown as a clinician and as a human being. I have met so many wonderful people here that looked out for me and sacrificed a lot to help me. To Dr. Schneider and Dr. Forman, thank you for your patience, support, and all the time you gave me. To my family, you have given me the gift of unconditional love, support, and the opportunity to pursue my dreams. To my friends, I can't believe how lucky I was to have all of you on this crazy journey. To my mentors, supervisors, and professors, you taught me not only how to help others but how to help myself. To Pauline, you always believed in me even when I didn't believe in myself.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

While the primary goal of a traditional elementary school has been the acquisition and retention of reading, writing, and arithmetic, years of research have also shown that student's social and emotional needs have not been addressed (Civic Enterprises, Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013). Authors of a recent mixed-method study examined principals' perspectives on staff, teacher, and student needs. Twenty principals (11 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, and 3 high schools, and 3 "other" schools) completed an online survey and a follow up phone interview. Analysis showed that over 60% of elementary principals identified behavioral/mental health as a primary need for their students (Iachini, Pitner, Morgan & Rhodes, 2016). Studies have found that programs targeting students' social competencies and emotional needs have led to a decrease in problem behaviors and risk factors for mental illness, and an increase in academic achievement and self-regulation abilities (Fraser, Thompson, Day, & Macy, 2014; Wong, Li-Tsang, & Siu, 2014; Zhai, Raver, & Jones, 2015). Effective mastery of emotional and social skills increases the likelihood of educational achievement, wellbeing, employment, and acts as a buffer against behavioral and social difficulties (Clarke, Morreale, Field, Hussein, & Barry, 2015). A recent meta-analysis examining 213 school-based social and emotional programs, involving 270,034 students aged kindergarten through high school, indicated that improving student's attitudes towards themselves, school, and others, increased their pro-social behaviors and academic performance (Joseph, Allison, Rebecca, Roger, & Kriston, 2011).

Another benefit of having a social emotional program implemented in the classroom is improving teacher's self-efficacy, as well as their attitude and discipline towards their students (Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2004). Teachers who are not confident are more likely to feel uncomfortable handling discipline concerns, feel more inadequate, take their student's behaviors

personally, and assume their student's behavior is all intentional (Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2004). Students also do well when their teachers have higher self-efficacy and teachers have higher self-efficacy when their students do well in the classroom (Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2004). Stressors in the teaching environment may limit teachers from reflecting on their teaching practices and long term goals (Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2004). Teachers that are able to minimize time spent on problem behaviors in the classroom as well as limit transition times between activities increase student academic achievement (Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2004).

<div align="center">Responsive Classroom Program Background</div>

One program that has been designed to address the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) of students is Responsive Classroom® (RC), an evidenced-based social emotional program designed for classroom teachers to create a safe and fun classroom environment that provides students with a sense of belonging in their school community (Center for Responsive Schools, Inc., 2017). The positive impact of RC includes higher student academic achievement, increased collaboration between teachers, improved student teacher relationships, increased social skills competencies, decreased academic anxiety, and having a sustainable model that can be used with all teachers (Abry, Rimm-Kaufman, Larsen, & Brewer, 2013; Baroody, Rimm-Kaufman, Larsen, & Curby, 2014; Griggs, Rimm-Kaufman, Merritt, Patton, & Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness, 2011; McTigue & Rimm-Kaufman, 2011; Ottmar, Rimm-Kaufman, Larsen, & Berry, 2015). The RC program also includes self-regulated learning aspects instructing students to plan and reflect on their academic work. This has been shown to increase mathematics standardized test scores and to have the greatest impact on initially lower achieving students (Abry et al., 2012). From the literature, there is ample research backing the RC program.

Brock, Nishida, Chiong, Grimm, & Rimm-Kaufman (2008) implemented RC, over a three year period, within six schools from the northeast which included 27 teachers ($N = 51$). The

authors required teachers to fill out a Social Skills Rating Scale, a Mock Report Card, and School-Related Questionnaire forms. Results convey that teachers who implemented RC saw students as having higher ratings on social skills, academic competence, and standardized reading tests (Brock et al., 2008). Children's perception of their school improved as well as their social and academic performance (Brock et al., 2008).

The RC program includes social emotional competencies such as cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control (Center for Responsive Schools, Inc., 2017). Along with the social emotional strategies, academic competencies are included as well. The four competencies are academic mindsets, perseverance, learning strategies, and academic behaviors (Center for Responsive Schools, Inc., 2017). The concept of developing an academic mindset involves encouraging students to believe in their performance, effort, and value in their work. Perseverance refers to teaching students to complete their assignments on time and with their best work despite any obstacles that get in their way. Learning strategies include how students can remember the work they do, evaluate and monitor their progress in the classroom, correct their own mistakes, and achieve attainable goals that they set for themselves. Academic behaviors incorporate why students need to come to class on time, participate in activities, and pay attention (Center for Responsive Schools, Inc 2017).

To achieve the social emotional and academic competencies, RC includes instructions for teachers to use evidence based practices. Building from a social-emotional approach to learning, RC includes how teachers can design effective and engaging lessons, promote effective teacher language and student engagement, promote self-efficacy, empathy and perseverance, and set high and appropriate expectations in the classroom (Center for Responsive Schools, Inc., 2017). These practices include Interactive Modeling, Teacher Language, Logical Consequences, and Interactive Learning Structures. Interactive Modeling informs teachers on how to create structure

in their classroom and establish classroom routines for their students. Baer & Bandura (1963) theorized the importance of social modeling for child development and learning. The authors reported that much of a child's behaviors are learned through imitation of an adult model. Through Interactive Modeling, classroom teachers explain the desired behavior to their students and have them practice and give each other feedback (Center for Responsive Schools, Inc., 2017). The practice of Teacher Language relates to using intentional language to encourage student learning during the school day. Teachers model eye contact, positive body language, and speaking volume to their class. Students then practice these skills with their classmates (Center for Responsive Schools, Inc., 2017).

Logical Consequences focuses on using a non-punitive consequence system that initiates students to learn from their mistakes but does not cause embarrassment in front of their classmates. Emphasis is placed on students reflecting on their own behavior and consequences of their actions. Children also learn how to self-regulate without being humiliated in front of their peers. Teachers are asked to regulate their own emotions throughout the school day and collaborate with their students in problem solving (Center for Responsive Schools, Inc., 2012). A report published by What Works Clearinghouse, an organization that reviews previous research on existing programs, highlights the effectiveness of giving students positive options to change their behavior, approaching disengaged students privately and promptly, and helping them label their emotions (Epstein et al., 2008).

Interactive Learning Structure includes how teachers should set up classroom activities that promote social interactions and collaboration between students (Center for Responsive Schools, Inc., 2017). The importance of interactive learning has been well documented within a school setting. Webb et al. (2014) examined student participation and teacher practices during mathematics in an elementary school setting. This was done by observing and recording student

and teacher conversations during math. The authors found that students who engaged with their classmates and provided their own opinion or suggestions displayed higher achievement in math (Webb et al., 2014). Teachers increased student engagement and collaboration when they encouraged their students to respond to their classmates' ideas and encouraged their students to compare how their approach to their math work was similar or different and if they understood how others were solving problems (Webb et al., 2014).

While the RC program is designed for elementary and middle school aged students, specific interventions are done for the primary school age level. RC incorporates written instructions for primary school teachers about how to start the school day with a Morning Meeting. When students arrive to school, they meet for a Morning Meeting. This meeting allows the class to come together to discuss their plan for the day and allows the teacher to offer words of encouragement. At the beginning of the year, teachers and students collaborate to establish rules ("Establishing Rules") in the classroom and attainable goals for the year. During academic lessons, students receive breaks or Energizers. These short breaks are class-wide activities and are enjoyable for students. After lunch and recess, children participate in "Quiet Time" which allows them to transition back into class work. Finally, at the end of the day, classes have a "Closing Circle." This is a time for the teacher to reflect on the classes' work and highlight the exceptional work of the students (Center for Responsive Schools, Inc., 2017).

