Investing in the Future:
Addressing Gaps in Social and Emotional Well-being
for Youth in BC

by
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Abstract

Social and emotional learning (SEL) initiatives have become popular in schools due to research consistently demonstrating their positive influence on student well-being. Although school districts in British Columbia (BC) have taken great steps toward improving SEL for students, some neighbourhoods continue to face lower well-being while others flourish. This study utilizes secondary data analysis and semi-structured interviews to identify neighbourhoods experiencing lower well-being and to understand key strengths and weaknesses in implementing SEL programs. In order of priority, I recommend increasing cultural knowledge and social and emotional competency for teachers by dedicating professional development days for training and workshops, integrating social and emotional learning into physical education classes, and implementing a province-wide program to promote social and emotional learning for students in BC.

Keywords: Social and emotional learning; Well-being; Students; Socio-cultural diversity; visible minority
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
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<tr>
<td>CASEL</td>
<td>Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning</td>
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<td>HELP</td>
<td>Human Early Learning Partnership</td>
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<td>MDI</td>
<td>Middle Years Development Instrument</td>
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<td>PE</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
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<td>Pro-D</td>
<td>Professional Development Days</td>
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<td>UBC</td>
<td>University of British Columbia</td>
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## Glossary

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>Social and Emotional Learning</td>
<td>The process of “acquiring and effectively applying the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to recognize and manage emotions; developing caring and concern for others; making responsible decisions; establishing positive relationships; and handling challenging situations capably” (Guyn Cooper Research Associates, 2013, p. 1).</td>
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<td>Well-Being Index</td>
<td>This “index combines MDI measures relating to children’s physical health and social and emotional development that are of critical importance during the middle years. These are: Optimism, Happiness, Self-Esteem, Absence of Sadness, and General Health. Scores from these five measures are combined and reported by three categories of well-being, providing a holistic summary of children’s mental and physical health” (Human Early Learning Partnership &amp; University of British Columbia, 2018, p. 19).</td>
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<td>Thriving</td>
<td>Children who are thriving are those who report “positive responses on at least 4 of the 5 measures of well-being” (HELP &amp; UBC, 2018 p. 20).</td>
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<td>Mindfulness</td>
<td>Mindfulness refers to an ability to focus on thoughts, feelings, or perceptions that arise moment to moment in a cognitive, nonelaborative, and emotionally nonreactive way, that is “paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally” (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015, p. 53).</td>
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<td>Visible Minority</td>
<td>The term visible minority refers to the ethnic group a person belongs to as defined by the Employment Equity Act (1995). The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as “persons other than aboriginal peoples who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour” (Statistics Canada, 2019, Definitions and Concepts section, para. 1). The visible minority population consists mainly of the following groups “South Asia, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese” (Statistics Canada, 2019).</td>
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Executive Summary

Policymakers and educators recognize social and emotional learning (SEL) as essential to child development (Guyn Cooper Research Associates, 2013, p. 3). This study explores SEL in British Columbia (BC) and the gaps that exist within the current system in which children report varying degrees of well-being. This study addresses a particular policy problem, which is that many children living in diverse communities, particularly those with more visible minorities, experience lower social and emotional well-being than their peers living in less diverse neighbourhoods.

To better understand social and emotional well-being in BC, the study utilized literature review, jurisdictional scan, middle-years development instrument (MDI), along with demographic data, (HELP, n.d.-b), and expert interviews. The literature review provided an overview of the benefits of SEL within a school climate and as lifelong skills (Guyn Cooper Research Associates, 2013, p. 6). The jurisdictional scan indicated that most schools and ministries are incorporating aspects of SEL into the curriculum. This illustrates that educators seek to address health from a more inclusive perspective. The MDI and demographic data confirmed that some neighbourhoods were experiencing higher well-being than others (HELP, n.d.-a). The interviews highlighted key strengths and weaknesses of implementing SEL in classroom settings.

The report discusses three themes from the interviews in detail. First, participants highlighted the importance of collecting data. Second, all participants voiced concern relating to teacher burnout and the amount of stress teachers face, which has a direct impact on integrating SEL into a day-to-day setting. Lastly, when asked about the MDI data and the differences that exist within neighbourhoods, interviewees acknowledged that differences did exist. However, the individuals interviewed were unsure of how to best tackle this. Some service providers expressed a desire for more knowledge around areas of cultural competency to better cater to individuals from diverse communities.

Three policy options were chosen for analysis:
1. Increasing cultural and SEL competency for teachers.
2. Integrating SEL into physical education classes.
3. Mindfulness programme supported by BC government.
I used five criteria to compare and evaluate my policy options. My primary criterion was equity, other criteria included effectiveness, minimizing cost, administrative ease, and stakeholder acceptance. Based on the analysis, this study recommends policy Option 1: Increasing cultural and SEL competency for all teachers. This policy addresses the need for SEL in a way that ensures that it incorporates aspects of cultural knowledge, helping to better direct SEL for neighbourhoods that experience lower well-being by shaping SEL to the population it is being directed towards.
Chapter 1.  Introduction

The concept of health has been widening to include aspects of physical, mental, and emotional well-being that were once neglected. As research becomes more evident, society at large is becoming more aware of the dangers of overlooking the long-term impacts of mental and emotional health (Durlak, Dymnicki, Taylor, Weissberg, & Schellinger, 2011, p. 420). One of the key areas that schools have targeted is building social and emotional learning skills into the curriculum, which has resulted in success for children in the academic arena, and helped them learn soft skills that can be utilized in the workplace and beyond (Guyn Cooper Research Associates, 2013, p. 6). Social and emotional learning (SEL) is described by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL, n.d.) as the process of “acquiring and effectively applying the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to recognize and manage emotions; developing caring and concern for others; making responsible decisions; establishing positive relationships; and handling challenging situations capably” (Guyn Cooper Research Associates, 2013, p. 1).

Researchers have found that “social and emotional skills (SES) can be learned, and they have provided direction about the most effective ways to teach these skills with a view to preventing school failure” (Guyn Cooper Research Associates, 2013, p. 3). Evidence-based SEL programs have demonstrated an increase in educational attainment, thereby prompting better employment rates and a larger contribution to the Canadian economy (Guyn Cooper Research Associates, 2013, p. 2). Research also indicates that SES are as important as cognitive skills to success in school and beyond (Swartz, 2017, p. 522). Additionally, SES, also known as soft skills, may be more malleable than cognitive skills, especially in early and middle childhood. Promoting social and emotional competence in schools can help facilitate improved cognitive skills, better management of emotions, and satisfaction with life beyond school (Guyn Cooper Research Associates, 2013). Once learnt, these skills can result in higher social and emotional well-being for students.

SEL is becoming more popular in BC. The middle years development instrument, also known as the MDI data, “a population-level research tool” (HELP, n.d.-b, “Why Look at Populations,” para. 1), are completed by most school districts in BC; this instrument
calls for children in Grades 4 and 7 to report on their own social and emotional well-being and general health. As such, the MDI data report on students’ physical health, connectedness, social and emotional development, school experiences, and use of after-school time. This is used by school administrators to track well-being of children within their school district. Through exploring the MDI and demographic data, I found it notable that there was a correlation between levels of well-being and percentage of visible minority within neighbourhoods. Specifically, students who live in diverse cultural backgrounds continue to report lower well-being than their peers, as indicated in MDI reports 2018 (Human Early Learning Partnership, 2018a). For example, in neighbourhoods such as Deep-Cove Dollarton 15% (HELP, n.d.-a) of the population is from a visible minority group and total students reporting that they are thriving is 57% (Human Early Learning Partnership, 2017e). This is drastically different to other neighbourhoods such as Kensington-Cedar Cottage, where the total visible minority is 64% (HELP, n.d.-a) and students reported thriving is 24% (Human Early Learning Partnership, 2017a). This indicates that higher percentage of visible minority in neighbourhoods is correlated with lower well-being.

When looking at the MDI data, it became evident to me that there were greater differences within school districts than between school districts. Therefore, in this capstone, I specifically focus on identifying neighbourhoods with high visible minority in Metro Vancouver and analyze the MDI data along with demographic data to better understand neighbourhoods reporting high well-being versus neighbourhoods that report low well-being. Additionally, for this project I conducted interviews with experts in the social and emotional field to understand the current approaches to SEL in BC. These findings from the study demonstrated that although BC is dedicating efforts to increase well-being for students, SEL programs often overlook the needs of a diverse population (Cramer & Castro-Olivo, 2016). This indicates that SEL cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach. By looking at policy options and evaluating them against specific criteria, the main objective of this study was to provide policy recommendation that have positive influence and will enhance the well-being of students from diverse cultural backgrounds.
Chapter 2. Background

2.1. What is Social and Emotional Well-Being

Early intervention programs for children and youth are on the rise (Swartz, 2017). As more research becomes readily available, various institutions and schools are investing in programs that help promote children's educational outcomes. Specifically, research is being conducted on the benefits of early intervention programs and their ability to help "predict success in school, labor market, and life" (Belfield et al., 2015, p. 509) and increase mental health and well-being for individuals and their families. A prominent area of early intervention is known as SEL, which refers to the ability of individuals to regulate their emotions, such as anger and frustration, and to use skills learned in programs implemented in a school setting to guide their behaviour and act accordingly. The knowledge and research surrounding SEL is implemented in schools to better prepare youth for the future. It is essential to have preventative strategies, especially directed toward school-aged children, not only to reduce future costs for Canadian taxpayers but also to ensure the well-being of Canadian society. Children who are able to do this successfully tend to fare better in their adult lives than those who are unable to hone these skills.

