



The Comparison of Effective Social-Emotional Learning Programs Use in P-12 Schools:  
A Meta-Synthesis

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## **Abstract**

This meta-synthesis of literature analyzed 59 journal articles pertaining to social-emotional learning programs for P-12 students. The articles underscored the importance of the involvement of peer support, parent support, teacher and parent training, behavior intervention, positive reinforcement, school-wide programs, and individualized programs being utilized in a consistent way as well as the individual programs being used with fidelity across the whole environment of the student for a successful implementation.

## **1. Introduction**

### *1.1. The problem*

Emotional and behavioral disorders, according to Eli Bower (1982), are defined by individuals having difficulty learning that is not explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors, being unable to keep relationships with peers and others, under normal situations, displays inappropriate types of behavior or feelings, depression, or develop physical symptoms or fears associated with a person or problem. The federal government has incorporated Bower's definition into the Individual with Disabilities Education and Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA). In simpler terms, Quay and Peterson (1987) have grouped these children into six groups: students with hyperactivity, psychotic behavior, anxiety or withdrawal, attention problems or immaturity, socialized aggression, or conduct disorder. After we have identified children with an emotional or behavioral disorder, what do we do with them?

Many of the teachers in schools do not want these students in their classrooms disturbing other students. These are the students that will cause a disturbance or start a fight. I believe that all of these students want to be needed, and all have a positive contribution they might make, but they just do not know how to show the tender side of themselves. They need to be taught to be understanding, patient, and not fearful of failing, like they have so many times before. This is where the social-emotional learning programs come into play, by teaching students with emotional and behavioral problems how to channel energy in a positive way, deal with anger, or change an attitude.

### *1.2. Author's beliefs and experiences*

I have been employed in a middle school in Eagle River for the past three years. The students that I work with have a wide variety of disabilities, which include emotional disorders,

autism, Tourette's syndrome, attention deficit disorder, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, specific learning disability, and hearing impairment. The students that I teach generally have a single disability except for the students that are diagnosed with emotional disturbance. These students, as with most students with emotional and behavioral disorders, have co-morbid disabilities generally linked either with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, learning disability, or both (Wagner & James, 2006). Social-emotional learning is incorporated into the study skills class that I teach to assist with cultivating favorable behaviors and to extinguish undesirable behaviors among these students.

Some of the undesirable behaviors are caused from the lack of communication skills. I observed one special needs student walking down the hall to the library to check out a book needed for a report in his social studies class. The eighth grader was stopped by security and asked for his hall pass for being out of his assigned classroom. Looking back at the classroom door he had just left then turned towards the library there seemed to be a wave of panic that came over him. He started walking away from the security officer at a fast pace towards the library, which caused the officer to pursue him. The officer again caught up with him just inside the door to the library. Words were beginning to be exchanged when I stepped between the two; telling the security officer that, "I will take care of this." The officer walks back into the hallway. Turning towards the student, I told him, "We needed to sit down and talk." After calming down, he was able to tell me that he had left the hall pass the teacher given him in the classroom, but did not want to go back to the room because he had limited time to complete his task of checking out a book on the *Articles of Confederation* for his report. "What would have happened if I did not intervene?" I asked. He replied, "I would have hit him." Two weeks later, I observed a similar situation with a non-special needs student.

The student had no hall pass in the hallway on the way to the library. He told the security officer that he must have left his pass in the classroom but he needed a book from the library and he only had five minutes to locate the book, get it checked out, and return to class to show the teacher before going to his next class. The security officer told him to be mindful of the requirements of being in the halls during class and allowed him to proceed to his destination. Communication is one of the differences between the two students. One could voice his desires while the other student became frustrated and bolted towards his destination.

From the first days in the school, I have observed behaviors in the hallways among many students. Some of the behaviors were aggression towards other students such as pushing and shoving, while other behaviors were actions of victims and diminished self worth (e.g., students having their heads lowered when passing other students). Anchorage School District has had affective skills classes for a number of years but has not had a curriculum that coincided with the classes until recently. The curriculum the district chose was the WhyTry affective skills program created by Christian Moore. I wonder if there are other programs that would be just as effective or better than the WhyTry. I have looked at some programs in other school districts (e.g., Tough Kid, C.H.A.M.P.S., and Tribes by Randy Sprick). The Sprick programs seem to work in some schools, and once a district starts using them, they seem to buy more of his programs. This could be an indicator of his programs' popularity. Another program, Rachel's Challenge, was resurrected from the Columbine school assault. I am told Rachel's Challenge turned around a rough high school into a school where students, once again, felt safe to walk down the halls. Other programs include MindUp, a program that I have seen advertised on CNN (Mayo, 2010), which has been endorsed by Goldie Hawn and the Hawn Foundation. MindUp is a classroom-based program geared to influence grades K-7.

As an affective skills teacher who is wanting to assist students in their social emotional learning, hearing about these other programs led me to research curriculum and programs to assist their emotional growth using the following questions:

1. What are the programs available to the schools to promote healthy emotional stability to special needs student?
2. Are these programs intended as a school-wide implementation or are they compatible with single implementation for individual success?
3. Do these programs have a long-term success rate?

Finding the answers to these questions will assist me in knowing curriculum or programs that would best suit the needs of a student who needs to refine their personality so that it is compatible with the expectations of the social order in which we live. By knowing how to interact with supervisors, peers, and subordinates in a meaningful relationship in accordance with the collective rules in our society the students will be able to have meaningful interactions with the people around them.