The History of SEL

The origins of emotional regulation may be traced to Plato's, *The* Republic, where he shared a story of a man letting his anger get the best of him. Plato's examples show that even good-tempered people can feel angry. During the 1820s the Infant School movement developed a different type of education based on love and affection (Dixon, 2012). This movement was started by Samuel Wilderspin based from his personal experiences running infant schools

(Dixon, 2012). These schools targeted children's morality, feelings, and encouraged them to play. One major principle was having school masters win the affection of the children, rather than the children obeying their school master (Dixon, 2012). A few years later, the *Quarterly Review* stated that the first ten years of a child's life should be dedicated to learning about the heart (Dixon, 2012). At the turn of the 19th century and the development of public schooling, educators began seeing their students as active learners, not passive learners (Reese, 2001). Educators hypothesized that books could not teach children everything they needed to know, thought that strict discipline should be replaced with kindness, began viewing children as inherently innocent, and believed education should not model previous medieval school models of thinking (Reese, 2001). Schools also began moving towards a child-centered approach (Reese, 2001). With the rise of education reform, came the theory of multiple intelligences. Howard Gardner in 1983 introduced the idea that intelligence can be viewed in seven capacities (interpersonal, intrapersonal, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, linguistic, spatial, and mathematical) (Humphrey, 2013). Interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence, also known as emotional intelligence, began to highlight emotional regulation and provide legitimacy in the scientific world (Humphrey, 2013).

During the 1970s and 1980s the Self Esteem Movement began to take shape claiming that self-esteem played a role in life outcomes. Research proved that this theory was a plausible one (Humphrey, 2013). The state of California created a self-esteem taskforce to combat issues being raised by researchers blaming violence, mental health issues, and drug use as causes of low self-esteem (Humphrey, 2013). Even though this model did not last, it showed that SEL can be included with traditional academic teaching and can be effective within a school setting (Humphrey, 2013). During the 1990s there was growing concern about the vulnerabilities of children as well as potential, social, and emotional problems. Schools began to be looked upon as

setting that could address these concerns (Hoffman, 2009). School shootings and violent events across several states brought the issue of mental health and the safety of schools into the public's attention. Emphasis was placed on prevention, crisis intervention, and assessments to predict violence (Merrell & Gueldner, 2010). SEL was first promoted by child advocates at the Fetzer Institute in 1994 (Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2015). The goals of this conference were addressing ineffective programs within schools as well as addressing the lack of systemic collaboration (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2018). Here the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) organization was first developed with their mission to promote development in children (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2018). Three years later CASEL along with the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) published the first SEL curriculum handbook titled "Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators" (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2018). In 2001, National Conference of State Legislators publicly supported schools teaching social and emotional skills in the classroom. In 2004, Illinois became the first state to develop specific SEL milestones for K-12 students (Hoffman, 2009).

State and federal organizations began combating the stigma of "mental illnesses." Organizations such as The Institute of Medicine and the World Health Organization began promoting mental illnesses as a state of being and defining mental health as a positive concept (Adelman & Taylor, 2015). As organizations began to fight the stigma of mental health, schools began to realize the economic benefits of providing mental health services to their students. A recent analysis of six common social emotional programs found that providing universal social emotional learning programs with objectives to address social and emotional learning for elementary students saves a substantial amount of money (Belfield, Bowden, Klapp, Levin,

Shand, & Zander, 2015). The study cited RC as one program that had very high positive returns. The authors created a "benefits map" about the potential outcomes and potential "shadow prices" of these outcomes. Shadow prices were taken from previous studies that estimated the cost of positive and negative behaviors. A cost-benefit analysis was used to estimate the future monetary societal impacts of the program on students. This analysis included educational, delinquency, health, and social emotional outcomes. After averaging the RC outcomes across three studies, the authors compared RC cost-benefit per 100 students. The estimated net savings per 100 students was $1.22 million over the course of their lifetimes.

Purpose of Study

The focus of this dissertation was to conduct an implementation evaluation of the Responsive Classroom® (RC) implemented in an elementary school in New Jersey. The principal of the school approached the investigator of this dissertation asking for help with the implementation of this program. The principal commented not observing many components of the RC program except for "Morning Meeting." She asked the investigator to investigate why teachers were not using other components of the program. This request was developed into an implementation evaluation after the investigator met with three teachers and concluded the possibility of various barriers potentially affecting implementation of the program. The investigator completed a full year practicum placement at this elementary school and had prior knowledge of the program and current culture of the elementary school.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

What is SEL?

As reported by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 50% of mental disorders show signs in individuals before age 14, and 75% show signs in individuals before age 24. Less than 20% of adolescents and children receive the treatment they need (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2017). There have been validated programs designed and implemented within schools to provide students and their families access to mental health services (Clayton, Chin, Blackburn, & Echeverria 2010). Schools provide the opportunity for children to receive early intervention for serious mental illnesses and the opportunity to increase students' resiliency while also promoting their personal development (Adelman & Taylor, 2015).

Social and emotional learning (SEL), is defined as the process of teaching children to understand and manage their emotions, show empathy for others, problem solve, and maintain positive relationships with others (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2018). CASEL describes SEL within five evidence-based competencies. These include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Self-awareness is the ability for children to identify their emotions and thoughts while realizing the impact on their behavior. This also includes identifying their strengths and weaknesses and having self-confidence and optimism (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2015). Self-management is children's ability to regulate their emotions, behaviors, and thoughts while in school or outside of school, as well as managing stress and impulses. Children are able to motivate themselves and work towards their personal goals (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2015). Social awareness is perspective taking and ability to empathize with others of different backgrounds and experiences

as well as recognizing social norms and other resources and supports the child may have (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2015). Relationship skills is a child's ability to create and maintain healthy relationships with people of diverse backgrounds. Skills that fall under "relationship skills" include communicating, listening, problem solving, helping others, and behaving appropriately (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2015). Responsible decision making is a child's ability to make appropriate decisions based on appropriate social norms, moral code, and potential consequences. SEL may be taught at school by teachers, administrators, special services professionals, and parents. SEL is not limited to instruction from adults, it may encompass school policies and academic curricula (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2018).

CASEL's most recent guide to "Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs: Preschool and Elementary School Edition" (2013) highlights evidence-based and well-designed social emotional learning programs. Within the guide, CASEL outlines a systemic theory for districts in implementing a SEL program. The first step is engaging appropriate stakeholders in planning and implementing a program. The second step is determining the amount of resources the district has to allocate to the program. The third step is developing program goals and a long-term plan for success. The fourth step, establishing what each student for each grade level should be able to learn and accomplish within the social and emotional domains, allows districts to track and document their student's development over time. The fifth step is selecting a SEL program with clear evidence-based practices. The sixth step is allowing time for professional development days that focuses on integrating SEL into academic learning. The seventh step includes adults modeling established standards, norms and rules for the children to emulate. The last step is developing a system to monitor the program and outcomes over a period of time.

The criteria for an effective program include "well designed, high-quality training and other implementation supports, and evidence based," (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2015). For a program to be considered "well-designed" it needs to include opportunities for practice and include a multi-year implementation plan and target CASEL's five areas of social and emotional competencies. "High-quality training and other implementation support" is defined as initial training of the program and on-going support for implementation. "Evidence-based" is defined as at least one rigorous evaluation of the program with positive effects.

A "well-designed" program includes the need for children to have the opportunity to practice their acquired skills. Hawkins, Smith, Hill, Kosterman, & Abbott (2007) describe the benefits of children interacting with others in a pro-social way and within pro-social activities. Repeated positive involvement reinforces the child and helps them build pro-social behavior habits. CASEL's coined acronym S.A.F.E. (Sequenced, Active, Focus, Explicit) describes the most effective procedures in implementing a SEL program. Also described by Hawkins, Smith, Hill, and Kosterman, & Abbott (2007) as effective in promoting pro-social behavior, these procedures include step by step instructions that engage students in active learning to use their new skills while focusing on social and emotional skill development, and teachers providing explicit instruction for the appropriate skill being taught (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2015). Responsive Classroom (RC) meets CASEL's requirements of an effective program as it is listed in the guide. The guide cites a quasi-experimental study ($N =$ 1,408) that involved 3rd-5th grade student outcomes over a three year period. Outcomes included improved academic performance and academic behaviors as well as improved climate (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2015).