SEL focuses on five key areas or competencies: self-awareness, responsible decision making, relationship skills, social awareness, and self-management. First, self-awareness is the ability to "recognize one’s emotions and needs, as well as one’s strengths and values, which may be evidenced by self-efficacy" (Zins et al., as cited in Duong & Bradshaw, 2017, p. 539). Second, responsible decision making is "being able to make constructive choices about behavior based on societal norms and ethical standards" (Swartz, 2017, p. 521). Third, relationship skills are the ability of children to "establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships and to act in accordance with social norms. Competence in ... [these skills] involves communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively and seeking help when needed" (Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2015, p. 7). Fourth, social awareness is the ability to "understand social norms and being able to adopt the perspectives of and empathize with others" (Swartz, 2017, p. 521). Fifth, self-management includes the "skills and attitudes that help regulate
emotions and behaviours. They include the ability to delay gratification, manage stress, control impulses, and persevere through challenges to achieve personal educational goals” (Greenberg, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Durlak, 2017, p. 15).

In BC, social and emotional well-being and the general health of students are understood through a population-level survey tool named MDI (Human Early Learning Partnership, n.d.-b). School districts choose to participate in this survey administered by Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP), an organization dedicated to promoting well-being for kids located at the University of British Columbia (UBC). School districts then use the findings from the survey to track student well-being and implement policies and programs that would result in a positive influence in the lives of children.

2.2. Longitudinal Studies Proving SEL and its Benefits

Research undertaken to understand the advantages of SEL over the long term has helped to illustrate the benefits from SEL programming beyond schools. These longitudinal studies add to the empirical evidence needed by policymakers to support SEL programming in schools. Studies conducted by authors Hawkins, Kosterman, Catalano, Hill, and Abbott (2005) and Durlak et al. (2011) are examples of research that illustrated the long-term benefits of SEL program implementation.

Hawkins et al. (2005) conducted research in Seattle. In their study, a group of teachers and parents were given intervention methods to improve interpersonal skills in children attending elementary schools (Hawkins et al., 2005). The authors hypothesized that teaching students interpersonal skills at a young age would have positive outcomes later on in life (Hawkins et al., 2005, p. 26). They defined interpersonal skills as the ability to “recognize social influences to engage in problem behaviors; identify consequences of problem behaviors; generate and suggest alternatives; invite peer(s) to join in alternatives” (Hawkins et al., 2005, p. 27). In their study, the researchers taught interpersonal skills in varying degrees to different sample of students by teachers and parents (Hawkins et al., 2005). The study included three groups, one receiving full intervention, a late intervention, and a control group. Their longitudinal study, which consisted of a follow up with participants 9 years after the training to examine the impact of interpersonal training in schools, illustrated a positive influence of interpersonal training on mental health and well-being (Hawkins et al., 2005). Specifically, the group
that received the full intervention was better at managing emotions and self-reported as functioning well in their work environment than the group that received no intervention (Hawkins et al., 2005). Although the difference between the two groups was less statistically significant, the full-intervention group was also less likely to be involved in crime and to have used various substances (Hawkins et al., 2005, p. 25). Students in the control group fared the worst, facing higher levels of anxiety than groups that underwent an intervention (Hawkins et al., 2005, p. 29).

In another study, a meta-analysis involving 213 studies with a sample size of 270,034 students, the target population age group was from 5–18 years of age (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 409). The authors noted that by high school children are more disengaged in schools, lack empathy toward others, and are unable to provide a caring environment for others (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 405). Durlak et al. (2011) hypothesized that students receiving some form of SEL training would be able to build on skills, which would enable them to be more receptive toward their own emotions as well as those of others. The findings illustrated that, when compared to control groups, students who received SEL programming had improved scores in their skills, positive attitudes, and behaviours toward themselves and others. Additionally, this study demonstrated that students who receive SEL training improved their academic achievement by 11% relative to control group (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 417). This is because SEL teaches students to be self-aware, set goals, work through their stress, and learn to problem solve, enabling students to thrive in schools (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 417). Furthermore, the creation of a safe and inclusive space, which is created by SEL programming, allows children to learn and feel respected in the environment they learn in.

The studies discussed in this section highlighted that schools play a vital role in shaping a student’s life and can be a great environment to help develop emotional competence. The research reviewed also confirmed that SES can be taught in the classroom by school administrators, which have a positive impact on students and school community (Durlak et al., 2011).

### 2.3. Results of Benefit-Cost Analysis

As mentioned before, SEL programs offer students the ability to acquire soft skills that allow them to excel in their lifetimes. Some scholars are suspicious of the
financial benefits for society at large in implementing preventative programs at an early age. Within the SEL field, researchers have conducted cost-benefit analysis projects (Long, Brown, Jones, Aber, & Yates, 2015). These are undertaken to determine whether early intervention programs, such as SEL, outweigh the monetary costs associated with them. Although it is often hard to quantify soft skills, researchers have attempted measuring and quantifying the monetary benefits of SEL programming. For example, Belfield et al. (2015) and Long et al. (2015) have concluded that social benefits outweigh the monetary costs associated with various SEL program interventions.

Long et al.’s (2015) article titled “Cost Analysis of a School-Based Social and Emotional Learning and Literacy Intervention” and Belfield et al.’s (2015) article on “Economic Value of Social and Emotional Learning” described the importance of effective evidence-based programming. Some basic principles of benefit-cost analysis are applied to estimate the costs associated with social and emotional well-being, such as market valuation under which the researcher aggregates the cost of each program. Under this account, analysts consider the resources required to administer the program, such as teacher training (Belfield et al., 2015, p. 45). This allows stakeholders to see upfront cost of programs. In their study, Long et al. illustrated that there are higher costs in the program’s first year, since more resources are needed for a program’s implementation rather than for sustainment (p. 545). These higher costs could be due to a need for teacher training during the initial period. Nevertheless, despite initial costs, benefit-cost analysis illustrates the potential for SEL programs to yield a net-gain over time, specifically social benefits over time (Swartz, 2017). Costs were estimated using an ingredient method; within this account, costs were associated with teacher training, parent time, classroom space, and program material. Benefits were measured and were expressed through a net present value exercise (Belfield et al., 2015, p. 28). The benefits are measured under three categories: first, the immediate benefits; second, benefits gained in school; and, third, benefits gained in adulthood (Belfield et al. 2015, p. 15). In sum, Belfield et al. illustrated “the weighted average benefit-cost ratio across all six interventions with prior evidence of effectiveness indicates that identified benefits outweigh the costs by a factor of 11:1” (p. 46). In other words, for every $1 spent there is a net gain of $11. This illustrates that SEL programs and early SEL programming comes in many forms. Some SEL programs are administered separately, such as recreational programs, while other programs take place in a classroom setting. Under the market
valuation, it would be relatively simple to evaluate the net benefit for an after-school recreational activity. However, evaluating SEL programs could be complex, especially when programs are taught within a classroom setting.

Both Long et al.’s (2015) and Belfield et al.’s (2015) articles illustrated the need for benefit-cost analysis in the field of social policy, specifically regarding net gains of SEL. Both articles also considered the complexity surrounding the field of social policy and the need for clear, consistent principles that allow for the replication of studies (Belfield et al., 2015; Long et al., 2015). Additionally, consistent principles would beget validity in the social policy and early intervention field. The literature dictated that intervention methods directed toward students are cost-effective, especially in the long run (Belfield et al., 2015; Long et al., 2015). Therefore, a benefit-cost analysis is especially applicable to potential stakeholders, particularly for schools with administrators who are considering implementing SEL programs but are hesitant because of the costs associated with programming.

2.4. SEL in Schools

The 2016 Canadian Index of Wellbeing report stated that the “gap between economic growth and wellbeing is widening [for Canadians]” (University of Waterloo, 2016, p. 1). This illustrates the need to understand well-being of the Canadian population, and this project focused on understanding and increasing well-being amongst school-aged children. Researchers have viewed promoting SEL in school, especially targeting middle childhood, to be highly effective (Eccles, 1999). HELP (2018c) has defined middle childhood as encompassing children 6 to 12 years of age. This is because “middle childhood is a time of enormous physical, emotional, and cognitive growth, accompanied by changes in peer and adult relationships and, both home and school environments” (HELP, 2018c, p. 2). During these crucial years, also known as transitional years, some children thrive, whereas a significant number of others report a decline in their well-being (Eccles, 1999, p. 37). However, as longitudinal studies indicate, this downturn in well-being is avoidable (Durlak et al., 2011; Hawkins et al., 2005).