### *1.3. Purpose of this meta-synthesis*

The purpose of this meta-synthesis was to review the literature on strategies, methods, and programs that effectively address students' behavior, self-worth, and motivation, and to connect this literature to my work with students with emotional and behavioral problems.

## **2. Methods**

### *2.1. Selection criteria*

The 59 journal articles included in this meta-synthesis met the following selection criteria:

1. The articles examined issues relating to students with emotional and behavioral

problems.

2. The articles examined issues related to affective skills programs or interventions used in P-12 schools.

3. The articles were published in professional journals typically read by educators.

4. The articles were published between 1979 and 2010.

## *2.2. Search procedures*

Database searches and ancestral searches were conducted to locate articles for this meta-synthesis.

### *2.2.1 Database searches*

I conducted systematic searches of the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC, EBSCO host) database limiting using the following search term combinations:

1. ("Rachel's Challenge").
2. ("Values Education") AND ("Special Education").
3. ("Values Education") AND ("Behavior Problems" OR "Emotional Problems").
4. ("Values Education") AND ("Behavior Disorders" OR "Emotional Disturbances").
5. ("Citizenship Education") AND ("Special Education").
6. ("Citizenship Education") AND ("Behavior Problems" OR "Emotional Problems").
7. ("Citizenship Education") AND ("Behavior Disorders" OR "Emotional Disturbances").
8. ("Ethical Education") AND ("Behavior Problems" OR "Emotional Problems").
9. ("Ethical Education") AND ("Behavior Disorders" OR "Emotional Disturbances").
10. ("Humanistic Education") AND ("Special Education").
11. ("Humanistic Education") AND ("Behavior Problems" OR "Emotional Problems").

12. (“Humanistic Education”) AND (“Behavior Disorders” OR “Emotional Disturbances”).
13. (“Values Clarification”) AND (“Special Education”).
14. (“Values Clarification”) AND (“Behavior Problems” OR “Emotional Problems”).
15. (“Values Clarification”) AND (“Behavior Disorders” OR “Emotional Disturbances”).
16. (“Character Education”) AND (“Special Education”).
17. (“Character Education”) AND (“Behavior Problems” OR “Emotional Problems”).
18. (“Character Education”) AND (“Behavior Disorders” OR “Emotional Disturbances”).
19. (“Affective Objectives”) AND (“Special Education”).
20. (“Affective Objectives”) AND (“Behavior Problems” OR “Emotional Problems”).
21. (“Behavior Problems”) AND (“Positive Reinforcement”).

These database searches yielded a total of 47 articles that met my selection criteria (Addison & Lerman, 2009; Anderson & Spaulding, 2007; Barth, Dunlap, Dane, Lochman, & Wells, 2004; Berg, Wacker, Harding, Ganzer, & Barretto, 2007; Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; Blank, Jacobson, & Pearson, 2009; Boulden, 2010; Bradshaw, Reinke, Brown, Bevans, & Leaf, 2008; Brock, Nishida, Chiong, Grimm, & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008; Carr, 1997; Carswell, Hanlon, O’Grady, Watts, & Pothong, 2009; Couvillion, Peterson, Ryan, Scheuermann, & Stegall, 2010; Curwin, 1995; Gagnon, Rockwell, & Scott, 2008; Greenberg, Weissberg, O’Brien, Zins, Fredericks, Resnik, & Elias, 2003; Hall & Didier, 1987; Hall et al., 2007; Harris & Short, 1988; Hollingshead, 2009; Hollingshead, Crump, Eddy, & Rowe, 2009; Ingvarsson, Kahng, & Hausman, 2008; Jones, 1998; Kennedy, 2002a, 2002b; Kilmann, Henry, Scarbro, & Laughlin, 1979; Kodak, Lerman, Volkert, & Trosclair, 2007; LaConte, Shaw, & Dunn, 1993; Lane, Wehby, Robertson, & Rogers, 2007; Laursen, 2005; Matus, 1999; Mendler & Mendler,

2010; Olive, 2010; Parker, Nelson & Burns, 2010; Peterson & Skiba, 2000; Polirstok & Gottlieb, 2006; Putnam, Markovchick, Johnson, & Johnson, 1996; Rahill & Teglassi, 2003; Richardson, Tolson, Huang, & Lee, 2009; Scott, White, Algozzine, & Algozzine, 2009; Sharma, Singh, & Geromette, 2008; Sherrod, Getch, & Ziomek-Daigle, 2009; Solomon, 1997; Sprick, 2009; Sugai & Horner, 2006; Swarthout, 1988; Thompson & Hudson, 1982; Warren, Bohanon-Edmonson, Turnbull, Sailor, Wickham, Griggs, & Beech, 2006).

### *2.2.2. Ancestral searches*

An ancestral search is a research method used to locate literature of a specific topic of interest from the reference lists of previously published literature (Welch, Brownell, & Sheridan, 1999). Ancestral searches were conducted from the reference lists of the articles retrieved through my database searches. These ancestral searches yielded 11 additional items that met the selection criteria (Anderson & Kincaid, 2005; Bohanon et al., 2006; Bower, 1982; Bradshaw, Mitchell, Leaf, 2010; Conroy, Dunlap, Clarke, & Alter, 2005; Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006; McMahan, Washburn, Felix, Yakin, & Childrey, 2000; Saylor, Zuna, Choi, Thomas, McCart, & Roger, 2006; Sugai et al., 2000; Turnbull et al., 2002; Wilson, Gottfredson, & Najaka, 2001).

### *2.2.3. Personal inquiry*

I contacted a commercial behavior modification program developer by email, asking them about studies on the WhyTry program. Their response directed me to an article that met my selection criteria (Joyce & Alvarez, 2010).