While RC is listed in CASEL's guide, two of the many SEL programs for elementary students listed by CASEL, Positive Action and Ruler Approach, are also listed as effective (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2015). Responsive Classroom, Positive Action, and Ruler Approach programs have many things in common. All three programs are integrated during at least one academic subject class, focus on teacher instructional strategies, provide opportunities to practice social and emotional skills, and are implemented at the classroom, school, and family level. All three programs monitor implementation through self-report measures and measuring student behavior (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2015).

Positive Action® incorporates explicit lessons (different from RC) by the classroom teacher, focusing on six units (Positive Action, Inc., 2018). This program last 140 sessions. The program is also uniquely designed with different activities and lessons for grades K-12 (different from RC). The first unit, Self-concept, includes students identifying and understanding themselves. The second unit, Positive actions for your mind and body, involves students learning about positive actions for their mind and body. In the third unit, managing yourself responsibly, students learn how to manage their time and resources. The fourth unit, treating others the way you would like to be treated, involves students completing puzzles, activities and role-plays that promote positive social interactions. The fifth unit, telling yourself the truth, includes students being honest with themselves and areas they would like to improve within themselves. In the sixth unit, improving yourself continually, students practice how to use what they have learned in all areas of their lives. Teachers take time out of their school day to present each unit to their students. Positive Action states teachers are not required to attend long trainings to use their program. This program also helps schools determine appropriate SEL standards and outcomes that should be monitored (Positive Action, Inc., 2018).

The Ruler approach (Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating emotion) is similar to the RC approach as it relies on changing teacher instructional practices rather than explicit instruction of skills (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2015). A group of selected teachers and administrators attend a two-day training outside of school with Ruler instructors. After this training the group returns to their school to educate other staff members about the program. Ruler coaches work with the initial group of teacher and administrators as they help implement the program in their schools (Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, 2013). Staff members also have access to online resources that include lessons, activities, and videos. The Ruler approach can be implemented by all teachers within a school setting (Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, 2013). The Ruler and RC also encourage changes in school and district policies to promote social and emotional learning. The five main skills of Ruler are students recognizing emotions in themselves and others, understanding what causes emotions and what potential consequences could be, using appropriate language when labeling emotions, appropriately expressing emotions dependent on the situation, and using strategies to regulate emotions (Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, 2013). A unique aspect of this approach is explicit activities for children to complete at home with their families and workshops parents can attend.

One theoretical framework for developing school-based intervention for SEL has been presented by Rimm-Kaufman and Hulleman (2015). Effective SEL programs include three components; explicit instruction, integration of SEL in student academics and effecting teaching practices. Explicit instruction includes classroom lessons such as labeling emotions and resolving peer conflict. Instruction is followed by teachers modeling desired behavior, for example taking turns and quietly standing in line. Teachers will then attempt to connect SEL into their academic curriculum. The authors give the example of a literature teacher having their students connect the

lives of a character within a story to their own lives. The students then discuss the social situations with their classmates. Teachers are able to incorporate SEL within their teaching practices by facilitating conversations with their students and students with their classmates as well as using explicit language that motivates students to learn (Rimm-Kaufman and Hulleman, 2015). With the use of these components students improve their individual cognitive, self, emotional, and interpersonal skills as well as their relationships with each other and their teachers (Rimm-Kaufman and Hulleman, 2015). Improvement in students' SEL skills and competencies will lead to social and academic success inside and outside of the classroom (Rimm-Kaufman and Hulleman, 2015).

Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, (2017), recently conducted a meta-analysis of 82 school-based SEL programs encompassing 97,406 kindergarten to high school students. The authors targeted follow up outcome measures on students only. The follow up for all measures ranged from 59 weeks to 195 weeks. These measures comprised seven categories (social and emotional skills; attitudes toward self, others, and school; positive social behaviors; academic performance; conduct problems; emotional distress; and substance use). After placing all measures into their appropriate category, the authors calculated the mean effect size for each category. The authors found the mean effect size for every category statistically significant, students that received the SEL intervention improved in at least one of these dimensions at least one year after the intervention was implemented.

<div align="center">Motivation Model</div>

Another way to improve children's performance in the classroom is for teachers to create positive interactions between themselves and students as well as students interacting with each other. Brock, Nishida, Chiong, Grimm, and Rimm-Kaufman expand on Connell and Wellborn's 1991 motivational model of self-system process. This model suggests that children have three

basic psychological needs: competence, relatedness, and connectedness. When these three needs are met, children exhibit positive social interactions and academic achievement. Student learning requires teachers creating an external environment that promotes learning and students that are motivated, receptive, and connected (Brock, Nishida, Chiong, Grimm, & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008). Teachers have the potential to meet all of their children's basic psychological needs in the classroom (Brock et al., 2008). Skinner and Belmont (1993) devised a model that highlights the importance of teacher involvement in children's experience in the classroom. This model predicted student's motivation to learn within a classroom. In this study, teachers assessed their own interactions with their students. In addition, 144 third, fourth, and fifth graders assessed their teacher's interaction with them. The authors concluded that teacher's interaction with their students predicted their student's behavioral and emotional engagement. Also cited in this study is Connell and Wellborn's psychological needs model. Connell and Wellborn state that to motivate children in the classroom, emphasis should be placed on children's psychological needs including classroom structure, autonomy support, and involvement (Skinner & Belmont, 1993).

This model relates well to RC, Ruler Approach, and Positive Action as well as embodies many of CASEL's competencies. All three programs described earlier depend on a secure and safe attachment between teacher and students. Students learn social and emotional skills through group activities as well as explicit instruction from their teachers. All programs encourage group or partner interactions over individual work. As instructed in RC, students feel connected by a community approach. Students learn how their actions not only affect themselves but the people around them, drawing on empathy and perspective taking to fulfill the psychological basic needs of relatedness and connectedness. CASEL's competencies (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making) help children make and maintain meaningful relationships with their teachers and classmates to fulfill the three basic

psychological needs. This model relates well to RC as both model and program emphasize

improving the classroom environment through the classroom teacher. As students feel more

motivated, connected, and comfortable in the classroom the greater chance they will learn

academic as well as social and emotional skills.

Implementing a social emotional program within a classroom also benefits teachers'

personal beliefs about themselves and their students. Authors examining self-efficacy beliefs,

attitudes toward teaching, and discipline and teaching practice priorities in connection to RC,

implemented RC in three different schools with 69 teachers total. The selection criterion was

interest in the program. Thirty-four teachers received training in RC from certified consulting

teachers and 35 teachers (comparison group) did not. Teachers in the RC group received a week-

long training during the summer and five extra days across the school year. The principals of the

schools also met with an RC consultation team three times during the year to facilitate

implementation throughout their school. All teachers completed six self-report measures

consisting of demographics, implementation of RC, training and exposure, self-efficacy, attitude

towards teaching, and teaching priorities. The results included significant positive correlations

for the treatment group. Correlations included use of RC practices and increase of positive

attitudes towards teaching and higher feelings of self-efficacy (Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer,

2004). This study also concludes that classroom discipline and positive interactions with students

is a significant contributor to teacher's self-efficacy and attitudes towards teaching (Rimm-

Kaufman & Sawyer, 2004). Limitations of the study included reliance on self-report measures

for data analysis and a potentially biased data sample as teachers who viewed RC in a positive

way may have been more likely to respond than those who did not view RC so positively

(Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2004). Additionally, significant correlation data may be due to

teacher personality or other factors not measured by the study (Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2004).