A report published by the Canadian government titled, The Health of Canada’s Young People: A Mental Health Focus, sought to better understand the social
determinants of health outcomes for school-aged children (Freeman, King, & Pickett, 2011). Freeman et al.’s (2011) report highlighted how home, school, peers, neighbourhood all impact a child’s well-being. For example, Freeman et al.’s report noted that among children in Grade 6, 35% of girls and 27% of boys reported high levels of emotional problems. These include feeling low, depressed, sad, helpless, or lonely (Freeman et al., 2011, p. 14). Considering children spend a majority of their time in school, a high level of stress and low emotional well-being contribute to overall decline in their general health, which also results in their school work suffering. McClelland, Tominey, Schmitt, and Duncan (2017) linked the ability to regulate emotions and positive school and community climate to higher literacy and math scores. This is essential, especially as the future success of children, such as employment, is based on their academic success in school (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Percentage of students reporting high levels of emotional problems by grade and gender, 2009/2010.

*Note.* From The Health of Canada’s Young People: A Mental Health Focus (p. 14, Graph 2.2), by Freeman et al., 2011, Ottawa, Canada: Public Health Agency of Canada. Copyright 2011 by the Public Health Agency of Canada. Adapted with permission.

It is also important to highlight that many students are skipping class or are unable to complete high school. In today’s world, completing high school is a necessary precondition to pursue higher education and to be successful in life. This illustrates the need for students, teachers, and community members to work together in order to ensure students are attending classes while also attaining appropriate skills to manage behaviours. Teachers have also reported that they are exhausted trying to control
students’ behaviour in a classroom setting and spend a considerable time doing so (Clunies-Ross, Little, & Kienhuis, 2008, p. 693). This is a distraction from schoolwork but also a contributing factor to teacher stress, which could impact teaching outcomes. Therefore, it is critical for SEL programs to be offered in a school setting in order to be accessible to all students.

2.5. SEL for Culturally Diverse Youth

Despite the increase in SEL programs, some researchers have voiced concerns about SEL programs. These researchers stated SEL programs often overlook the needs of students from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds (Cramer & Castro-Olivo, 2016). Some educators and administrators view SEL as a one-size-fits-all approach. Studies of programs indicate that SEL programs may be effective for some groups yet may have no positive impact on others (Garner, Mahatmya, Brown, & Vesely, 2014, p. 174). Educators, such as Simmons (2017), also claimed that SEL is just as effective for students of colour if curriculum and teachings within the classroom take into consideration students’ life experiences (para. 3). Therefore, in order to be effective to multicultural subpopulations, the SEL program must be culturally adaptive (Garner et al., 2014, p. 166). Despite the limited data relating to SEL for culturally diverse groups, there is evidence that dictates that culturally responsive programs have greater impact on students from diverse sociocultural backgrounds (Cramer & Castro, 2016, p. 127). This translates to students getting the necessary support needed to be successful in school and beyond.

In sum, working on the skills listed and described in this section help students have better engagement with their emotions and offer them the ability to manage and control their behaviours in the short and long term. As a result of SEL programming, children become more conscious of their emotions, which helps students to perceive events in a more positive light when dealing with a task or engaging in a conversation.
Chapter 3.  Policy Problem and Methodology

3.1. Policy Problem

This research examines a particular policy problem with SEL in BC, which is that many children living in diverse communities, particularly those with more visible minorities, experience lower social and emotional well-being than their peers living in less diverse neighbourhoods. The findings and policy problem primarily focused on Metro Vancouver school districts that participated in the MDI in 2018 (HELP, n.d.-b). The MDI data along with neighbourhood demographic data and socio-economic data offered explanatory factors that help illustrate the key differences and gaps between neighbourhoods that experience high well-being in contrast to those that report low well-being. The results, as illustrated in the next chapter, highlight that neighbourhoods with high well-being are those that are economically affluent with a lower population of visible minorities. In other words, SEL programming needs to be implemented in a more strategic manner to directly increase well-being of children across all neighbourhoods.

3.2. Methodology

In conducting this research, I utilized quantitative data to explore which neighbourhoods experienced higher well-being and further identified demographic data that would attribute to the differences between neighbourhoods. Furthermore, I used qualitative data, specifically semi-structured interviews to analyze strengths and weaknesses of SEL implementation in Metro Vancouver, as well as to better understand SEL in BC and the groundwork that is being done to improve child well-being. I used these methodologies to understand and evaluate policy options.

3.2.1. Literature Review

This project included a thorough literature review to understand the basic notions around SEL and research that indicates benefits, especially those targeted toward students. The literature review was presented in Chapter 2, which discussed the background of the research. This was seen as a necessary step in providing overview of findings that currently exist within this arena.
3.2.2. Jurisdictional Scan

I conducted a jurisdictional scan to review the practices adopted by other countries, nationally, and within school districts in BC. In order to focus the scan, the results were used to help narrow policy options. Furthermore, once attaining MDI reports, which were available online for BC (HELP, n.d.-b), I chose to focus this study on SEL in BC. This is because all school districts in BC emphasize some aspect of SEL as being necessary for student development, as represented and summarized in the next chapter. These are included in the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning (Government of BC, n.d.-d) and individual annual school plans. This review demonstrated that the BC Ministry of Education has been a role model in advancing and working toward greater incorporation of child well-being within a school environment.

3.2.3. Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis of Metro Vancouver school districts that participated in the MDI (HELP, n.d.-b) and reported online in 2018 for Grade-7 students. I combined the MDI data, which reported on well-being of students, along with the 2016 census data (HELP, n.d.-a). I specifically examined socio-economic and demographic data to determine if there were similarities and differences between neighbourhoods and to understand the underlying factors impacting neighbourhoods experiencing lower well-being. I accessed the data through the HELP (n.d.-a) website and further analyzed to evaluate if differences between and among districts as it pertains to well-being do exist for particular neighbourhoods.

3.2.4. Interviews

As part of this project, I conducted nine semi-structured interviews with experts in SEL field, including school counsellors, teachers, and members of organizations that deliver SEL-focused programs. All interviews were conducted on the phone and were 30- to 45-minutes long. To capture the data, I arranged for the interviews to be audio-recorded and transcribed. I also took notes during the interview. I used these qualitative interviews to further understand the complexities that lay within the implementation of SEL in a school setting. Participants had the option to be named in the report; some
chose to remain anonymous. In such cases I referred to individuals by their participant codes, assigned as Participant 1 through to Participant 9 (see Table 1).

Table 1. Interview Participants and Their Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Participant</th>
<th>Role/Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>School Counsellor in the Metro Vancouver area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>SEL coordinator in the Metro Vancouver area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>SEL coordinator in the Metro Vancouver area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>Program provider to schools, teachers and principals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>Teacher in the Metro Vancouver area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>Participant from Safer Schools Together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron Hertel (Participant 7)</td>
<td>Program Supervisor Social and Emotional Learning/Compassionate Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marna Macmillan (Participant 8)</td>
<td>Curriculum Coordinator – SEL and Middle Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel French (Participant 9)</td>
<td>Coordinator of Positive Mental Health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I conducted the interviews to provide more information about work that is being undertaken by experts in the field and to examine how different districts, program providers, and other key stakeholders are engaging in student well-being. Eight out of nine participants were from BC. Ron Hertel was the only participant outside of BC. I chose to include him in this research project as a participant because he could contribute vital information for child well-being.

3.2.5. Limitations

In this study, I utilized census data from 2016 (HELP, n.d.-a) and MDI data 2018 (HELP, n.d.-b), specifically looking at visible minorities within a neighborhood. Gender differences were significant in the report by Public Health Agency of Canada, however, this capstone had limited data on exploring these differences. Furthermore, due to time constraints, I did not explore other demographics or socio-economic data such as unemployment rate or prevalence of low-income families, which could be useful in understanding well-being of children. I specifically looked at social and emotional well-being, but are other areas of well-being are equally important for children which are presented in the MDI report, such as school connectedness and use of after school time. I also limited my findings and policy options to how a school setting impacts emotional well-being. However, other factors such as family norms and community play an integral part in the social and emotional well-being of children.
Chapter 4. Results

4.1. Jurisdictional Scan

4.1.1. Recent Initiatives: England and Mindfulness

As SEL research becomes more significant and widely understood, educators and administrators are willing to invest in such practices. For example, recently, the Ministry of Education in the United Kingdom announced the steps they would be taking to address social and emotional well-being of students by implementing mindfulness strategies in approximately 370 schools (Magra, 2019). Mindfulness “is a state of being aware of your own mind, at any given moment” (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2016, p. 88). Implementing mindfulness can help children self-regulate, which has a positive impact on children’s behaviour, and also helps teacher and students manage stress and anxiety (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2016, pp. 99, 104). Relatedly, a study conducted by Schonert-Reichl et al. (2015) provided evidence that SEL programming that incorporates mindfulness “can yield promising and noteworthy findings with regard to positive behavioral and cognitive change in children (p. 61). The British Education Secretary, Damian (as cited in Magra, 2019) stated, “Children will start to be introduced gradually to issues around mental health, well-being and happiness right from the start of primary school” (para. 6). The ministry chose to take this step after the “National Health Service found that one in eight children in England between the ages of 5 and 19 suffered from at least one mental disorder at the time of their assessment in 2017” (Magra, 2019, para. 7). Therefore, investment in mindfulness practices, a key component of SEL, is expected to decrease the future costs associated with mental health disorders (Magra, 2019).