### *2.3. Coding procedures*

I used a coding form to categorize the information presented in each of the 59 articles. This coding form was based on: (a) publication type; (b) research design; (c) participants; (d) data sources; and (e) findings of the studies.

### 2.3.1. *Publication type*

Articles were gathered, analyzed, and then organized into one of seven groupings: research study, theoretical work, descriptive article, opinion piece, guide, annotated bibliography, or review of the literature. A *research study* is a systematic gathering, classifying, and evaluation of materials and data. *Theoretical works* describe or develop theory. *Descriptive articles* are works that clarify and describe an idea or experience but do not use systematic methods to collect and analyze data. An *opinion piece* is an article that promotes the ideas and perspectives of the author. A *guide* shows how to implement a program or model. An *annotated bibliography* is a compiled index of cited articles, documents, or books related to a specific topic followed by a description or evaluation of each. *Reviews of the literature* review previously conducted research on a particular topic (Table 1).

### 2.3.2. *Research design*

Each study was classified by research design (e.g., quantitative research, qualitative research, mixed methods research). *Quantitative* research is where numerical data is collected and analyzed by researchers. *Qualitative* research is the collection of data that is analyzed in a non-numerical manner using language to explain events or experiences. *Mixed methods* research uses a combination of both quantitative research (i.e. numerical) and qualitative research (i.e. language based) (Table 2).

### 2.3.4. *Participants, data sources, and findings*

I identified the participants of the research studies (e.g., high school students, middle school student, elementary students, preschool students, special education teachers, psychologists, and parents). I also identified the data sources that were analyzed for each research study (e.g., observations, surveys,). Finally, I summarized the findings of each research

study (Table 2).

#### *2.4. Data analysis*

I used a modified version of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method previously employed by Duke (2011) and Duke and Ward (2009) to analyze the 59 articles included in this meta-synthesis. I first identified significant statements as statements that addressed issues related to social-emotional learning programs for P-12 students. I then developed a list of non-repetitive, non-overlapping (verbatim) significant statements with (non-verbatim) formulated meanings. These formulated meanings represented my interpretation of each significant statement. Lastly, I grouped the formulated meanings from all 59 articles into theme clusters (or emergent themes). These emergent themes represented the essence (or content) of the entire body of literature (Table 3).

### **3. Results**

#### *3.1. Publication type*

Fifty-nine articles were collected that met my selection criteria. The publication type of each article is identified in Table 1. Thirty-two (54.2%) of the articles included in this meta-synthesis were descriptive articles (Anderson & Kincaid, 2005; Anderson & Spaulding, 2007; Blank et al., 2009; Boulden, 2010; Bower, 1982; Carr, 1997; Carswell et al., 2009; Couvillion et al., 2010; Curwin, 1995; Gagnon et al., 2008; Greenberg et al., 2003; Harris & Short, 1988; Hollingshead, 2009; Hollingshead et al., 2009; Ingvarsson et al., 2008; Jones, 1998; Joyce & Alvarez, 2010; Kennedy, 2002a; Kennedy, 2002b; Kilmann et al., 1979; Laursen, 2005; Olive, 2010; Peterson & Skiba, 2000; Polirstok & Gottlieb, 2006; Richardson et al., 2009; Saylor et al., 2006; Sharma et al., 2008; Solomon, 1997; Sprick, 2009; Sugai & Horner, 2006; Turnbull et al., 2002; Warren et al., 2006). Twenty (33.9%) articles were research studies (Addison & Lerman,

2009; Barth et al., 2004; Berg et al., 2007; Bohanon et al., 2006; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Bradshaw et al., 2008; Brock et al., 2008; Hall & Didier, 1987; Hall et al., 2007; Kodak et al., 2007; LaConte et al., 1993; Lane et al., 2007; Lassen et al., 2006; McMahon et al., 2000; Parker et al., 2010; Putnam et al., 1996; Rahill & Teglasi, 2003; Scott et al., 2009; Sherrod et al., 2009; Thompson & Hudson, 1982). Two articles (3.4%) were opinion papers (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; Matus, 1999). Three (5.1%) articles were guides (Mendler & Mendler, 2010; Sugai et al., 2000; Wilson et al., 2001). One (1.6%) was an information analysis (Swarthout, 1988). One (1.6%) was a review of literature (Conroy et al., 2005).

**Table 1**

<b>Author(s) &amp; Year of Publication</b>	<b>Publication Type</b>
Addison & Lerman, 2009	Research Study
Anderson & Kincaid, 2005	Descriptive Article
Anderson & Spaulding, 2007	Descriptive Article
Barth, Dunlap, Dane, Lochman, & Wells, 2004	Research Study
Berg, Wacker, Harding, Ganzer, & Barretto, 2007	Research Study
Berkowitz & Bier, 2004	Opinion Paper
Blank, Jacobson, & Pearson, 2009	Descriptive Article
Bohanon et al., 2006	Research Study
Boulden, 2010	Descriptive Article
Bower, 1982	Descriptive Article
Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010	Research Study
Bradshaw, Reinke, Brown, Bevans, & Leaf, 2008	Research Study
Brock, Nishida, Chiong, Grimm, & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008	Research Study
Carr, 1997	Descriptive Article
Carswell, Hanlon, O'Grady, Watts, & Pothong, 2009	Descriptive Article
Conroy, Dunlap, Clarke, & Alter, 2005	Review of Literature
Couvillion, Peterson, Ryan, Scheuermann, & Stegall, 2010	Descriptive Article
Curwin, 1995	Descriptive Article
Gagnon, Rockwell, & Scott, 2008	Descriptive Article
Greenberg, Weissberg, O'Brien, Zins, Fredericks, Resnik, & Elias, 2003	Descriptive Article
Hall & Didier, 1987	Research Study
Hall, Turnbull, McCart, Griggs, Choi, Markey, Markey, & Sailor, 2007	Research Study
Harris & Short, 1988	Descriptive Article
Hollingshead, 2009	Descriptive Article
Hollingshead, Crump, Eddy, & Rowe, 2009	Descriptive Article
Ingvarsson, Kahng, & Hausman, 2008	Descriptive Article