<center>Program Implementation</center>

For a program to be most impactful, fidelity of implementation of the program needs to be high. Implementation, emphasized by Rogers (1995), relates to the act of putting an innovation into practice. Monitoring the intervention or tracking treatment fidelity involves assessing whether the program was delivered as intended (Yeaton, 1982). Boruch and Gomez (1977) discussed the difficulty of matching their laboratory treatment fidelity with treatment implementation in the field. As their implementation fidelity decreased, so did their chances of discovering their desired effect in the field (Boruch and Gomez, 1977). Studies on implementation for RC have shown fidelity variation ranging from 0.57 to 0.27 in the field (Abry, Rimm-Kaufman, Larsen, & Brewer, 2013). Schools given RC training showed variability in implementation compared to schools that did not receive the training (Rimm-Kaufman, Larsen, Baroody, Curby, Ko, Thomas, &DeCoster, 2014). Factors that can influence teachers implementing the program include feelings of emotional-support in the school, how the teachers view the program, their ability to implement the program, and their perceived responsibility to implement it (Wanless, Rimm-Kaufman, Abry, Larsen, & Patton, 2015). Other obstacles that have been found as barriers in school based programs are money, time, school staff perception of the program, and maintaining other priorities within the school (Forman, Olin, Hoagwood, Crowe, & Saka, 2009).

A study conducted by Paxton, Wanless, and Rimm-Kaufman (2013) included having trained coaches in schools supporting teachers implementing the RC program. These authors discuss the importance of teachers feeling confident in their abilities to implement the program and of social buy-in or social validity. They also emphasize that the biggest factor for program

implementation in a school setting is having principal buy-in. The six schools that were selected

for the study showed high and low fidelity. The authors concluded that high fidelity schools saw

a balance of relational and strategic support from the mentors to their teachers. Five of the

schools reported implementation level corresponding to principal buy-in. The authors concluded

that high implementation needs strong leadership within schools as well as principal buy-in.

Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman, & Wallace, (2005) discuss the research on important

implementation components for a successful intervention. The first is Staff Selection. Having the

right people assigned to a role that fits best with their abilities and personality is important. This

can include which staff members will implement the program, provide supervision, or be in

charge of logistics. The second is Staff Training. Providing adequate training to staff members

increases implementation fidelity while using the program, increases adoption of the program's

philosophy, and increases their confidence in using the program's components. The third is Staff

Coaching. After staff members are adequately trained to implement the program, additional

support is needed to shape newly desired behavior. Staff members also require additional

emotional support as new behavior and policies may bring up additional sensitivities and

negative reactions. The fourth is Evaluation and Fidelity. Evaluating practitioners' performance

and providing feedback increases program implementation and fidelity. Fidelity measures can be

used to evaluate and compare performance within the implementation environment or compared

outside the implementation environment to the program's standards.

Domitrovich, Pas, Bradshaw, Becker, Keperling, Embry & Ialongo (2015) discuss their

review of the literature as well as individual and organizational factors that may impact program

implementation within a school setting. Personal Resources, for example self-efficacy and

burnout, negatively affect teachers in the classroom (Ransford, Greenberg, Domitrovich, Small,

& Jacobson, 2009). Burnout decreases teachers work productivity and ability to cope (Ransford,

Greenberg, Domitrovich, Small, & Jacobson, 2009). Teachers with low levels of self-efficacy believe they are unable to control their student's behaviors. (Ransford, Greenberg, Domitrovich, Small, & Jacobson, 2009). Intervention acceptance, teachers own beliefs about the intervention, can influence teacher's motivation to implement the program as well as their own behavioral change (Domitrovich et al., 2015). Implementation Support, individuals or "coaches" assigned to support teachers, have the ability to act as buffers to help reduce teacher stress and increase self-efficacy (Domitrovich et al., 2015). The amount of support provided by schools can help to decrease the potential negative effects of Personal Resources stated earlier. Finally, School Characteristics, such as school size and demographics, can impact how much of the intervention each student is receiving (Domitrovich et al., 2015).

Authors of a randomized control trial, studying contextual influences of a social emotional program within a school-setting, found that teachers that perceived their school setting in a more positive way scored higher in their self-report measures in using the program's interventions (Pas, Waasdorp, & Bradshaw, 2015). Other potential factors that may impact implementation of a school program were also discussed in this study. Research suggests that school climate (relationships between school staff), demographics of the school (size and student make up), teacher attitude and perceptions of the program, and level of training and support teachers receive can all impact implementation (Pas, Waasdorp, & Bradshaw, 2015). Authors of a recent study looking at training engagement and implementation fidelity of RC concluded that teachers that reported high emotional support during training showed higher fidelity of implementation during the school year (Wanless, Rimm-Kaufman, Abry, Larsen, & Patton, 2015). The authors stated that studying behavioral participation during training can be a good indicator of future implementation. Teachers' initial SEL background and training, beliefs about

themselves and school, and personal demographic characteristics did not determine level of implementation, disagreeing with their hypothesis and previous research.

Authors of a formative evaluation study examined the implementation of a SEL program within a school setting. The authors begin by explaining Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory, researched as increasingly used by SEL programs for implementation (Evans, Murphy, & Scourfield, 2015). Diffusion of Innovations Theory, consisting of five phases, can be used to explain the current implementation functioning of an intervention. The first phase includes the overall knowledge, flexibility, and adaptability an organization has related to the intervention. The second phase is the change agent/program developer ability to persuade and provide insight to the organization. The third phase is the organization's willingness to identify the program as the best solution to their concerns. The fourth phase, implementation phase, includes the program being physically implemented in the organization. The fifth phase is the organization's willingness to continue implementing the program.

Using Rogers' theory, the authors concluded that barriers to implementation and fidelity of the program included staff personnel describing the program as "complex", failure to implement all components of the program even when staff members stated fully implementing the program, and limited staff support of student lead groups. To improve the implementation of the program authors suggested that the school increase intensive training for staff members, conduct a better assessment of the program as to how it will help the school as well as determine staff members' perceptions of the program, better clarify what it means to fully implement the program, and assign responsibility and accountability to appropriate staff members to increase the likelihood of sustainability in the future (Evans, Murphy, & Scourfield, 2015).

One example of a program implementation within an elementary school was conducted by Wang et al. A preventative HIV program's implementation fidelity, within a school for 6th

graders, was analyzed. The goal of the study was to identify factors that may influence

implementation fidelity and the impact of implementation variations on student outcomes.

Teachers completed an implementation checklist fidelity and a questionnaire about the program.

This questionnaire included questions such as years of teaching experience, whether they

attended a training workshop, their perception of the importance of preventative HIV programs,

confidence in teaching the program, and their "ownership" of the program. Student outcomes

were determined by assessing their knowledge of HIV and preventative health skills as well as

their perceptions of the program. Findings included positive correlations between teacher level of

comfort using the program and implementation fidelity, and teacher age positively and

implementation fidelity. Teachers' perception of HIV prevention and confidence in teaching

were factors in program delivery. Teachers that attended the training workshop had the highest

increase in implementation. Teachers that only attended a portion of the workshop and those that

did not attend any part of the workshop showed equal level of implementation (Wang et., 2015).

While research has emphasized the need for schools to identify potential organizational

barriers before implementing a program, choose an evidence-based program, and monitor

implementation of that program, gaps remain as to how schools should collect implementation

information and identify organizational barriers. Research is also lacking as to how schools

should support their teachers, especially teachers in their first year, and helping teachers

implementing a program during the school year. The current study evaluates an evidence based

program within an elementary school, highlights current implementation of the program, and has

teachers identify current organizational barriers. The following are evaluation questions that the

investigator addressed:

1. Do the teachers find specific components of RC as helpful and useful?

2. Do the teachers feel competent to use RC?

3. To what extent are teachers implementing the practices and principles of RC?

4. What are the barriers that are limiting the teachers from implementing the program?

5. What additional supports do teachers need to improve their implementation of RC?

6. Do teachers think the school should continue implementing the program?

7. What are teachers' present knowledge of the practices and principles?

Schools have the opportunity to teach children not only academic content, but social and emotional skills as well. The RC program has been identified as a well-designed and evidence based program. Children's three basic psychological needs; connectedness, relatedness, and competence as well as CASEL's SEL competencies are met using RC. For RC to be most effective, program implementation must be considered. Identifying and addressing factors that increase program implementation and barriers that decrease implementation can yield higher implementation fidelity. This study sought to investigate the implementation of RC in an elementary school.