4.1.2. The Canadian Context

Numerous provinces in Canada are taking steps toward becoming more aware and integrating SEL into the curriculum. Alberta, Manitoba, and British Columbia all aim to ensure that students are developing and achieving literacy and numeracy skills whilst also focusing on notion of SEL (Government of BC, n.d.-b). These key goals within these
provinces help illustrate the nurturing environment needed for student success in the classroom and beyond.

In recent years, the Alberta Ministry of Education has shifted focus to a more holistic framework toward student health and wellness. Particularly, in its Framework for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education (Government of Alberta, Education, 2009), the ministry recognized that a school environment is a place to enhance student well-being. Wellness for students is described as embodying elements of “emotional, intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual well-being” (Government of Alberta, Education, 2009, p. 7). Furthermore, school districts, such as Calgary Catholic School District (2016), are emphasizing the importance of “resiliency and mental health” (p. 24) skills. One of the strategies to achieve greater well-being for students is to ensure that at least three teachers in each school have some sort of training in SEL through direct training, which can be a useful resource for the whole school (Calgary Catholic School District, 2016). Within the health and physical education curriculum, four key areas are highlighted: healthy choices (nutrition), active living, student resilience, mental health and wellness (Government of Alberta, Education, 2018). This is promoted through recognizing that emotional and spiritual well-being play an integral part in overall student well-being.

The Government of Manitoba (n.d.-a) has also done exceptional work to shed light on child development and investment in child rearing. This provincial government has focused on middle childhood, recognizing these years as crucial to a child’s development. The Government of Manitoba (n.d.-a) has chosen to focus on nurturing and extending existing skills as well as including wider concepts of health. Furthermore, in order to assist with middle childhood, the province has implemented multiple evidence-based programs centred on children and adults within schools. Within their physical education curriculum, aspects of SEL are clearly outlined. For example, the Personal and Social Management (Government of Manitoba, n.d.-b) framework focuses on self-awareness, responsible decision making, relationships, and goals, which are all skills that can be learned. In order to assess these, students are taught self-management, goal setting, and conflict resolution skills. For these assessments, the Government of Manitoba (n.d.-b) has outlined various indicators, such as “show a positive attitude” (p. 114), “be sensitive to the needs and abilities of others” (p. 114), and “show a willingness to play fairly and work cooperatively/collaboratively with others” (p. 114).
4.1.3. SEL in British Columbia

Lastly, British Columbia’s Ministry of Education is leading the way in emphasizing the role of SEL as integral aspect to supporting children’s health. This focus has been reflected in their new curriculum in which part of physical health includes an emphasis on mental well-being (Government of BC, n.d.-a). The ministry’s new goal is to support health and well-being from a wider perspective. Under the new curriculum, various factors of SEL are emphasized, including social responsibility, personal awareness, which encompasses showing love, addressing self-determination, and working toward self-regulation (Government of BC, n.d.-a). The Ministry of Education presents goals for school districts in BC and allows individual districts to aspire to a more inclusive health model, one that advances student well-being.

As a province, BC is taking steps to address mental health and well-being for school-aged children. This can be seen as a positive step taken by the government to promote well-being and highlights a key issue that is on the ministry’s agenda. Each district is committed to integrating SEL within a classroom setting or in after-school programs. Furthermore, in order to make districts accountable, each district lays out their plans of action in a document named the Framework to Enhancing Student Learning (Government of BC, n.d.-b). Included within each district’s report are specific principles outlined that target social and emotional learning. This framework is mandated by the Government of BC (n.d.-b) to reflect “a public commitment by education partners to work together to continuously improve student learning” (para. 1). Additionally, individual schools also partake in reporting the school’s strengths and areas that need work in their annual report and school plan. Many of these plans include goals to place more attention on student learning and identifying their social and emotional skills through the MDI results (HELP, 2018b).

Hymel, Low, Starosta, Gill, and Schonert-Reichl (2017) illustrated the ways mental health and SEL influence each other as well as the approach taken by the Government of BC to improve well-being in schools. Their particular article included a timeline of events that have taken place in BC that promote well-being in schools since 2012 (Hymel et al., 2017), including the SEL focus in the new BC curriculum, the SEL objectives in BC teacher education, and Erase, an anti-bullying program (Government of BC, n.d.-c). These steps have been taken in response to “Mental Health Commission of
Canada identifying child and youth mental health as a priority for the transformation of mental health systems in Canada [in 2012]” (Hymel et al., 2017, p. 1). Hymel et al. also highlighted various organizations in BC that advocate for mental health and well-being, these include organizations such as HELP and Social Emotional Learning BC. This list of resources indicates that educators, researchers, policymakers, and community organizations are committed to improving well-being of children in BC.

4.2. Data Analysis

4.2.1. Understanding Well-being in Metro Vancouver

In BC, the MDI data (HELP, n.d.-a) are integral for understanding key gaps and strengths of neighbourhoods and school districts pertaining to SEL and middle childhood development.

For this study, I specifically looked at school districts in the Metro Vancouver. The inclusion criteria consisted of school districts that participated in the MDI (HELP, n.d.-b) and had reports available online in 2018 for students in Grade 7. These districts are Burnaby, Coquitlam, New Westminster, North Vancouver, Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows, Sea to Sky, Vancouver, and West Vancouver. The MDI data provided a clear snapshot of what students in Grade 7 had reported on their well-being across the Metro Vancouver region. Some districts have been part of the MDI for a number of years. For example, Vancouver has participated since 2010, Coquitlam since 2011, and Burnaby since 2014 (HELP, 2018b). As Coquitlam, Burnaby, and Vancouver had been part of the MDI data collection for a number of years, their data provided a starting point to understand gaps between and within school districts.

For this project, I looked at the well-being index. Specifically, I am concerned with the percentage of children reported as “thriving”, defined as children who reported “positive responses on at least 4 of the 5 measures of well-being” (HELP & UBC, 2018 p. 20).

The Well-Being Index combines MDI measures relating to children’s physical health and social and emotional development that are of critical importance during the middle years. These are: 1) Optimism, 2) Happiness, 3) Self-Esteem, 4) Absence of Sadness, and 5) General Health. Scores from these five measures are combined and reported by
three categories of well-being, providing a holistic summary of children’s mental and physical health. (HELP & UBC, 2018, p. 19)

Table 2 presents a comparison of data from the Vancouver, Coquitlam, and Burnaby districts, which provided baseline data. Although this index includes response for children’s general health, the index largely consists of social and emotional development measures, therefore chosen as a basis for analysis.

Table 2. Distribution of Well-Being Index, by Selected School Districts – MDI Survey, 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indices</th>
<th>Vancouver</th>
<th>Coquitlam</th>
<th>Burnaby</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Well-Being Index</td>
<td>Thriving</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium to High Well-Being</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Well-Being</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As shown in Table 2, the districts were on par relating to how students had rated their well-being. For example, 35% of the students reported thriving in Vancouver (HELP, 2017a). Burnaby is only a percentage point ahead at 36% of students reporting that they are thriving (HELP, 2017b), and Coquitlam is 2% ahead with 37% of the students reporting that they are thriving (HELP, 2017d). The overall data indicated that the districts are not experiencing stark differences, which led me to investigate what might be happening within school districts, specifically looking at the neighbourhood level data.

4.2.2. Visible Minority and Well-being in Metro Vancouver

Through years of collaboration, the Census Bureau along with researchers at Harvard and Brown have pinpointed neighbourhoods that appear to be lagging behind when it comes to student success (Badger & Bui, 2018). In their article published in the New York Times, Badger and Bui (2018) highlighted, “Where children live matters deeply in whether they prosper as adults” (para. 4). Specifically, children who live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are less likely to succeed in life, which, along with other outcomes, means less earning potential as an adult (Badger & Bui, 2018). Researchers indicated that the standard SEL approach (Garner et al., 2014), while useful for some students, does not always help elevate the lives of individuals who may be growing in a more socio-culturally diverse neighbourhood (Badger & Bui, 2018). Authors noted that
although there is an increase in the adoption of SEL programs in schools, there remains a subpopulation of students who are left out or do not benefit from these programs (Garnet et al. 2014).

Examining the MDI data with demographic data and socio-economic data could reveal the key differences between neighbourhoods with high well-being versus those with low well-being. As Badger and Bui (2018) reported in their New York Times article, “Neighborhoods Shape Children for Life,” neighbourhoods clearly determine how successful kids are. This is essential to understand because SEL and skills being taught in BC schools must be integrated in a way that address the student populations that experience low well-being.

To better understand characteristics of neighbourhood, I compared the top five neighbourhoods in the Metro Vancouver area that reported high well-being to the bottom five neighbourhoods, specifically looking at the well-being index. Looking at various variables, such as percentage of immigrant population, median household income, and percentage of visible minority within each neighbourhood, the results indicate that there are differences between neighbourhoods that are experiencing relatively higher well-being.
Figure 2. Top five neighbourhoods experiencing high well-being and bottom five neighbourhoods experiencing low well-being in Metro Vancouver.