Jones, 1998	Descriptive Article
Joyce & Alvarez, 2010	Descriptive Article
Kennedy, 2002a	Descriptive Article
Kennedy, 2002b	Descriptive Article
Kilman, Henry, Scarbro, & Laughlin, 1979	Descriptive Article
Kodak, Lerman, Volkert, & Trosclair, 2007	Research Study
LaConte, Shaw, & Dunn, 1993	Research Study
Lane, Wehby, Robertson, & Rogers, 2007	Research Study
Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006	Research Study
Laursen, 2005	Descriptive Article
Matus, 1999	Opinion Paper
McMahon, Washburn, Felix, Yakin, & Childrey, 2000	Research Study
Mendler & Mendler, 2010	Guide
Olive, 2010	Descriptive Article
Parker, Nelson, & Burns, 2010	Research Study
Peterson & Skiba, 2000	Descriptive Article
Polirstok & Gottlieb, 2006	Descriptive Article
Putnam, Markovchick, Johnson, & Johnson, 1996	Research Study
Rahill & Teglas, 2003	Research Study
Richardson, Tolson, Huang, & Lee, 2009	Descriptive Article
Saylor, Zuna, Choi, Thomas, McCart, & Roger, 2006	Descriptive Article
Scott, White, Algozzine, & Algozzine, 2009	Research Study
Sharma, Singh, & Geromette, 2008	Descriptive Article
Sherrod, Getch, & Ziomek-Daigle, 2009	Research Study
Solomon, 1997	Descriptive Article
Sprick, 2009	Descriptive Article
Sugai & Horner, 2006	Descriptive Article
Sugai et al., 2000	Guide
Swarthout, 1988	Information Analysis
Thompson & Hudson, 1982	Research Study

Turnbull et al., 2002	Descriptive Article
Warren, Bohanon-Edmonson, Turnbull, Sailor, Wickham, Griggs, & Beech, 2006	Descriptive Article
Wilson, Gottfredson, & Najaka, 2001	Guide

### *3.2. Research design, participants, data sources, and findings of the studies*

Twenty research studies were collected that met my selection criteria (Addison & Lerman, 2009; Barth et al., 2004; Berg et al., 2007; Bohanon et al., 2006; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Bradshaw et al., 2008; Brock et al., 2008; Hall & Didier, 1987; Hall et al., 2007; Kodak et al., 2007; LaConte et al., 1993; Lane et al., 2007; Lassen et al., 2006; McMahan et al., 2000; Parker et al., 2010; Putnam et al., 1996; Rahill & Teglassi, 2003; Scott et al., 2009; Sherrod et al., 2009; Thompson & Hudson, 1982). The research design, participants, data sources, and findings of each of these research studies are delineated in Table 2.

**Table 2**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Research Design</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>	<b>Findings</b>
Addison & Lerman, 2009	Quantitative	2 four-year old students diagnosed with autism and behavior issues. Three special education teachers with 3-5 years of teaching experience	Videotaped sessions	Results suggested that an immediate decrease in child behavior was a consequence for teacher behavior, either escapement or reprimands.
Barth, Dunlap, Dane, Lochman, & Wells, 2004	Quantitative	378 students spanning fourth/fifth grade over 2 years and 211 5 <sup>th</sup> grade students in 17 different schools	Data from teachers in target schools	Finding suggests that each of these environmental factors play a role in accounting for children's aggression, peer relations, and academic focus but classroom environment might play a more important role than school environment.
Berg, Wacker, Harding, Ganzer, & Barretto, 2007	Quantitative	4 children ages 4 to 5 years old whose behavior was maintained by negative reinforcement	Interviews and Descriptive information (Scatter Plot and A-B-C assessment) obtained from parents	A reduction of behavior of 70% and 90% compliance to instruction was observed following training.
Bohanon et al., 2006	Mixed Methods	438,500 students in 602 public schools in Chicago	Qualitative interviews and observations including a school-wide evaluation tool, Effective Behavior Support Survey, Student Climate Survey, and Office Disciplinary Referrals	Findings indicate that in urban high schools Positive Behavior Supports are productive in reducing the occurrences of undesirable behaviors.
Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010	Quantitative	37 elementary schools volunteered from 5 different	Surveys, Interviews, and Data gathered	School personnel trained in School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention

		Maryland school districts (rural and suburban)	using School-wide evaluation tool	and Supports (SWPBIS) program that was administered with fidelity showed a significant reduction in office referrals and suspensions.
Bradshaw, Reinke, Brown, Bevans, & Leaf, 2008	Quantitative	37 elementary schools volunteered from 5 different Maryland school districts (rural and suburban)	School-wide evaluation tool data	Schools that have implemented a Positive Behavior Intervention with high fidelity has shown a success within the first 1 to 2 years but may take 3 to 5 years to translate into a full organizational changes to effect student behavioral changes.
Brock, Nishida, Chiong, Grimm, & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008	Quantitative	520 children in grades 3-5 that attended 1 of 6 schools in a district in the Northeastern U.S.	Questionnaires were collected over a 3 year period	Responsive Classroom teacher practices have a correlation with positive student outcome but the study showed relationship between the student's perception of the school and student academic outcome had generally no relevance.
Hall & Didier, 1987	Qualitative	73 student teachers from a Midwestern U.S. state university during their student teaching experience and at the end of their formal coursework	Intervention Rating Profile-15 (IRP-15) developed by Witt and Martens (1984)	Acceptable approaches were rated as Humanistic 1 <sup>st</sup> , Behavioral 2 <sup>nd</sup> , and Pragmatic 3 <sup>rd</sup> .
Hall, Turnbull, McCart, Griggs, Choi, Markey, Markey, & Sailor, 2007	Qualitative	6 participants attending parent-training workshops designed to empower them to use PBS child behavior management strategies and enhance their own	Data from ENROLL to measure family demographics, WAVE to measure family profile, and Family Support Scale (FSS) to measure the quality of support	Parent training has a significant positive affect on challenging behavior problems demonstrated by children.

		mental health outcomes via a functional parent-child relationship		
Kodak, Lerman, Volkert, & Trosclair, 2007	Qualitative	5 children who had been diagnosed with developmental disabilities and who engaged in problem behavior maintained by escape from demands	Trained observers collected data on reinforcer choices, problem behaviors, and compliance.	The choice between positive and negative reinforcement did not alter the preference level of the task.
LaConte, Shaw, & Dunn, 1993	Quantitative	23 middle school students from 2 schools in 6 <sup>th</sup> , 7 <sup>th</sup> , and 8 <sup>th</sup> grades ranging in age from 12 to 15 years	Data gathered from Tennessee Self-Concept Survey and end-of-year report card grades	There were no significant improvements of the end-of-year grades nor self-concept between control and experimental groups.
Lane, Wehby, Robertson, & Rogers, 2007	Quantitative	178 students attending 2 high schools participating in a federally funded investigation of positive behavior support at the high school level conducted in middle Tennessee	Data from GPA, unexcused tardies, discipline, and suspensions	Students with typical behavior and students with internalized behavior had significantly higher GPA other students with externalized, comorbid, and high-incidence disability.
Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006	Quantitative	3-year longitudinal project involving students from multiple schools in a low-income, inner-city area	Data on office referrals, suspensions, standardized test scores, and treatment fidelity	Results demonstrated a reduction in office referrals and suspensions and an increase of standardized math and reading scores.
McMahon, Washburn, Felix, Yakin, & Childrey, 2000	Quantitative	56 African American, Latino, and European American children (3 classes), ages 3-5, who participated in the violence prevention program from the preschool setting	Knowledge, behavior problems, and social skills were assessed using pre-and posttests based on student interviews, teacher ratings, and behavioral observations.	Improved participant scores between the posttest and pretest interviews indicated the children learned many of the concepts taught in the violence prevention program.

Parker, Nelson, & Burns, 2010	Quantitative	Students in 77 classrooms from 12 public schools throughout an upper Midwestern U.S. state	Observational data	Study implies a school-wide character education program has a stronger influence on schools with a higher percentage of free and reduced lunches.
Putnam, Markovchick, Johnson, & Johnson, 1996	Quantitative	41 special education students (32 boys and 9 girls) ages 11 to 15; 417 regular education students (197 boys and 220 girls) ages 10 to 14	Data from student questionnaire rating peers desirable as a work partner	Students taught in a cooperative learning environment was more tolerant of students with special needs than students taught in a competitive environment.
Rahill & Teglesi, 2003	Quantitative	Students from 4 special education centers were selected on the basis of the willingness of the 3 school psychologists working at these centers to participate in piloting and implementing STORIES and Skillstreaming programs for the students	Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC) teacher report form, School Social Behavior Scales (SSBS), and peer-teacher sociometric questionnaires separated into 3 phases	In the 1 <sup>st</sup> phase little response to indicate a positive result of change in behavior. During the 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> phase teachers noticed an increased cognitive and behavioral response indicating the intervention was successful.
Scott, White, Algozzine, & Algozzine, 2009	Quantitative	Students in the 23 <sup>rd</sup> largest school system in the nation; the total population was over 120,000 when the study was completed	Observation by Positive Unified Behavior Support (PUBS) trained graduate students	Research supports evidence that defined and repeatable interventions provide positive instructional experiences.
Sherrod, Getch, & Ziomek-Daigle, 2009	Qualitative	Entire school population of 468 students with 51% female and 49% male. Cultural composition of student population:	Behavioral referrals were monitored using School and Student Information system (SASI) to	Tier 1 and 2 of a 3-tier school-wide behavior intervention program was implemented with 80-90% positive results. Tier 3 was targeted for individual students

		African American (52%), White (31%), Multiracial (7%), Asian (5%), and Hispanic (5%) students. Targeted group included five 5 <sup>th</sup> grade students (3 white and 2 African American)	select students to participate in Positive Results in Discipline Education (PRIDE).	resulting in decrease in inappropriate behavior, bus referrals, physical aggression, and not following directions but an increase of disruptive and disrespect.
Thompson & Hudson, 1982	Quantitative	From a population of 160 volunteers, 96 9 <sup>th</sup> grade male students at a non-tuition, private, residential school	Data was collected on behavioral indicators of unhappiness and acts of maladaptive behavior. A pretest and 2-posttests were administered to self-report irrationality. Houseparent opinion was included into the data.	Findings in this study show there is a collation between the indicators of unhappiness and maladaptive behavior.