Chapter III

METHODS

Setting

The evaluation was conducted at an elementary school in New Jersey. According to the 2014-2015 report by The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), the elementary school has an enrollment of about 400 students Pre-school through 3rd grade. The ethnic makeup of the school is 94.4% Caucasian, 0.2% Black, 2.2% Hispanic, 1.0% Asian, 0.2% Pacific Islander, and 1.9% Two or More Races. It was reported that 12% of the student population had been classified as having a disability. Nearly all students (99.3%) speak English as their first language. There are 0 students reported under "Economically Disadvantaged" or "English Language Learners." According to the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) of 2015-2016, the elementary school had 28 full time teachers and 14 instructional aides. All full-time teachers were certified. Three teachers were in their first year of teaching and two teachers were in their second year of teaching (New Jersey Department of Education, 2014).

The principal of the school asked the investigator for help with the implementation of Responsive Classroom (RC). The perceived needs of the target population, as outlined by the school principal, are to develop children's social skills and to create a safe space for children to interact and learn together. The principal would also like the program to help her teachers better interact with their students and to create a culture in the school that promotes tolerance of others' differences. The principal commented that during her observation of unstructured activities (i.e. recess and school assemblies), students display more "negative" behaviors than "positive" behaviors. These needs were informally assessed by the principal whom recommended the use of the RC program. The implementation of this program was not necessarily a solution to an ongoing problem, but a program to improve well-being in the classroom and during unstructured

activities. The principal asked the investigator to evaluate the program because she helped implement RC, with high fidelity, at a previous school where she worked and did not believe current implementation was very high. The principal was unsure as to why the program was not being implemented. She hypothesized it could be because of a lack of training and time during the day, teachers not liking the program, or teachers did not think they "had" to use RC. Teachers received training about implementing RC once every two years. The training is a one-day overview, conducted by a Responsive Classroom consultant, that reviews the teacher training manual highlighting the important practices (Morning Meeting, Energizers, Quiet Time, Establishing Rules, and Closing Circle) and principles (Logical Consequences, Interactive Modeling, Teacher Language, and Interactive Learning) the program has to offer. Another reason the principal selected this program was due to the empirical evidence backing the program. This principal subsequently left the school to work in another school, and a new principal began at the start of the school year.

Participants

All general education teachers ($N = 20$) were asked to complete the survey and open-ended questions. Of the 20 classrooms, three rooms also had one or two special education teachers. The special education teachers were not given the survey. Since the program is not designed for pre-school students, only general education teachers from Kindergarten through 3rd grade participated.

<div align="center">Measures</div>

Implementation Ratings

After interviewing the principal, the investigator developed items that directly related to the principal's concerns as well as issues related to implementation of the practices and principles. The practices include morning meeting, quiet time, energizers, and closing circle. The

principles include logical consequences, interactive modeling, establishing rules, teacher

language, and interactive learning (See Appendix B). Teachers rated their perceptions of the

usefulness of and perceived competence in using each practice and principle. They also provided

self-reports of their extent of use of each practice and principle. For the perception of usefulness

items, teachers were asked to circle whether they strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed, or

strongly agreed that each practice or principle was useful. For the perceived competence items

teachers were asked to circle that they strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed, or strongly agreed

whether they felt competent in each practice or principle. For the extent of use items, teachers

were asked to circle "I don't use this, "once a month", "once a week", "a few times a week", or

"everyday" on their use of each practice or principle.

Open-Ended Questions/Items

   The investigator developed thirteen open ended questions highlighting the practices and

principles of RC (See Appendix C). Teachers were also asked how many years they had been

teaching and using the RC program, potential barriers of the program, how to improve it, and

advice they would give the new principal about the program. Teachers were also asked to define

and describe each practice and principle that they previously rated from the Implementation

Ratings.

<div align="center">Procedures</div>

   The investigator interviewed the previous principal, school psychologist, and teachers to

understand how the program was functioning. Teachers were asked through email if any of them

would like to discuss the program and their current use of it, three teachers agreed to speak with

the investigator. The teachers gave feedback about a draft of the survey. The investigator

collected background information about potential barriers to implementation from the previous

principal.

During the fall of the 2018-2019 school year, the investigator joined a faculty meeting with all general education teachers (K-3rd) and explained the survey and open-ended questions. During this time, teachers were informed about the study as well as confidentiality, participation, and instructions for returning the to a specifically marked container. After the meeting, surveys were placed in a sealed envelope along with an anonymous consent form (See Appendix A) by the investigator in the general education teachers' mailboxes. Teachers retrieved their envelopes after the faculty meeting. After three to five school days, the investigator returned to the elementary school to collect all of the envelopes.

Upon teacher completion of the survey, statistical analysis was conducted to analyze survey results. Mean, median, range, and standard deviations were computed for the Implementation Ratings items. The implementation ratings of teachers with high vs. low teaching experience and years using RC were compared.

For the open-ended questions asking teachers to describe barriers of the program, advice for the principal, and how to make implementation easier, Classical Content Analysis was used to determine major themes within the responses (Leech & Onweugbuzie, 2008). First the investigator read over the teacher's responses and developed a list of major themes for each question. The investigator then read the responses over again and began to group themes into larger, more general themes. The investigator then trained another doctoral level student to read the teacher's responses and developed their own list of themes for each question. The investigator and trained doctoral student compared their themes and agreed on one list of themes for each question. The investigator and doctoral student had nearly matching codes for every teacher response. For the codes that did not match, the investigator and doctoral student discussed their rational and agreed on a final code. The final list of codes was all agreed upon by

the investigator and doctoral student. The investigator determined the frequency of each theme

by counting how many times it was coded among teachers for each question.

For the questions about knowledge of RC principles and practices, the investigator

compared teacher responses to the RC training manual to determine accuracy. The manual

specifically defined each principle (Logical Consequences, Interactive Modeling, Teacher

Language, and Interactive Learning) and practice (Morning Meeting, Energizers, Quiet Time,

Establishing Rules, and Closing Circle) as well as provided examples for teachers on how to

implement. The investigator determined the essential components (Appendix D) teachers needed

to include in their responses to receive credit. The investigator graded the teacher responses

based on a three-point scale. A score of "0" demonstrated no knowledge of the question, a score

of "1" demonstrated adequate knowledge, and a score of "2" demonstrated superior knowledge.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Implementation Ratings

Eighteen teachers completed the Responsive Classroom (RC) survey (see Appendix B)

The survey included five items related to practices and four principles of the program. Teachers

were asked to rate each practice and principle based on its perceived usefulness, their self-

reported competency, and its use in their classroom. Two teachers did not answer every prompt.

Tables 1, 2, and 3 include the item by item results for the three survey areas. Descriptive

statistics included mean (M), range, median, standard deviation (SD), and sample size (n). Table

1 includes teacher ratings of each RC principle/practice based on teacher's perceived usefulness.

Table 2 includes teacher ratings of each RC principle/practice based on perceived competence.

Table 3 includes teacher ratings of each RC principle/practice based on how many times it was

used in their classroom.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics - How Useful Each Principle/Practice Is

Practices	M	Range	Median	n	SD
Morning Meeting	3.83	1	4	18	0.38
Energizers	3.33	2	3	18	0.59
Quiet Time	3.56	2	4	16	0.63
Establishing Rules	3.94	1	4	18	0.24
Closing Circle	2.83	3	3	18	0.79
Principles					
Logical Consequences	3.78	1	4	18	0.43
Interactive Modeling	3.72	1	4	18	0.46
Teacher Language	3.78	2	4	18	0.55
Interactive Learning	3.89	1	4	18	0.32

Note. 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Agree, 4= Strongly Agree.

From Table 1, Establishing Rules (M = 3.94) was rated as the most useful practice by the

teachers while Closing Circle (M = 2.83) was rated as the least useful practice. Closing Circle

was the only practice that the teacher average was below "Agree" for usefulness. The SD for the

top two rated practices, Establishing Rules (SD = 0.24) and Morning Meeting (SD = 0.38), were

the lowest out of all the practices. As the perceived usefulness of the practice decreased

variability of teacher responses increased for RC practices. While the average rating of Closing

Circle and Quite Time (M = 3.41) were lower, these two practices had the highest SD (SD =

0.79, SD = 0.71). For the principles, all were similar in their average ratings among teachers.