Figure 2 represents the top five neighbourhoods experiencing high well-being and bottom five neighbourhoods experiencing low well-being in Metro Vancouver. Specifically, Figure 2 illustrates the percentage of visible minority in each neighbourhood. Visible minority relates to individuals who identify as South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin America, Arab, South East Asia, West Asian, Korean, and Japanese (HELP, 2018a). The neighbourhoods experiencing high well-being tend to have a lower percentage of visible minority, whereas those with low well-being have higher percentage of visible minority. Specifically, Deep-Cove Dollarton reported 57% of students thriving with a visible minority at 15% (HELP, 2017e, 2018a), whereas Kensington-Cedar Cottage reported only 24% of students thriving with 64% visible minority in the neighbourhood (HELP, 2017a, 2018a). This 33-percentage point gap in percent “thriving” is significant and illustrates the high negative correlation between well-being and share of visible minorities. Other socio-economic characteristics almost
certainly explain some of the strengths and differences. For example, the median family income in the top five neighbourhoods on average is $115,442 (calculated based on data from HELP, 2018a) and the median family income in the bottom five neighbourhood on average is $86,496 (calculated based on data from HELP, 2018a). Furthermore, percentage of immigration also tends to be higher in neighbourhoods that are experiencing low well-being (See table 3).

4.2.3. Visible Minority and Well-Being in Vancouver

As previously noted, neighbourhoods within a school district experience more differences than the school districts themselves. I confirmed this by taking a closer look at Vancouver (HELP, 2017a). Some neighbourhoods, often those with higher median income, lower visible minority, and lower student population, tend to have higher well-being among students.

Figure 3. Vancouver neighbourhoods well-being comparison.
Note. Data compiled from the 2017-2018 Grade-7 MDI data (HELP, 2017a, 2018a).
Looking at Vancouver School District, with a sample of 2,572 students and participation rate of 71% (HELP, 2017a), students in Kitsilano and Cambie-Riley Park rated their well-being higher than students in Renfrew Collingwood and Kensington-Cedar Cottage. Neighbourhoods such as Strathcona were removed from the graph in Figure 3, as I chose to limit the criteria to neighbourhoods that have at least 60 students or more. There is a clear negative correlation between the percentage of visible minority students and percentage of students thriving in neighbourhoods. Furthermore, as Table 3 illustrates, neighbourhoods experiencing higher well-being also tend to have a high median income and a low percentage of immigrant populations. These are some of the demographic and socio-economic factors that explain the key differences among neighbourhoods and lead to the understanding that students from culturally diverse groups may be facing additional challenges in and outside of school that are hindering their well-being. Specifically, as Cramer and Castro-Olivo (2016) elaborated, these challenges could be “perceived discrimination, low socioeconomic status, low sense of school belonging, and acculturative stress” (p. 121).

### Table 3. Neighbourhood Demographic and Socio-economic Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Median Family Income ($)</th>
<th>% of Immigrants</th>
<th>%, Visible Minority</th>
<th>% of Students Reported Thriving</th>
<th>No. of Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kitsilano</td>
<td>43,050</td>
<td>109,579</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambie – Riley park</td>
<td>30,520</td>
<td>109,304</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renfrew – Collingwood</td>
<td>51,530</td>
<td>77,148</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>77.9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kensington – Cedar Cottage</td>
<td>49,165</td>
<td>86,679</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Data compiled from the 2016 NHS data (HELP, 2018a).*

Understanding MDI and socio-economic data allows educators to see that differences between neighbourhoods do not exist in a vacuum. The data comparisons presented in this section shed light on how SEL programs could be beneficial if modified to address specific needs in targeted neighbourhoods. This would result in general well-being of youth within that community to flourish. The data confirm that neighbourhoods are experiencing different levels of well-being (HELP, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d, 2017e, 2017f). Although it is beneficial that many school districts are participating in the
MDI, there is a growing consciousness that SEL needs to be adapted to a certain neighbourhood in order to realize the desired benefits for children.

4.3. Interview Themes

In addition to analyzing the MDI data (HELP, n.d.-b), I conducted nine semi-structured interviews with experts in the field to gain greater insight into SEL, how it is being used across BC, as well as considerations on how to improve SEL programs to provide better outcomes for all youth. Several themes arose in the interviews. In this section, I discuss three of these themes at length. These themes surfaced through my thematic analysis of the data utilizing Braun and Clarke’s (2006) approach detailed in their journal article “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology.” During the interview process, I took handwritten notes during each session. Next, I transcribed the interview with my participants. The transcription process was helpful in engaging with the data in more depth.

The following five themes are apparent from the thematic analysis:

1. The importance of understanding SEL and setting a standard Language.
2. Data as a means to understand student population and better direct resources.
3. Teacher burnout and support must be a priority.
4. Collaboration with other stakeholder is key to student success.
5. The needs of a diverse student body must be addressed.

Although multiple themes were recognized, only three themes, which I deemed integral to addressing gaps in SEL, will be discussed in this paper – Theme 1: Data as a catalyst for change, Theme 2: Teacher burnout and support, and Theme 3: Addressing the needs of a diverse student body. Most participants discussed these themes and thought them important in the SEL field, especially in Vancouver.

4.3.1. Theme 1: Data as a Catalyst for Change

The MDI and understanding of what it entails has really taken off in Vancouver, this has had significant impact on how educators relate to and
understand student well-being. Really, it's a catalyst for change, allowing school districts and teachers to engage in student well-being. (Marna Macmillan)

Many school districts within BC take the MDI survey (HELP, n.d.-b), as mentioned earlier in this report. Participants who work at the district level saw this as a “catalyst for change” (Marna Macmillan). Data are able to help identify strengths and weaknesses of the school district, right down to the neighbourhood level. This helps school district staff plan and direct resources where they are needed as well as to learn the capacity at which they are needed. The MDI data have enabled progressive policy change and allow for resource distribution in a more useful manner (HELP, n.d.-b).

For example, one of the participants stated,

Before the MDI we were quite unaware of what services the students needed. We knew that after-school programs are a key source of improving wellness, we also knew that nutrition and sleep are important, but we were unsure to what degree and what neighbourhoods needed these services, perhaps all of them did, but to be sure we needed students to report on their own well-being. The MDI data really just helped take that understanding one step forward. We were able to come together, as a community and work with stakeholders to see what kids reported. Some neighbourhoods were in need of a lunch program, whereas other needed more organized after school activity. (Participant 2)

The MDI has been around since 2006, collecting data on student well-being (HELP, n.d.-b). This has allowed for greater improvement within each school district. First, stakeholders have come to understand the data units that are presented to them. This has allowed for more conversation around topics of well-being, thus creating communities of people who come together, such as researchers, teachers, principals, and various organizations that help deliver the program to schools. This conversation has resulted in not just an increased understanding of SEL but also better implementation of SEL within communities. Therefore, the MDI remains a promising practice in BC, helping to promote student well-being.

4.3.2. Theme 2: Teacher Burnout and Support

We go to a 45-minute presentation and get handouts. Which should be pretty helpful, but It's often difficult to translate that workshop learning to a classroom setting. Not to mention making sure we tick off all the curriculum goals for the year. (Participant 5)
One of the main themes that participants discussed at length was teacher burnout and the burden on teachers (Participant 2). As authors Jennings and Greenberg (2009) explained, “Burnout results from a breakdown in coping ability over time and is viewed as having three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and feelings of a lack of personal accomplishment” (p. 497). Teachers are often the primary contacts for students, especially when learning SEL skills because they are implemented within a classroom setting. Teachers also expressed that they have a large role to play in helping raise responsible students (Participant 5). The expectations from the larger community that are placed on teachers often causes a great deal of stress. Consequently, teachers are dealing with a variety of personalities at the same time and are rarely afforded the much-needed time to get an emotional break from their work. This causes distress among the teaching staff, which can then impact the students in the classroom.

Participants confirmed that teachers often feel overloaded with the amount that they have to teach in the classroom (Participant 4); therefore, it often becomes difficult to integrate SEL into the day-to-day school program along with making sure the academic curriculum is being followed. Participant 5, a teacher in the Metro Vancouver area, discussed how teachers often feel they have to stick to the curriculum; as such, making room for SEL or wellness initiatives can be a great challenge, even when they attend SEL workshops.

There is strong evidence that there is a great amount of pressure on teachers to create a positive and safe environment within their classroom (Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2012). Some schools and school districts try to mitigate this by offering resources that may be helpful to teachers. Participants 3 and 5 discussed that some schools have a wellness committee, which is responsible for ensuring that teachers have some basic understanding of SEL and the importance of wellness so that they are able to take those learnings into the classroom.

Furthermore, some interviewees stated that it is important to frame child well-being strategies and approaches to include the well-being of teachers and other service providers (Ron Hertel). In my conversation with Ron Hertel, the Program Supervisor Social and Emotional Learning/ Compassionate Schools in Washington State, he brought to light the need for strategies to assure that teachers are “happy, healthy and
feel supported” within their work environments. Teachers are often “first responders” (Ron Hertel) for students who may be facing trauma in their own lives. However, teachers often do not have resources available to them to cope with the challenges that trauma brings. Specifically, Ron Hertel stated that there is an effective way to market SEL competency and targets for teachers by framing it as a “self-care initiative.” He defined self-care as “the collection of strategies we use to prevent or alleviate the symptoms of vicarious trauma” (Ron Hertel). By delivering the teacher SEL competency using self-care language, Washington State ensures that the materials and resources provide teachers with a strength-based approach, one which ensures teachers and administrators who work with children feel valued in their work environment (Ron Hertel).