### *3.2.1. Research design*

Fifteen of the 20 studies (75.0%) included in this meta-synthesis employed a quantitative research design (Addison & Lerman, 2009; Barth et al., 2004; Berg et al., 2007; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Bradshaw et al., 2008; Brock et al., 2008; LaConte et al., 1993; Lane et al., 2007; Lassen et al., 2006; McMahon et al., 2000; Parker et al., 2010; Putnam et al., 1996; Rahill & Teglassi, 2003; Scott et al., 2009; Thompson & Hudson, 1982). Four of the studies (20.0%) used a qualitative research design (Hall & Didier, 1987; Hall et al., 2007; Kodak et al., 2007; Sherrod et al., 2009). One of the studies (5.0%) employed a mixed methods research design, collecting and analyzing a combination of both quantitative (i.e., numerical) and qualitative (i.e., non-numerical) data (Bohanon et al., 2006).

### *3.2.2. Participants and data sources*

The 20 studies included in this meta-synthesis analyzed data collected from P-12 students with disabilities, P-12 students, P-12 teachers, 9<sup>th</sup> grade male students from a residential school, preservice teachers, parents of students, and school psychologists. Seventeen of the studies (85.0%) analyzed data collected from P-12 students with disabilities (Addison & Lerman, 2009; Barth et al., 2004; Berg et al., 2007; Bohanon et al., 2006; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Bradshaw et al., 2008; Brock et al., 2008; Kodak et al., 2007; LaConte et al., 1993; Lane et al., 2007; Lassen et al., 2006; McMahon et al., 2000; Parker et al., 2010; Putnam et al., 1996; Rahill & Teglassi, 2003; Scott et al., 2009; Sherrod et al., 2009). Thirteen of the studies (65.0%) analyzed data collected from P-12 students (Barth et al., 2004; Bohanon et al., 2006; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Bradshaw et al., 2008; Brock et al., 2008; LaConte et al., 1993; Lane et al., 2007; Lassen et al., 2006; McMahon et al., 2000; Parker et al., 2010; Putnam et al., 1996; Scott et al., 2009; Sherrod et al., 2009). Two of the studies (10.0%) analyzed data collected from P-12 teachers (Addison &

Lerman, 2009; Bradshaw et al., 2010). One of the studies (5.0%) analyzed data collected from a 9<sup>th</sup> grade male students from a residential school (Thompson & Hudson, 1982). One of the studies (5.0%) analyzed data collected from preservice teachers (Hall & Didier, 1987). One of the studies (5.0%) analyzed data collected from parents of students (Hall et al., 2007). One of the studies (5.0%) analyzed data collected from school psychologists (Rahill & Teglassi, 2003).

Most of the studies reviewed for this meta-synthesis used questionnaires, observations, and/or interviews to collect data from the participants. Eight of the 20 studies (40.0%) used questionnaires to collect data (Berg et al., 2007; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Brock et al., 2008; Hall & Didier, 1987; Parker et al., 2010; Putnam et al., 1996; Rahill & Teglassi, 2003; Thompson & Hudson, 1982). Six of the studies (30.0%) used observations to collect data (Addison & Lerman, 2009; Bohanon et al., 2006; Kodak et al., 2007; McMahon et al., 2000; Parker et al., 2010; Scott et al., 2009). Five of the studies (25.0%) used interviews to collect data (Berg et al., 2007; Bohanon et al., 2006; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Hall et al., 2007; McMahon et al., 2000;). In addition to questionnaires, observations, and interviews, other sources of data were also used to collect data for one or more of the 20 studies; these additional sources of data included A-B-C assessments, school-wide evaluation tools, office disciplinary referrals, suspension reports, end-of-year report card grades, grade point averages, attendance records, pre and post measures.

### *3.2.3. Findings of the studies*

The findings of the 20 studies included in this meta-synthesis can be summarized as follows:

1. Positive behavior intervention programs have shown a positive impact on students with disabilities (Bohanon et al., 2006; Brock et al., 2008; Sherrod et al., 2009). These approaches allow the student to see modeling of the desired behaviors and clarify the results of

the behaviors whether they have positive or negative outcomes.

2. Programs taught with fidelity show a higher student success rate (Bradshaw et al., 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2010). The students follow cues from the teacher and other students whether they are verbal or non-verbal. A class taught with fidelity energizes most of the students bringing with them the resistant students into the learning process.

3. School-wide programs bring a sense of cohesion and school pride throughout the school with additional support from peers is highly desired (Hollingshead et al., 2009). In addition to behavior intervention programs there are character programs that instill a sense of right and wrong in the students and the understanding that the students operate as a large family.

### *3.3. Emergent themes*

Five themes emerged from my analysis of the 59 articles in this review of the literature. These emergent themes (or theme clusters) include: (a) social climate in the classroom, school, and community; (b) challenging behaviors; (c) social skills; (d) behavior management; and (e) parent and teacher training. These five theme clusters and their associated formulated meanings are identified in Table 3.