Teacher Language the highest range (Range = 2) and SD (SD = 0.55) among the principles.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics - How Competent Each Teacher Feels For Each Principle/Practice

Practices	M	Range	Median	n	SD
Morning Meeting	3.72	1	4	18	0.46
Energizers	3.39	3	4	18	0.92
Quiet Time	3.41	2	4	17	0.71
Establishing Rules	3.83	1	4	18	0.38
Closing Circle	2.89	3	3	18	0.96
Principles					
Logical Consequences	3.22	2	4	18	0.81
Interactive Modeling	3.61	1	4	18	0.50
Teacher Language	3.50	2	4	18	0.62
Interactive Learning	3.33	2	4	18	0.77

Note. 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Agree, 4= Strongly Agree.

For Table 2, teacher ratings of average usefulness for RC practices were similar to their

perceived level of competence. Morning Meeting (M = 3.72) and Establishing Rules (M = 3.83)

had the highest teacher ratings for perceived competence. Closing Circle (M = 2.89) and

Energizers (M = 3.39) were the lowest teacher ratings. These two practices also had the highest

range scores (Range = 3) and SD variability (SD = 0.96, SD = 0.92). While teachers rated the

principles as useful in the classroom, teachers rated perceived competence lower than usefulness.

Logical Consequences (M = 3.22) was the lowest rated principle and Interactive Modeling (M =

3.61) as the highest rated.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics - How Many Times Each Principle/Practice Is Used

Practices	M	Range	Median	n	SD
Morning Meeting	4.94	1	5	18	0.24
Energizers	3.94	4	5	18	1.48
Quiet Time	4.12	4	5	17	1.54
Establishing Rules	4.28	3	5	18	1.18
Closing Circle	2.44	3	1	18	1.29
Principles					
Logical Consequences	3.89	4	5	18	1.23
Interactive Modeling	4.39	3	5	18	0.98
Teacher Language	4.72	2	5	18	0.67
Interactive Learning	4.17	4	5	18	1.47

Note. 1= I Don't Use This, 2= Once A Month, 3= Once A Week, 4= A Few Times A Week, 5= Every Day.

For Table 3, Energizers (M = 3.94) and Closing Circle (M = 2.44) were the only practices

rated being used less than once a week, with Closing Circle being used once a month. Besides

Morning Meeting, the other practices' SD was greater than 1. There was great variability in the

use of the practices, according to SD. Nearly all of the principles were reported as being used

nearly a few times a week. Logical Consequences had the greatest range (Range = 4) while

Interactive Learning had the greatest SD (SD = 1.47).

Teachers were asked to fill in the number of years they have used RC and how many

years of total teaching experience they have acquired. The following tables include a comparison

between years using RC and their respective average scores for usefulness, competence, and use

(Table 4) as well as a comparison between years teaching and their respective average scores for

usefulness, competence, and use (Table 5). Teachers were divided into two equally numbered

groups based on their years of teachers experience and years using RC. In these tables, average

scores were determined by first calculating the mean from all the usefulness items (all practices

and principles) for each teacher and then calculating the average score among all of the teachers

in each group. This step was repeated for competence items and how many times the

principle/practice was used. Teachers were grouped based on years using RC and total years

teaching.

Table 4

Comparison Between Years Using RC and Average Usefulness, Competence and Use Scores

Years Of Using RC	Usefulness Average	Competence Average	Use Average
1 – 6 Years	3.60	3.37	4.23
7 – 15 Years	3.73	3.60	4.12

Note. 7 – 15 Years; *n* = 8, 1 – 6 Years; *n* = 9.
 Usefulness: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree.
Competence: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Agree, 4= Strongly Agree.
Use: 1= I Don't Use This, 2= Once A Month, 3= Once A Week, 4= A Few Times A Week, 5= Every Day.

The above scores represent the average rating from the group of teachers that fell within

one to six years of using RC or seven to fifteen years using RC. Teachers with less than six years

experience rated the overall usefulness (M = 3.60) and overall competence (M = 3.37) of RC

practices and principles as lower than more experiences teachers. However, these teachers rated

higher for overall use (M = 4.23) of RC practices and principles. T-test analyses did not reveal

any significant differences between the groups for either usefulness, competence, or use (p >

.05).

Table 5

Comparison Between Years Teaching and Average Usefulness, Competence and Use Scores

Years Of Teaching	Usefulness Average	Competence Average	Use Average
1 – 11 Years	3.58	3.38	3.79
12 – 29 Years	3.70	3.49	3.97

Note. 1 – 11 Years; *n* = 10, 12 – 29 Years; *n* = 8.

For Table 5, teachers with eleven or less years of experiences rated overall usefulness (M = 3.58), competency (M = 3.38), and use (M = 3.79) of RC practices and principles lower than teachers with twelve or more years of experience. T-test analyses did not reveal any significant differences between the groups for either usefulness, competence, or use (p > .05).

Classical Content Analysis Results

The following tables (Table 6, Table 7, and Table 8) include the major themes and frequency of each theme from the open-ended questions (see Appendix C). Each table corresponds with one open-ended question.

Table 6

Major Themes and Frequencies From Classical Content Analysis (Barriers): Question #3

Theme	Frequency	%
Training	9	50.0
Time To Implement	6	33.33
No Barriers	2	11.11
Left Blank	1	5.56
Inexperience	1	5.56

Teachers cited a lack of training and time within the school day as major barriers preventing them from implementing the program effectively. Two teachers did not identify any barriers, one teacher left the question blank, and one teacher cited her first year at the school as a major barrier.

Table 7

Major Themes and Frequencies From Classical Content Analysis (Easier To Implement): Question #4

Theme	Frequency	%
Training	7	38.89
Time To Implement	6	33.33
Left Blank	3	16.67
Positive Feedback About Program	1	5.56
Extend Implementation	1	5.56

Teachers stated that an increase of training and time to implement the program would make the program easier to implement. Three teachers did not answer the question, one teacher stated the program was already easy, and one teacher wrote that the program should be used in the special classes at the school.

Table 8

Major Themes and Frequencies From Classical Content Analysis (Advice For Principal): Question #5

Theme	Frequency	%
Time To Implement	5	27.78
Left Blank	3	16.67
Positive Feedback About Program	3	16.67
Feedback About Principal	3	16.67
Training	2	11.11
Extend Implementation	1	5.56
Staff Buy-In	1	5.56

Five teachers stated the principal should give them more time in the school day to implement the program. Another three teachers asked the principal to provide more support to teachers that need it, for the principal to join their morning meeting, and for the principal to encourage teachers to consistently use morning meeting. Three teachers left the answer blank and three stated something positive about the program. Two teachers wrote they needed more training or videos on how the program is used within a classroom. One teacher stated that the entire school needs to use the program. One teacher wrote that more staff need to buy into the program's philosophy.

Knowledge Questions Results

The following tables include the average score for each question (Table 9) as well as an overall comparison between total average scores among teaching experience with RC (Table 10). Scoring for this test included 0 = demonstrated no knowledge of the question, 1 = demonstrated adequate knowledge, and 2 = demonstrated superior knowledge. The investigator individually

scored each teacher response based on the criteria explained in Table 9 and 10. If a teacher's

answer was left blank or did not include any information from the training manual, this was

scored a 0. If the teacher's answer included only some correct information based on the training

manual, this was scored a 1. If the teacher's response included all aspects of the training manual

explanation, this was scored a 2. Scoring criteria was taken from the RC teaching training

resource book. After scoring, the investigator determined the average score for each question

among the teachers (Table 9). The same cutoff used in Table 4 was replicated in Table 10. Each

individual teacher had every score averaged to calculate their overall average score among all the

questions. These scores are compared based on their experience using RC.

