TEACHERS’ PERSPECTIVES: WHAT SUPPORT SYSTEMS ARE NEEDED TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF SEL BY CLASSROOM TEACHERS?

Rose Elizabeth Pennington

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

Faculty of Education and Social Work, The University of Sydney

2016
Author’s Declaration

This is to certify that:

I. This thesis comprises only my original work towards the Master of Education Degree.

II. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used.

III. the thesis does not exceed the word length for this degree.

IV. no part of this work has been used for the award of another degree.

V. this thesis meets the University of Sydney’s Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) requirements for the conduct of research.

Name(s): Rose Elizabeth Pennington
Date: 23rd August, 2016
Abstract

The traditional role of schools as solely responsible for the academic achievement of its students has been altered in recent times, with an increased focus on addressing their social and emotional needs, so that children may have the resilience to manage the challenges they face. Research indicates that this aspect of a teacher’s role is assisted through the use of social-emotional programming and practices.

Activity Theory is a descriptive framework that considers an entire activity system (in this case, a school environment) in order to explain how a range of factors work together to impact an activity like the provision of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) (Engestrom, 2000). This case study examined the perceptions of three teachers from one primary school utilising Activity Theory (Engestrom, 2000) to first identify and describe the components of the activity system (the activity system being the school in question). The purpose of this case study was to gain insight into teachers’ perceptions of how SEL is addressed at a primary school and in turn provide understanding on SEL promotion and directions to take for success.

There were a few key tensions that inhibited the effective implementation of SEL in the school. It seems that its perceived importance is low for some of the staff, which may be attributed to a lack of professional development and therefore knowledge about SEL. In addition, inconsistent policies result in uncertainty for teachers as to what they are ‘meant’ to do. The participants were unsure of school wide expectations, making the high priority of SEL less likely, and they perceived that irrelevant programs were in use.

Analysis of the professional development surrounding SEL at the school in question, the systemic policies, the executive commitment and the relevance of SEL programs indicated tensions in the activity system. If alleviated, they would serve to further to the goal of effective SEL implementation by placing SEL higher on teachers’ lists of priorities. A recommendation for further study into the provision of SEL in schools would be to examine the use and effectiveness of different teaching strategies incorporating the development of social emotional skills.

The examination of these teachers’ experiences has illuminated which areas need support and in turn offers strategies and resources to assist the whole school provision of SEL.
Contents

Author's Declaration .................................................................................................................. 2
Abstract ..................................................................................................................................... 3
Table of Figures .......................................................................................................................... 5
Introduction to the Study ........................................................................................................... 6
  Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 6
  Problem Statement .................................................................................................................... 6
  Purpose of the Study ................................................................................................................ 7
  Nature of the Study .................................................................................................................. 7
  Research Questions ................................................................................................................ 8
  Definition of Terms ................................................................................................................. 8
  Significance of the Study ......................................................................................................... 8
Literature Review ........................................................................................................................ 9
  What is SEL and why is it needed? .......................................................................................... 9
  Implementation of SEL in Australian Schools ...................................................................... 9
  Obstacles hindering successful implementation of SEL ....................................................... 12
  Possible Solutions to Obstacles ............................................................................................... 14
  Conclusion ............................................................................................................................... 16
Methodology .............................................................................................................................. 18
  Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 18
  Qualitative Design (Case Study and Activity Theory) .......................................................... 18
  Research Questions ................................................................................................................ 21
  Contexts for the Study ........................................................................................................... 21
  Measures for Ethical Protection ............................................................................................. 22
  Role of the Researcher ........................................................................................................... 22
  Participant Selection .............................................................................................................. 23
  Data Collection Strategies .................................................................................................... 23
  Data Analysis .......................................................................................................................... 24
  Validity Threats ...................................................................................................................... 25
Findings ....................................................................................................................................... 27
  Objective: supporting the development of social emotional skills of students .............. 27
  Subjects: Interviewees ............................................................................................................ 29
  Rules: School and Government Policies .............................................................................. 30
  Tools: Programs and Initiatives Utilised to Support Students’ SEL .................................... 31
  Community: School Staff and Families ............................................................................... 32
  Division of Labour: Division of Responsibility for SEL ....................................................... 33
  Tensions and Contradictions ................................................................................................. 34
Table of Figures