**Table 3**

<b>Theme Clusters</b>	<b>Formulated Meanings</b>
<b>Social Climate in the Classroom, School, and Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom environment is directly associated with student aggression, peer relations, and academic focus.</li> <li>• Disruptions due to discipline problems have a negative effect on other student's learning in the classroom.</li> <li>• Putting students with similar behavior traits may only be productive if the students are collectively highly competent.</li> <li>• Students that have experienced bonding to the school have higher test scores and exhibit more appropriate social skills.</li> <li>• Local, state, and national policies are highlighting the need for evidence-based practices from remediate learning to behavior problems to moral decay of our youths.</li> <li>• Character, social, and behavioral programs can inspire students to make changes in lives and schools thus treating others with respect and understanding which impacts the social climate of the school and community in which they live. Schools with a high percentage of free and reduced lunches are affected greatly by character education programs.</li> <li>• Schools with a high percentage of free and reduced lunches are affected greatly by character education programs.</li> <li>• Social validity is necessary to completely understand behavior problems and the events that maintain the behavior.</li> </ul>
<b>Challenging Behaviors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers feel ill prepared to deal effectively with discipline problems.</li> <li>• Problem behaviors are maintained by both negative and positive reinforcement.</li> <li>• Untreated challenging behaviors in children can lead to a classification in emotional disturbed student or emotional behavior disorder. The behavior increases in severity over time may lead to severe conduct disorders in adulthood.</li> <li>• Behavior analysis improves understanding of environmental and biological causes of problem behavior and the rewards from the behavior.</li> <li>• Consequence-based punishment is shown to have little effect in reducing problem behavior.</li> <li>• Correlations exist between indicators of unhappiness and challenging behaviors.</li> </ul>
<b>Social Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor social skills have been show to have a direct relationship with behavioral and academic underachievement.</li> <li>• Students that are exposed to longer periods of interventions during early grade levels will have made greater positive rewards both socially and academically.</li> <li>• Students taught in a cooperative environment has more tolerance of a</li> </ul>

	<p>student with special needs that students taught in a competitive environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning social skills, behavior techniques, and building positive peer relationships can help people with behavior problems to attend school and live in typical community settings that would not have been imagined many years ago.</li> <li>• Many students do not get a real opportunity to practice improving their behavior.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Behavior Management</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of behavior intervention programs with high fidelity has show to be very effective and linked to marked improvements in student and staff behavior.</li> <li>• Many behavior programs have 3 elements: (a) prevention/teaching; (b) identification, intervention, and rewards for appropriate behavior; and (c) effective fair and consistent responses to inappropriate behavior.</li> <li>• School-wide behavior intervention programs generally have 3 tiers: (a) entire school training for Tier 1; (b) small group behavior instruction for Tier 2; and (c) individual behavior instruction for Tier 3.</li> <li>• Employ a proactive classroom management response with a strong antecedent-based component instead of a reactive response associated towards discipline problems.</li> <li>• Effective classroom management is needed to prevent disruptive behaviors that take the teacher's and students' attention away from instruction and learning.</li> <li>• Legislature pressure on schools to prevent disruptive and violent behaviors has contributed to the popularity of preventive intervention programs.</li> <li>• Acceptable behavior intervention approaches rates humanistic approach being first, behavioral approach being second, and pragmatic approach for handling disruptive behavior being third.</li> <li>• The foundation of behavior management is based on two concepts: positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Parent and Teacher Training</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent training has shown significant positive effect on challenging and disruptive behavior problems demonstrated by their students.</li> <li>• Schools with high regard for their principal that implemented a school-wide positive behavior intervention and support plan with fidelity shows a higher degree of success than schools with the principal did not actively participate in the training and implementation.</li> <li>• School personnel trained in school-wide positive behavior intervention and support plan showed a significant reduction in office referrals, suspensions, and referrals to special education for behavior evaluation.</li> </ul>

#### **4. Discussion**

Following is the summarization of the major themes that emerged from my analysis of the 59 articles I have included in this meta-synthesis. In this summarization, I have connected these emergent themes to my teaching practice and my professional experiences.

##### *4.1. Social climate in the classroom, school, and community*

The classroom is where the students spend most of their school day. Due to the majority of time by a student is spent in the classroom it can be associated with student aggression that in turn has a negative effect on student learning. It is believed that schools with higher percentages of free and reduced lunches are associated with schools in a lower socio-economic area. It is also mentioned that character, social, and behavior education programs can inspire students to make changes in their lives.

As a special education collaborating teacher, I co-teach with the teachers on my four-person team. Some of the students on my caseload as well as other students on the team have behavioral issues they are working to overcome. We work as a team in the classroom and in the halls during unstructured times to observe, monitor, and modify their behaviors. I am finding that with the expectations varying between the classrooms that intensity of the behaviors will vary based on the expectations of the students in that setting. The socio-economic differences also have an effect on the student's behavior. I have noticed that a higher percentage of students that reside on the military base have more office referrals than the students that reside in the more affluent areas of Eagle River. I spend time talking to the students that have been sent to the office asking them what happened then keep the conversation going by using Socratic questioning to draw out their thinking about why they got in trouble. This time spent with the student shows a caring for the welfare of that student and promotes a positive relationship with

the student in the classroom, hallway, and community.

#### *4.2. Challenging behaviors*

Problem behaviors exhibited by some students is a constant concern in schools and classrooms with some teachers feeling ill prepared to deal with these behaviors. The bad behaviors are supported by both positive reinforcements (e. g. bantering with other students in the classroom) and negative reinforcements (e. g. being removed from the classroom thereby escaping from the lesson being taught). A tendency has been noted that these behaviors will escalate over time if left untreated. Behavior analysis can help identify the causes and rewards of problem behavior whether the behaviors are environmentally or biologically based.

I have noticed in the school where I am teaching most of the staff would be considered veteran teachers with highly adaptive classroom management skills. When a new teacher is hired into the building, the veteran teachers will assist them in developing management skills that fit the teaching environment thus reducing the feeling of being ill prepared for the new teacher. When I am with students as an affective skills teacher I watch for signs of unhappiness or sadness that might contribute to challenging behaviors. When the student is having difficulties with friends or at home the turmoil they feel could turn outward and manifest itself in disruptive or violent behavior.