Table 9

Knowledge Questions Score Averages

Question/Item	Average	n
6. Please describe a "Morning Meeting."	1.67	18
7. What are "Energizers"? Please provide an example.	1.22	18
8. Please describe "Quiet Time" and when it occurs in your classroom?	1.39	18
9. What happens during "Closing Circle"?	0.83	18
10. What is a Logical Consequence?	1.00	18
11. How do you engage in Interactive Modeling in your classroom?	0.88	17
12. Please explain what it means to use appropriate Teacher Language.	1.06	17
13. How do you promote Interactive Learning in your classroom?	1.06	17
14. What does "Establishing Rules" mean?	1.76	17

Note. 0 = demonstrates no knowledge of the question, 1 = demonstrates adequate knowledge, and 2 = demonstrates superior knowledge.

For Table 9, teachers scored below adequate knowledge for Question #9 "What happens

during Closing Circle" (M = 0.83) and Question #11 "How do you engage in Interactive

Modeling in your classroom?" (M = 0.88). The two highest scored questions were #6 "Please

describe a Morning Meeting" (M = 1.67) and #14 "What does Establishing Rules mean" (M =

1.76).

Table 10

Comparison Between Years Using RC and RC Knowledge Questions Average Scores

Years Using RC	Average RC Knowledge Score
1 – 6 years	1.12
7 – 15 years	1.37

For Table 10, teachers with seven or more years of experience scored higher (M = 1.37) than teachers with six or less years of experience (M = 1.12). A T-test analyses did not reveal any significant differences between the groups (p > .05).

Summary

Nearly every practice (except Closing Circle) was rated as useful among teachers. Teachers also felt competent in nearly all practices (except Closing Circle). Teacher need more time and training to better implement RC. Teachers rated all principles as useful and felt competent using them. Closing Circle was used the least by teachers, only using this practice once a month. Ratings for practices' and principles' usefulness, competency, or average use were not significantly different for teachers with more vs. less teaching experience and experience using RC. Differences between teachers with more vs. less experience using RC were not significant for knowledge of RC. Teachers did not demonstrate adequate knowledge for Closing Circle and Interactive Modeling.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION

An evaluation of the social emotional program, Responsive Classroom (RC), was conducted at a predominantly affluent and white elementary school in New Jersey. The school principal asked the investigator to examine the implementation of the program. The principal's goals were to improve well-being for students in the classroom and improve student behavior during unstructured activities. Twenty teachers of the elementary school were given a RC survey (see appendix B & C) created by the investigator. The survey included RC practices and principles for the teachers to rate on perceived usefulness, competency to use, and use in their classroom. Knowledge questions measured teachers' familiarity with and understanding of the program. The survey also included items for teachers to answer about barriers to of appropriate implementation of the program, needed supports, and advice about continued use.

Overall, teachers rated all RC principles and nearly all practices as useful and felt competent in using them. Closing Circle was the only practice teachers rated as not useful and not competent in using. While nearly all practices and principles were designed to be used every day, only Morning Circle was the closest to daily usage. Logical Consequences and Energizers were rated as only used once a week. Closing Circle was rated as once a month. Overall the comparisons between teachers with more vs. less teaching experience and experience with RC were not statistically significant.

Two barriers were cited by all teachers- lack of training and lack of time to implement the program. Most RC practices and principles require daily implementation from teachers. While teachers were "implementing" principles and practices, only the practice Morning Meeting was endorsed by teachers as "daily". Other major themes that were found from the Classical Content Analysis were teachers liked the program the program, encouraged the principal to provide them

with more time to implement the program, and felt that training and implementation should be extended to all school staff.

Results from the current study support previous research conducted by Forman, Olin, Hoagwood, Crowe, & Saka (2009) examining barriers for school-based programs. Both studies found lack of time as a major barrier for school-based programs. Another barrier discussed by these authors was money. The investigator learned about the school's financial constraints while collecting background information. The school is unable to pay for yearly training for all teachers, receiving training once every two to three years.

Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman, & Wallace, (2005) discussed the need to assign roles for successful implementation. The current implementation of the program does not include one person over-seeing or leading the program. Teachers are expected to implement a program after one training every two to three years. This person could be the principal, or another school administer checking up on teachers and observing the use of the program. The Responsive Classroom program is unique as it is primarily implemented by teachers and focuses on every day interactions. It may be difficult to observe the principles of the program as there is not explicit instruction happening.

An important finding from Paxton, Wanless, and Rimm-Kaufman (2013) was the importance of principal" buy-in". The results of this study support this finding as some teachers encouraged the principal to join their classrooms during meetings and offer support to younger teachers. Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman, & Wallace, (2005) discussed the importance of Staff Training. Training increases program fidelity and confidence in using the program. Another major barrier identified in this study was a lack of training, which could be affecting program implementation. Pas, Waasdorp, & Bradshaw (2015) concluded from their study, that context influences a school based program. This may include school climate or relationships between

staff members. One teacher commented on the open-ended questions that all staff needed to "buy-in" to the philosophy of the program.

Limitations

A major limitation of this study is reliance of self-report data for analysis. There may have been bias in the teacher ratings. For example, teachers may have over-estimated their ratings of usefulness, competency, and times using RC practices and principles to show themselves in a positive way. This is an example of Social Desirability Bias as teachers wanted to present themselves in a positive light. Another potential bias that may have occurred is response bias. Some teachers' responses were inconsistent, for example, a teacher rating a practice as using it daily may have demonstrated limited knowledge of the practice on the knowledge questions.

Threats to internal validity include maturation, selection, and history. Teachers completed this study at the beginning of October, which is the beginning of the school year. Teachers who were newer to the school district may have been focusing more on arranging their classrooms and meeting their students' parents than RC implementation. These may have reduced their use of RC principles and practices as well as limited their knowledge of the program. Ratings and answers may have also been different if the study was conducted at the end of the school year. Teachers with more years of teaching experience may have rated their use of RC across all their years of teaching rather than just at the school in this study. Selection of the teachers includes a sample size of only general education teachers and not special education teachers or paraprofessionals. Limiting the size of the sample does not account for all of the teachers in the school and implementation across the entire school. The sample size was also small with some items only having 16 teacher responses. In order to protect the confidentiality of the teachers, there were few items for teacher demographics; more comparison groups could have emerged

(between grade levels) and yielded different results in combination with a greater sample size. Teachers were allowed almost a week to complete their ratings. This may have allowed teachers to discuss their answers with each other or use their training manual to answer the knowledge questions, thus decreasing internal validity. There are several limitations to the study's external validity. Population validity is low due to the study being conducted in only one school. Every school district is different and can vary greatly across states (Manna & McGuinn, 2013). Schools are very different and diverse for a variety of reasons. Some of these reasons include school rules and procedures, amount of resources a school has, demographics of the children attending the school, and potentially school administrators having different opinions of social emotional learning programs.

Implications for School Psychologists

An important implication for school psychologists is to acquire competencies for how Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs are designed and implemented. This is particularly important for doctoral level school psychologists. Many school administrators are not trained in identifying evidence based programs or understand how programs should work in their school. As identified earlier, every school is unique, even when a program has sufficient research showing its effectiveness, the school may not have the appropriate resources, staff, or day to day functionality to properly implement the program. School psychologists may be hired to work specifically with students classified for special education, but they can limit the number of students in special education by developing competencies in SEL programs.

Another important implication, specifically for doctoral level school psychologists, is becoming a champion of a SEL program. While many masters level programs are designed for school psychologists to work on Child Study Teams, doctoral level psychologists have training in program evaluation, implementation, and data collection. Having a school psychologist run a

program provides the opportunity for consultation and supervision to teachers and staff implementing the program. These school psychologists can also brainstorm ways to quantitatively and qualitatively evaluate the effectiveness of the program, create reports that can be presented to stakeholders, and apply for grants to help fund the program. Maintaining a SEL program should be a full-time role within a school district. Having a school psychologist running the program allows for proper oversight and implementation.