Ron Hertel noted it is essential for all staff members to incorporate SEL into their lives. This is supported by authors Dolev and Leshem (2016), who stated, “Teachers’ personal competencies … are particularly important for teacher effectiveness” (p. 75). A self-care framing has a greater potential for teaching kids and ensuring they are incorporating SEL guidelines into their own lives. Even with the challenges that teachers and other service providers face within a school setting, there are ways to address their own well-being. This is important because this will positively influence students. Therefore, creating a positive self-image will have a direct impact on creating a safe, positive, and healthier learning space. Furthermore, researchers have provided evidence that teacher understanding is directly related to their teaching material (Brackett et al., 2012). This is because “teachers’ beliefs influence the type of learning environments they create, as well as their students’ academic performance and beliefs about their own abilities” (Fang; Kagan, as cited in Brackett et al., 2012, p. 230). Therefore, addressing SEL through improving teacher awareness directly influences student well-being.

4.3.3. Theme 3: Addressing Needs of a Diverse Student Body

In conducting the interviews, I posed the following question to all interview participants: “How do you address and navigate needs of a diverse student body?” Diversity in this context included cultural, gender, socio-economic status, and learning differences between students. All participants acknowledged that students have different needs, and all participants chose to target this from different angles and expressed that addressing student needs is an ongoing learning process, which can also be challenging. As authors Garner et al. (2014) stated, there are a growing number of
programs that are seen to be effective for reducing behavioural problems. However, these programs are often limited in “scope” (Garner et al., 2014, p. 166); they tend to help some students, while leaving out others. The core idea behind SEL is to provide skills to students so that they are better able to manage their emotions (Guyn Cooper Research Associates, 2013). However, SEL programs are often presented as a universal approach. This, as the teachers confirmed in the interviews, makes it difficult to adapt SEL in a classroom setting (Participant 5). This also sheds light on the demand for different strategies to address the learning needs of students from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds.

When it comes to cultural differences, which can often be hard to interpret and understand, Ron Hertel shared the following sentiment: “All cultures understand the importance of critical thinking; the difference is really just how we get to those goals.” Ron Hertel as well as other participants acknowledged that there is “implicit bias” that teachers may not be aware of (Participant 4). However, understanding such bias is essential to creating a safer community. In Washington State, Ron Hertel and his team work with other heads of communities to better understand how to navigate cultural differences. Washington State has adopted a method of collaborating on best practices with different cultural leaders, rather than just an input from cultural leaders as a way to ensure collaboration works as a two-way stream (Ron Hertel).

The Safer Schools Together organization takes a different approach (Participant 6). Although the training is standard to every community and school group, participant 6 indicated that often parents and teachers come up after the workshop session to ask about their different needs. This presents an opportunity for a more one-on-one approach to inform individuals and make sure that practices best fit their needs.

Furthermore, in general, school districts in BC have a community outreach committee or an individual striving to learn what different communities might need. This is seen as a step toward understanding the needs of communities and coming together to have larger conversation on student well-being and approach it in a way that is appropriate for different learning abilities and different cultures (Marna Macmillan, Rachel French, Participant 3). The steps taken by different actors—all working toward student wellness in some way—demonstrate the multiple approaches that can be employed to address student wellness and mental health. For example, employing the
Safer Schools Together (Participant 6) strategy of having one-on-one conversations, and noted Washington State’s strategy of bringing in cultural leaders to build a SEL network together, all of which address student well-being. It would be unfair to say that one of these strategies works better than others; rather, these are presented here as examples of how varied strategies can help bridge differences and allow for opportunities for children regardless of their race, sex, gender, or ethnicity.

All participants agreed that working toward a more inclusive SEL or mental health program that address the needs of students is their goal for the upcoming year. However, many participants, despite deeming SEL critical, were unsure of how to approach conversations about diverse student body (Participants 2–5).

4.4. Conclusion

The scan illustrated educators’ growing awareness on student health from a more holistic perspective. Furthermore, there is a need for educators to take the necessary steps to build ideas around SEL, such as empathy, into the school curriculum and to support those educational objectives. By providing program resources such as an anti-bullying program, stakeholders understand that behaviour and social and emotional skills can be fostered and enhanced in school-aged children, which will positively impact student well-being (Hymel et al., 2017). The MDI and census data analysis pinpoint neighbourhoods that are experiencing a range of well-being in Metro Vancouver and further shed light on the characteristics that are similar between neighbourhoods with high well-being and those with low well-being. Lastly, the interviews elaborated on steps taken by key stakeholders to address SEL in BC. The findings illustrate that, in general, BC educators are working toward implementing SEL programming, which is often seen as the first step. What comes next is the understanding and adaptation of those programs to specific sociocultural groups. Therefore, the policy options I present in the next chapter are directed toward increasing equity among neighbourhoods.
Chapter 5. Policy Objectives and Evaluation Criteria

This chapter outlines the framework I used to evaluate different policy options. I evaluated each policy against the results of the study, including literature review, jurisdictional scan, secondary data analysis, and expert interviews. I implemented this approach to understand which policy works best under what circumstances. I set five criteria to evaluate the policy options. These included criteria such as equity, effectiveness, as well as ease of implementation, cost and stakeholder acceptance. This enabled me to delve deeper into the policy options and determine how they would perform under multiple criteria, which allowed me to reach an objective policy recommendation.

Each option is scored on a high, medium, and low scale. To better understand the trade-offs, a scale of 1–3 was used, with 1 representing low or minimal support for that objective, 2 representing moderate support, and 3 representing the highest level of support for the particular objective. Lastly, I include summary tables at the end of each policy option to illustrate how each policy fared against each criterion. The score for policy options is given if the policy is fully implemented, regardless of the challenges it may face, and the improvement in child well-being that can be measured by MDI (HELP, n.d.-b) scores in the upcoming years for the same school districts.

5.1. Equity

The primary criterion is equity. This evaluates whether a given policy option helps to enhance the learning outcomes for students living in diverse socio-cultural neighbourhoods. This criterion also determines whether, in the long term, individuals living in diverse neighbourhoods benefit from the policies in place. This option can be assessed on the extent to which the policy is able to increase MDI (HELP, n.d.-b) scores within neighbourhoods with low well-being in the coming years, regardless of having high percentage of visible minorities or being in a low-income neighbourhood. Since the MDI can be administered by the district every year, if the district administrator so chooses, this would be a great way to measure well-being of students across BC.
5.2. Effectiveness

This criterion helps measure whether the policy is successful in delivering the programs or teachings to students both in and outside of the classroom, which would be measured by how students are rating their own well-being on the MDI (HELP, n.d.-b) survey in the upcoming years. This criterion also helps to assess if students are achieving higher scores in their academic life, as improving SEL skills is correlated to an increase in academic scores. This can be proven through the Foundation Skills Assessment (Government of BC, n.d.-e) scores in BC. All policy options were chosen on the basis that they would be effective in their delivery, especially in the immediate phase of policy implementation.

5.3. Ease of Implementation

This criterion specifically looks at the degree of authority needed to implement specific policy option. For example, a policy option may need just a few key individuals to implement the policy, whereas other options might require a number of many individuals in executive or senior leadership positions to help implement the policy. Higher degree of authority would result in difficulty implementing the policy as the policy and initiative may not be on the agenda. Therefore, it would need a greater degree of collaboration, which could be more complex.

5.4. Minimizing Cost

This criterion measures the dollar amount the school districts and school might need to invest in teacher training or workshop for school. This criterion takes into account initial as well as sustainment costs. This is because the first-year cost of workshops and training may be high; however, over the years the costs are expected to diminish as workshops would be boosters for some and be principally directed toward new and incoming teachers and students.

5.5. Stakeholder Acceptance

Stakeholder groups were determined based on who would be responsible for implementing these policies and the degree to which they would support the policy.
Stakeholders include parents, teachers, principals, organizations, and the government. It is important to keep in mind that teachers and parents might find it hard to accept and integrate policy initiatives. Furthermore, although the government would want to increase child well-being in their province, budgetary costs and complexities relating to implementing the policy would make it harder for stakeholders to support the policy in question.

The objective is to maximize SEL skills for all students regardless of the neighbourhood they live in. This is measured by the weighted sum of the criteria measures: equity, effectiveness, administrative complexity, minimizing cost, and stakeholder acceptance as presented below.