#### *4.3. Social skills*

Development of social skills for students is one of the first steps of developing positive interactive relationships with others. Students must be able to observe appropriate social skills and when these skills are not learned through the student observations and life experiences these skills must be taught independently. Once these skills are learned the students must have an opportunity to practice and demonstrate the acquired social skills; a good environment to

practice and develop the skills would be in a cooperative rather than a competitive environment.

During my affective skills class, I strive to build cooperation to reduce the competitive tension in the classroom. This helps to build cohesive bonds among the students thus strengthening their social skills among each other and reduce rivalry. When something happens, whether it is in one of classrooms, hallway, or on the bus, I ask their thoughts on, "How did this escalate to the level that I know about it? What other approach could have been taken? What has been learned?" Role-playing is another strategy that I use when showing the students how a positive reaction to a situation might look like, feel like, and be able to recognize a similar situation when presented to them. This gives them more social tools to deal with situations that are similar in nature when they occur.

#### *4.4. Behavior management*

There are three tiers generally recognized when looking at school-wide behavior programs. Tier one is training for the entire school and explanations of the rules. After the initial introduction of the school level expectations an occasional reminder would be needed. Tier two is small group instruction when a group of students are straying away from the behavior plan or individual classroom lessons. Tier three is individual instruction to students that have repeat offences for disruptive behaviors; this group will be the majority of the disruptions in the classroom and hallways. For classroom management, a proactive approach is desired to truncate the undesirable behavior by the teacher being able to recognize the antecedents of the disruptive behavior then reward the desired behavior using a humanistic approach as it occurs and develops. The schools are under pressure from the legislature to find means to avert violent and disruptive behaviors.

I am generally involved in what would be considered tier two and tier three of behavior

intervention at my school by teaching affective skills to special needs students that have behavioral and social goals identified in their individualized education program (IEP). The students are taught how to interact with each other through analyzing situations they might encounter and how to react to the circumstances they meet by using the *WhyTry* school violence prevention program. In addition to the affective skills class I teach, I collaborate on the team where these students are assigned. This gives me the opportunity to observe peer interaction in the academic classroom and interact with the students on a daily basis. This daily contact allows me to see changes in behavior when it occurs and advise the teaching team how they should interact with the student. One of my students has a particular smirk that I spot when he has forgotten to take his medicine; if I do not notice this nuance, by the third period of the day he is in the office with a referral. I approach the students in a humanistic manner to help them understand the behaviors in their life, and then I assist them in understanding the consequence of their behaviors.

#### *4.5. Parent and teacher training*

Parenting is a career that requires no training for most of the people. As a result parents use what they know or have been exposed to for instilling a sense of values and appropriate behaviors in their children. When the students are having difficulties with behavior management, parent training has a significant degree of success in effecting maladjusted behaviors in their children. In addition to training parents, teacher training is a critical to the success of behavior programs. One factor that radiates through the literature dealing with individual and school-wide behavior programs is that if the program is taught and implemented with fidelity by the teachers and staff the program has a higher rate of succeeding than if teachers and staff fortuitously implemented the program.

I have had some parents ask me about how they would get their child to behave in school and at home. I generally respond by advising them of some parenting books and directing them to the Students, Educators, and Parents (STEP) Center at the Anchorage School District main office to register for parenting classes and check out parenting materials to study. I also tell them that I follow three simple universal rules when dealing with students and people in general. Those rules are responsibility for living, consequences for their actions, and rewards for their successes. So if the student does not bathe for a week the consequence will be other students shunning him or her. If the student takes pride in self and dresses appropriately the rewards might be in the form of compliments from others thus rewarding their success. The same holds true with behaviors. When the student chooses to use the behavior appropriate for their age and circumstance, reward them. When training for new ideas of behavior management is being offered, I am one of the first to volunteer. I believe that training is essential to improving oneself for the good of the students being taught.

## **5. Conclusion**

This meta-synthesis has brought to the forefront the many aspects of social emotional learning as well as the programs teaching those skills noting the common characteristics that make them successful. I am able to recognize many aspects of social emotional learning from observing the behaviors in the classrooms where I have intervened. What I did not realize was the universal connections throughout the schools as it was discussed in the studies and articles. I will use this knowledge in my and my teammates' classrooms to assist in diverting problem behaviors while building self-confidence in the students around me. Teaching with fidelity will be the key component that will assist my students in being able to interact with adults and other students without confrontation.

Social emotional programs come in and out of favor as the politics surrounding them fluctuates. The programs that are in vogue today may not be as popular the next year. In saying this, slightly different versions of behavior intervention programs are developed on a regular basis with slightly differing emphasis. Currently, in the Anchorage School District, the WhyTry program is the one currently in vogue.

From the literature that I have analyzed, I feel safe to say that a school-wide implementation of a behavior intervention program is more successful than a single implementation due to the student involvement and the consistency between the various classes. Based on my observations at Gruening Middle School, I can state that when I can teach a concept that is not followed through by the other teachers; the behavior that is designated to be extinguished will continue to occur outside of my classroom. As a result of this lack of continuity across the environments the behavior is not extinguished, but has instead simply modified the circumstance in which the behavior occurs. This being said, the longevity of the success rate of a program is directly connected to how the program is being implemented. If the program is implemented with fidelity across the school environment the chances are increased for a long-term success rate to occur.

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