For school psychologists that are able to work with the administrators of their school, it is important to discuss how teachers will find time and needed resources to implement the program at the beginning and throughout the school year. School Psychologists may also have to accept the program the school is already implementing and work with school administrators to find areas that need improvement. All schools experience various rates of teacher turnover. New teachers need proper training and support throughout the school year. Also important for school psychologists in helping to select a school-based program is discussing whether or not there is enough time built into the school schedule for implementation or helping teachers fit the practices into their school day. Research stated earlier has shown having teacher buy-in and support of the program will increase implementation and fidelity. After teachers have been trained and implementation is underway, school psychologists should be helping to check in with teachers throughout the school year to ensure proper implementation, help teachers feel supported, and to see if any changes need to be made.

Also important for school psychologists is to be well versed in the program and (if appropriate) be able to change parts of the program to best fit the needs of the school without losing the potential benefits. While school-based programs are designed to be implemented in a school, every school is different and presents different obstacles to overcome. Knowing the climate of the school, the available resources, and other important contextual factors will help in

shaping the program to best fit within a school. School psychologists also need to work with school administrators to identify potential barriers in program implementation and help facilitate ways to overcome them. Finally, school psychologists should not take on choosing a program, providing training, and monitoring implementation by themselves. Having administrators buy-in and helping with these tasks will increase implementation and allow a school psychologists time to work on other important tasks.

Suggestions for Further Research

Research in the field of program implementation within a school setting should focus on how to provide ongoing support and training during the school year, specifically within the school itself. Another area of research is determining the effectiveness of adapting Responsive Classroom to better fit a school's schedules. This could include shortening the time spent on each practice or how-to better tailor the program for each grade level. Research could also focus on implementing this program in a high school as the some of the practices and principles occur in every day interactions. The last suggested area of research for program implementation is the benefits of teacher to teacher mentoring. The school in this study had a spectrum of teaching experience among teachers. Schools that have similar demographics could benefit from veteran teachers supporting teachers with less experience.

Research in regard to RC, should focus on helping teachers better utilize Closing Circle and helping teachers tailor the practices into their busy school day. Closing Circle was the least used and perceived by teachers as least useful. This may have been due to teachers feeling less competent and knowledgeable in using the practice. Teachers may also run out of time at the end of the day to use Closing Circle. While it is important for students and teachers to end the day as a group, teachers may need more structured activities and practices. Research could focus on the best way to provide training to teachers, whether it is a one-day workshop or something else.

Determining if Closing Circle is an effective practice and if children benefit from it will also be important. Another area of research could be the potential impact of using the RC practices a few times a week instead of every day. This may give teachers more flexibility in their school day.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based upon the results of the study, the elementary school where the program was implemented would benefit from the continued implementation of RC. Teacher results include overwhelming support for the program. School administrators should focus on providing RC training for incoming or first year teachers as well as teachers who are not part of the general education staff. Teachers can attend one-day workshops in New York for an introduction to the program. Since teachers have mandatory professional development days, teachers can attend this workshop, and have it count towards their professional development requirement. RC also offers a four-day workshop within the school itself. This workshop can be given during the summer or throughout the school year.

To address financial concerns, administrators or school staff can apply for grants to mitigate cost of trainings. The "Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund" is a federal grant designed to improve student's achievement in the classroom by providing professional development for teachers and principals (Center for Responsive Schools, Inc., 2014). School officials can also apply for a grant through The Corning Incorporated Foundation. This foundation provides funding for educational institutions that foster student success in education as well as cultural programs that provide an innovative and creative way of thinking (Corning Incorporated Foundation, 2018). To provide ongoing implementation support for teachers during the school year, school administrators can organize mentoring opportunities for new teachers to be paired with teachers that have been using RC longer. These mentoring pairs could meet once a week during lunch, break, special classes, or after school. It would benefit all teachers to

review "Closing Circle" during a monthly faculty meeting and highlight when it should occur and how it should look. To help teachers use RC practices, school administrators should allow teachers to schedule 5-10 minutes for Morning Circle at the beginning of the day, 2-5 minutes for energizer activities after academic subjects, 2-5 minutes for Quite Time after recess, and 5-10 minutes at the end of the day for Closing Circle. To help ensure that teachers are using RC practices and principles every week the principal could join either one Morning Meeting or Closing Circle for one classroom. The principal could rotate between all the classrooms.

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APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

<u>CONSENT FORM</u>

You are invited to participate in an evaluation is being conducted by Tom Gambino who is a graduate student in the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology Department at Rutgers University. The purpose of this evaluation is to determine the barriers, thoughts, and attitudes of the Responsive Classroom program

This research is anonymous. Anonymous means that I will record no information about you that could identify you. There will be no linkage between your identity and your response in the research. This means that I will not record your name, address, phone number, date of birth, etc.

The Institutional Review Board and myself at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. All study data will be kept for three years.

There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study. Please keep the gift card included in the envelope regardless of participation.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw at any time during the study procedures without any penalty to you. In addition, you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are not comfortable. If you have any questions about the study or study procedures, you may contact:

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If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact an IRB Administrator at the Rutgers University, Arts and Sciences IRB:
Institutional Review Board
Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey
Liberty Plaza / Suite 3200
335 George Street, 3rd Floor
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
Phone: 732-235-2866
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

Please retain a copy of this form for your records. By participating in the above stated procedures, then you agree to participation in this study.

APPENDIX B: IMPLEMENTATION RATINGS: Please rate each component and practice of Responsive Classroom within your own classroom. All answers will be kept **strictly anonymous**.

Principle/Practice	_____ is useful in improving the functioning of my students and classroom. 1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Agree 4= Strongly Agree	I feel competent in using _____. 1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Agree 4= Strongly Agree	How Many Times You Have Used _____? 1= I Don't Use This 2= Once A Month 3= Once A Week 4= A Few Times A Week 5= Every Day
Morning Meeting	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5
Energizers	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5
Quiet Time	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5
Establishing Rules	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5
Closing Circle	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5
Logical Consequence	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5
Interactive Modeling	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5
Teacher Language	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5
Interactive Learning	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX C: OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS/ITEMS
Responsive Classroom Questions

1. How many years have you been a teacher?

2. How many years have you used Responsive Classroom either in this school district or somewhere else?

3. What barriers are preventing you from using the Responsive Classroom program effectively?

4. What would make it easier for you to use the Responsive Classroom program?

5. What advice would you give the new principal about using the Responsive Classroom program?

6. Please describe a "Morning Meeting."

7. What are "Energizers"? Please provide an example.

8. Please describe "Quiet Time" and when it occurs in your classroom?

9. What happens during "Closing Circle"?

10. What is a Logical Consequence?

11. How do you engage in Interactive Modeling in your classroom?

12. Please explain what it means to use appropriate Teacher Language.

13. How do you promote Interactive Learning in your classroom?

14. What does "Establishing Rules" mean?

Please Place All Forms In The Envelope Provided And Return To The Marked Container In The Main Office

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!!

APPENDIX D: KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONS GRADING MANUAL

Principle/Practice	Essential Components
Morning Meeting	**- Meeting in the morning and at the beginning of the school day.** **- Four parts: greeting, sharing, group activity, and morning message.**
Energizers	**- Classroom wide activities that are breaks for students during academic lessons.**
Quiet Time	**- Relaxing time after lunch and recess, before academic work starts again.**
Establishing Rules	**-Teacher and students collaborate on creating rules and goals for the school year.**
Closing Circle	**- 5 to 10 minute meeting at the end of the day.** **- Students engage in 1 or 2 activities that involve reflection and celebration of what the students have accomplished.**
Logical Consequence	**- Nonpunitive response to misbehavior.** **- Teachers are able to set limits.** **- Students have the opportunity to fix and learn from their mistakes.**
Interactive Modeling	**- Teacher's model desired behavior, students describe what they notice, students model the desired behavior, and teacher provides feedback.**
Teacher Language	**- Use of words or phrases that promote learning and help develop academic, social, and emotional skills.** **- Language is direct, brief, and convey faith in students' abilities.**
Interactive Learning	**- Activities used during a lesson or introducing a topic that allows students to be active (hands-on learning) and interactive.** **- Increases student engagement.**