Table 4. Summary of Objectives, Criteria, and Measure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Scoring (1 = Low; 2 = Medium; 3 = High)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Objective Equity</td>
<td>Increase in the SEL Skills for a student from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds</td>
<td>Extent to which the policy is able to increase MDI scores within neighbourhoods with low well-being in the coming years.</td>
<td>Low: Results in a decreasing score in well-being as measured by MDI survey for children&lt;br&gt;Medium: Results in no change in the well-being of children&lt;br&gt;High: Results in an increase in well-being scores for children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>Successful implementation of SEL skills in the classroom</td>
<td>Extent to which policy results in an increase well-being for students as presented in the MDI and Increase in FSA Scores in BC.</td>
<td>Low: Policy results in minimum improvement in well-being for kids&lt;br&gt;Medium: Policy results in moderate improvement in the well-being for kids&lt;br&gt;High: Policy results in a significant increase in well-being for kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Successful implementation of SEL skills outside the classroom</td>
<td>Testing to determine the extent to which policy results in an increase of SEL skills and improvement in MDI results</td>
<td>Low: Policy results in minimum improvement in well-being for kids&lt;br&gt;Medium: Policy results in moderate improvement in the well-being for kids&lt;br&gt;High: Policy results in a significant increase in well-being for kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Criterion</td>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>Scoring (1 = Low; 2 = Medium; 3 = High)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative Complexity</strong></td>
<td>Is the policy easy to implement?</td>
<td>Level and degree of authority needed to implement policy</td>
<td>Low: Requires only minimum number of authority, such as teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ease of implementation of program or learning initiative</td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium: Requires more of the school district, principal and teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High: Different ministries at the government needed to implement policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minimizing Cost</strong></td>
<td>How much does the policy cost and is it feasible?</td>
<td>Annual cost of implementing each policy to the school district</td>
<td>Low: minimal cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Approximate cost to the school district or school</td>
<td>Medium: Moderate amount of cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Approximate cost to the government</td>
<td>High: Significant cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stakeholder acceptance</strong></td>
<td>Will stakeholder support the policy?</td>
<td>Number of key individuals that would support the policy.</td>
<td>Low: Minimum support for the policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Likelihood that different stakeholders would accept the policy.</td>
<td>Medium: moderate amount of support for the policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Including Government acceptance of policy initiative</td>
<td>High: Significant amount of support for the policy, in which all stakeholders are on board.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. BC = British Columbia; FSA = Foundation Skills Assessment; SEL = Social and Emotional Learning; MDI = Middle Years Development Instrument.*
Chapter 6. Policy Options

Policy options drawn on the findings from MDI (HELP, n.d.-b) and socio-economic data (HELP, 2018a), as well as the interviews. Based on the literature reviewed, the policy analysis, and the participant interviews, I have determined these policy options are the most effective in addressing student well-being, in particular the well-being of youth from diverse neighbourhoods.

6.1. Policy Option 1: Increasing Cultural and SEL Competency for all teachers

The first policy option is directed toward improving socio-cultural competency and SEL competency among staff members, especially teachers who are often first respondents to students and spend majority of their time with students. This would result in culturally adapted and responsive SEL techniques in the classroom. Professional development days (Pro-D days) could be set aside for teachers to engage in SEL and cultural competency material. Currently, some schools are already engaged in SEL material during Pro-D days (Participant 5). However, expanding this policy option to encompass a larger set of schools and including components of cultural knowledge could make be the necessary change needed to enhance well-being of students from various cultural backgrounds.

As several interviewees indicated, in order for children to be living and experiencing a greater level of social and emotional well-being, the adults around them must also be competent in their knowledge of SEL, must understand socio-cultural makeup of the student body, as well as know how their teaching might impact students who come in from various different backgrounds. Interviewees in this study indicated that teachers require extra support to ensure their classrooms and students are experiencing happiness and optimism. This could have a large impact on students within each classroom and their behaviour. Additionally, because teachers are overloaded with information, they often find it difficult to keep up with new programs and new evidence being presented to them. This could result in high stress in the classroom, and, as studies have illustrated, have a negative impact on students and their learning processes (Brackett et al., 2012, p. 228).
As noted above, this policy option is directed toward teachers to provide educators with a greater understanding of social and emotional and cultural differences that could impact student learning. Furthermore, this approach should highlight the need for SEL training, not only for what teachers would be teaching students, but also for teachers themselves and their own well-being. A combination of workshops that help with teaching and learning about cultural diversity and increasing SEL knowledge would have a direct impact on teaching material within the classroom.

The benefits of this policy would be that it would allow teachers to increase their knowledge about on cultural competency, which would impact the way they teach SEL in their classroom. This would influence teachers to shape SEL in the way that best fits the students they teach and the teachers themselves, which may vary depending on the group or the class. Challenges with this policy would be that some teachers would be unwilling to participate in learning and attending workshops, as it requires time and implementation of another aspect of learning into the curriculum. There could also be some opposition from administrators who may not want to use Pro-D days and resources for SEL or cultural competency training.

6.2. Policy Option 2: Integration of SEL into Physical Education Class

The second policy option is to integrate SEL within physical education (PE) and health class. The new curriculum has changed physical education and health to incorporate ideas about healthy living (Government of BC, n.d.-b). Considering ideas around mental health and well-being, including responsible decision making and safe space, which are core ideas from SEL are ingrained in the curriculum (Government of BC, n.d.-b). This policy options aims to extend and direct training on SEL toward physical education teachers, encouraging at least two teachers within each school to be trained in SEL skills development for children in elementary and secondary school. This could incorporate understanding benefits of various SEL programming, one being mindful breathing. This policy option is a reflection of direction taken up by school districts in Alberta, where physical health class encompasses aspects of social and emotional skills. This would help youth in all neighbourhoods and school districts and ensure that all students develop some skills in their PE class. Currently, schools do have after-school programs as well as workshops held for teachers and students (Participant
1,2,3,4,5). These often include sports and arts activities, which are essential to kids for all ages. However, not all kids will be able to participate in after-school activities. Furthermore, as described in the interview results sections, teachers are often overwhelmed and are unsure of how to integrate SEL into their classroom. Incorporating SEL into the PE classroom would allow for resources to be directed toward a specific department, which could ease implementation and integration of SEL into the school environment in a way that is accessible to all students.

Benefits of this policy would be that each student is getting at least some dedicated time toward learning and enhancing their SES. However, a setback of this policy option is that it would require a universal approach, unless PE teachers accommodated and changed teaching material to the group of students they are working with.

6.3. **Policy Option 3: Mindfulness Programme Supported by BC Government**

Until recently, the provincial government funded and supported the FRIENDS for Life program (Participants 2–3; see also Friends Resilience, n.d.). The FRIENDS program specifically deals with mental health and addresses anxiety or depression children may face (Friends Resilience, n.d.). However, funding for this program was cut. Therefore, although some teachers who have received training in the past may still implement this program, new teachers do not have access to the resources to implement this within classroom. School districts also supported multiple programs and invested in teacher training; however, these largely depend on school educators and administrators electing to implement those learnings in the classroom.

A province-wide initiative, such as investment in mindfulness for all school districts, would help address SEL at the provincial level. Each district would to be able to measure their outcome for student well-being if the provincial government were to provide training and resources for teachers and other administrators. This could be a great way to ensure that all districts are being offered at least one program that they are being trained in and could implement in a classroom setting. Specifically, this could be a program offering training for teachers in mindfulness. This policy option is growing in popularity as seen in the jurisdictional scan by steps taken by England (Magra, 2019).
In sum, the benefits of this policy would be that teachers across the province would have resources to enhance and integrate SEL into their teachings. This would take some stress away from district staff, as they may have limited funding for such initiatives. Furthermore, this policy option ensures that districts are not left to pick and choose which programs to implement, and can implement this as well as other programs they see fit. Additionally, this would help track student well-being, ensuring at least some resources are directed towards all students in BC. Similar to Policy Option 2, this is proposed as a standard or universal approach to integrate SEL into the classroom. However, it is a necessary first step in directing SEL resources to all school districts.
Chapter 7. Policy Analysis

7.1. Policy Option 1: Increasing Cultural and SEL Competency for all Teachers

7.1.1. Equity

This policy option would increase equity, as it would directly impact the way teachers interact with students, specifically students from various socio-cultural backgrounds. This would enhance their learning and make the school environment a safe place, allowing children from all backgrounds to feel included. By creating such a space, children educational outcomes, as well as SES would increase. Therefore, this criterion gets a high rating of 3.

7.1.2. Effectiveness

By teachers engaging in increasing their own knowledge of SEL and cultural knowledge, there would be an increase in the uptake of social and emotional teaching in the classroom and beyond. This policy options would greatly impact the amount of ways that teachers are involved in teaching and learning within a school environment. Therefore, this option receives a score of 3, as it would be effective if there is a large participation from each school district and their various neighbourhoods allowing greater well-being.

7.1.3. Administrative Complexity

This policy option is directed toward teachers. Initially, this policy option would be administered towards teachers who are already engaging in SEL workshop, in the long-run this would be scaled up to be directed towards all teachers. As the teacher interviewees who took part in this inquiry noted, teachers are often struggling to making time for materials and trying to keep up with teaching material (Participant 1 & 5). Teachers have begun to voice their desire to be aware of and knowing how they impact a classroom setting. Therefore, Policy Option 1 would receive a two or moderate score because some teachers would be thrilled to delve into learning more about impact they have within the classroom. However, there might also be resistance from others, as this
policy option asks teachers to reflect on their own biases they may have towards groups of students. This as well as the time needed to address and give workshops could be quite complex, as teacher’s schedules are busy.

7.1.4. Minimizing Cost

The cost would go toward online training, workshops, and teaching materials, which would initially be moderate and would diminish in the second and ongoing years. This is because initial training would cost the school district staff; however, the district would only need booster courses and or thorough training for new and incoming staff. Therefore, the costs would be moderate for this policy option. Some online training specifically for SEL are available for free, such as “The Teacher’s Social and Emotional Learning” offered by University of Colorado Boulder (n.d.). However, costs for the cultural competency test for teachers could cost as much as $500 for each individual, depending on the level of training. For example, San Diego State University (n.d.) offers online courses in cultural competence for educators. At the time of this writing, the course costs were $500 (San Diego State University, n.d.).

7.1.5. Stakeholder Acceptance

The interview findings illustrated that teachers and other staff do want to be involved and raise their own awareness. However, they find it hard to make time for such initiatives. Furthermore, with time and commitment required for attending workshops the overall acceptance for policy would be moderate, as some would accept this policy whilst others would likely oppose this policy option.

| Table 5. Summary of Results for Policy Option 1: Cultural and SEL Competency for All Teachers |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| **Criterion**                              | **Rating**      |
| Equity                                      | High            |
| Effectiveness                               | High            |
| Administrative Complexity                   | Medium          |
| Minimizing Cost                             | Medium          |
| Stakeholder Acceptance                      | Medium          |
7.2. Policy Option 2: Integration of SEL into Physical Education Class

7.2.1. Equity

Integration of SEL into PE would have moderate impact on students from diverse backgrounds. As such, I give this a score of 2. This is because while there would be SEL teaching directly received in each school, it would be a universal approach to teaching SEL, which often does not take into consideration children from diverse backgrounds. On the other hand, this could still result in children's well-being scores and academic scores increasing because they are attending PE class that is required to have aspects of SEL, which would, to some extent, increase their well-being.

7.2.2. Effectiveness

This policy option would be highly effective, as it would be administered in all schools in the PE classes. Schools in BC have some form of PE classes which students are required to attend. Therefore, SEL would be integrated in a strategic manner in a school environment, which would be accessible to all students. As such, this receives a score of 3.

7.2.3. Administrative Complexity

By targeting a specific department in the school that teaches kids about physical health, this policy option would be moderately easy to implement. The PE teachers would also be aware of not just the importance of physical health, but also ensuring that the definition around health becomes more inclusive, especially in a school setting. Therefore, this criterion receives a score of 2.

7.2.4. Minimizing Cost

In terms of minimizing cost for school districts and individual schools, this policy option receives a moderate score of 2. While teacher training and workshops can cost the district a significant amount, the costs for this option apply to a specific department and two individuals within the department, resulting in the costs being moderate. The
costs associated would also be greater initially; however, because PE teachers often work with the same cohort of students for a number of years for all students, the costs would be minimal in the long term. Costs from SEL programs could be around $6,500 for training, workshops, teacher materials for about 20 teachers (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, n.d.). Keeping in mind that some of these programs are already offered, it would be a matter of concentrating the training towards a specific department in every school.

7.2.5. Stakeholder Acceptance

A growing number of SEL experts believe in the fundamental wellness of their school including teachers and administrators. However, it is often hard for schools to focus on teachers and students at the same time. This criterion gets a score of two, as there is support for SEL in classroom; however, as participants made evident through the interviews, it is often hard to incorporate and ask teachers for extra time to implement and integrate additional components to their teaching material. This would make SEL specific to a department. As such, this option might meet with some challenges to incorporating and extending physical education class to more than just exercise. There may also be some resistance from stakeholders, especially teachers, because they do not have the time necessary to ensure success in this area (see Table 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6. Summary of Results for Policy Option 2: Integration of SEL into Physical Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criterion</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Complexity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimizing Cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder Acceptance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.3. Policy Option 3: Mindfulness Programme Supported by BC Government

7.3.1. Equity

This policy option may increase equity among different school districts and different neighbourhoods, as it allows all school districts to have access to the same program training. This would limit differences between the school neighbourhoods that have resources to invest and others that do not. Seeking to bridge the gap and increase access to resources may increase well-being for all students. However, this would still be a standard approach to integrating SEL for all students regardless of their identity. Therefore, receiving a medium score.

7.3.2. Effectiveness

This policy would be highly effective because each school district would adopt some training in how to implement SEL in the classroom. This would increase knowledge on SEL at a district level and within a classroom setting and increase SEL uptake within and outside classroom. Therefore, this policy option would receive a high score for effectiveness.

7.3.3. Administrative Complexity

Implementing program training for each district would be quite complex, as it requires different actors to come together and collaborate on the best approach to addressing well-being. This would require understanding from different actors and the best way to implement policy. Therefore, I assess this to be a low score of 1

7.3.4. Minimizing Cost

The cost to government would be high, as it would require a large sum to financially invest in any program. This would require training and workshops, all being implemented in each school district, with at least one member of the team being trained in the program that will be delivered to kids. The costs could be as high as $3 million,
which would help reach mindfulness resources and could target up to 2,000 children (Healy, 2019, para. 5).

### 7.3.5. Stakeholder Acceptance

Stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, principals, school district administrators, and the municipal government, are likely to welcome support for funding programs for the province. However, the government may not have resources to support this program and would require some clear evidence as to why this would be beneficial in the short and long term. Additionally, this would fit in with provincial government’s role in addressing mental health and wellness in the province. Therefore, this criterion gets a medium score, as it would receive support from district staff, but less support from governmental bodies themselves.

**Table 7. Summary of Results for Policy Option 3: Mindfulness Programming Supported by BC Government**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Complexity</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimizing Cost</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder Acceptance</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 7.3.6. Summary of Analysis

Table 8 summarizes each policy option and the trade-offs amongst them. The equity criterion is double weighted to give it more importance. This is because the study deals with particular aspect of SEL ensuring the students from diverse neighbourhoods are getting resources and training to support their well-being. The results from the policy analysis are shown below.
Table 8. Summary of Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Policy Option 1: Increasing Cultural and SEL competency for all teachers</th>
<th>Policy option 2: Integration of SEL into Physical Education Class</th>
<th>Policy Option 3: Mindfulness: Province wide program initiative.</th>
<th>Ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equity (x2)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Complexity</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimizing Cost</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder Acceptance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 8. Recommendation

Based on the findings and evaluation criteria, I recommend Policy Option 1: Cultural and SEL Competency for All Teachers. This policy option will have significant impact on teachers’ interactions and knowledge of SEL and cultural differences. It is evident that dedicating Pro-D days to conduct workshops and training to increase not only SEL skills for specifically teachers themselves, but also to include aspects of cultural competency will address needs of students from various socio-cultural backgrounds. This policy will impact teachers’ skills and the ways in which teachers and other staff members interact with students. The second focus should be on teacher and staff well-being. This is essential in improving well-being for students. There is clear evidence that teacher well-being matters, especially because there are working closely with students. Students spend the majority of their time in school; therefore, teacher well-being and competency in social and emotional field is essential for community well-being to improve.

Although Policy Option 1 would have the greatest impact on students as it is more equitable and easier to implement, other options should be considered and implemented. Therefore, policy implementation should be in order or priority, leading with Policy Option 1, then Policy Option 2, and lastly Policy Option 3. Other approaches could also be implemented simultaneously to ensure that students get the necessary SEL training. This could be through implementing SEL into physical education class, as proposed in Policy Options 2 and 3, in which the provincial government would be responsible for dedicating resources to a specific program for all students in BC.

Although these policy options are considered the best to address well-being of students, they cannot solely address those living in diverse neighbourhoods and living in low-income households. Policy options will also address the needs of larger groups, ensuring that SEL in not only built into the curriculum, but also implemented in a strategic manner into day-to-day school experiences. Furthermore, although these findings are based and recommended for BC, the policy options could be replicated in other school districts that are also experiencing low well-being for students.
Chapter 9. Conclusion

In this capstone, I explored how to mitigate the gaps between youth who self-assess as having high well-being and those who face lower well-being. Through understanding and analyzing the MDI data as well as demographic data, it is evident that differences between neighbourhoods exist. These differences are in part a result of the demographic make-up of the communities. Therefore, this capstone provides the initial steps to help address gaps in social and emotional well-being for youth.

This study contributes to the existing literature by providing policy options which would increase SEL and cultural knowledge amongst teachers. This is unique, as much of the effort, as presented interviewees noted, is on students and how they rate their well-being. This is critical, however, in order to make a significant impact, attention should be placed on teachers and the ideas and knowledge they bring into class. Therefore, the study recommends dedicating Pro-D days for teachers to increase their own understanding of SEL and incorporate that with learning about how to interact with diverse groups and individuals. Although integrating SEL into a teacher training was considered as a policy option, it was not in the final project as it was not seen as benefiting the current student population in the immediate stage. However, this option could be explored in future research and should be implemented to enhance teacher training and quality of teaching.

Furthermore, the study also suggests the continuing process of collecting and engaging in MDI and other demographic data. This will track how students’ progress has changed and where resources are needed as program implementation takes place. The MDI data could be seen as a feedback mechanism, allowing school administrators to track student well-being and dedicating resources effectively.

Lastly, there is growing awareness of incorporating culturally safe practices into various fields. This awareness should be acknowledged and acted upon in the educational field as well. It is essential to provide opportunities and resources to all students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, to help equip them with necessary skills to advance in school and in life. BC is taking great steps to include SEL in the curriculum, however, it is important to ensure that SEL is culturally responsive for it to have the maximum benefit for students and the larger community.
References