Figure 1: Interaction of an Activity System .......................................................... 20
Figure 2: Cycle of Expansive Learning ................................................................. 20
Figure 3: Interaction of the Activity System at NPS ............................................. 37
Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The traditional role of schools as solely responsible for the academic achievement of its students has been altered in recent times, with an increased focus on addressing their social and emotional needs, so that children may have the resilience to manage the challenges they face. The Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning (CASEL) was formed in 1994 in order to establish evidence based social and emotional learning (SEL) within education from preschool through to high school. It identified five core competences that SEL should address (CASEL, 2012, p. 9):

1. Self-awareness; involving the ability to identify and recognise one’s own emotions and thoughts, as well as strengths and challenges in oneself.
2. Self-management; the ability to regulate emotions and behaviours, involving stress management and motivating oneself.
3. Social-awareness; the ability to take the perspective of others, including those from different backgrounds.
4. Relationship skills; the tools to form and maintain positive and healthy relationships and to communicate clearly.
5. Responsible decision making skills; equipping children to make constructive and respectful choices about their own behaviour, taking into account safety concerns and ethical standards.

SEL programs within schools have been found to be central to the development of students’ mental wellbeing, and specifically the core SEL competences, as outlined above (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). There are many pressures placed on educators and students and as such the introduction of extra programs such as SEL may seem, without proper understanding, to be simply another pressure on an already heavy workload (Collie, Shapka, Perry, & Martin, 2015). However, schools that have effectively implemented SEL programs have seen a number of benefits, including a relationship between students’ social-emotional wellbeing and their academic achievement (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). A program that is school-wide and integrated through all learning areas is likely to optimise the students’ potential to be successful both academically and in social situations (Durlak et al., 2011). A knowledgeable and motivated school staff, and collaboration between the school and parents, have been noted as important structural features of an effective SEL program. This study examines three primary school teachers’ perceptions of the success of and support for SEL at their school.

Problem Statement

The role of teachers is not confined to imparting specific subject knowledge, but rather involves guiding students through social or emotional challenges they may face (Albrecht, Albrecht, & Cohen, 2012). Research indicates that this aspect of a teacher’s role is assisted through the use of
social-emotional programming and practices. The following review of recent research indicates that many such programs are not successfully implemented however, and that it is this, as opposed to the program content, that results in school improvement failures (Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2012). The case study examines the perspectives of three teachers at North Public School\(^1\) (NPS) in order to explore their perceptions of how the school addressed SEL, and what, if any, support is required to ensure effective implementation.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the case study was to gain insight as to teachers’ perceptions of how SEL is addressed at NPS and in turn inform ongoing development within the school and provide other schools and teachers with understanding on SEL promotion and directions to take for success. The purpose was achieved by listening to the teachers’ perspectives about their knowledge of SEL and the teaching strategies used in SEL across the school. Furthermore, the case study established what, if any, support is needed to ensure effective implementation of a school wide approach. The ways in which to effectively implement SEL have been widely documented and will be referred to throughout this thesis (see for example Dix, Slee, Lawson, & Keeves, 2011; Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Durlak et al., 2011; Meyers et al., 2015; Oberle, Domitrovich, Meyers, & Weissberg, 2016; Slee, Dix, & Askell-Williams, 2011; Wolpert et al., 2015). This is not a study of the effects of an SEL program on the students but rather a review of the teachers’ perceptions of SEL, and an examination of what processes may be put in place at NPS to ensure it is being provided effectively.

**Nature of the Study**

Activity Theory is a descriptive framework that considers an entire activity system (in this case, a school environment) in order to explain how a range of factors work together to impact an activity like the provision of SEL (Engestrom, 2000). The case study examined the perceptions of three teachers from one primary school utilising Activity Theory (Engestrom, 2000) to first identify and describe the components of the activity system (the activity system being the school in question). The study explored the relationships existing within the activity system that supported the implementation of SEL in the school and factors that create tensions within this implementation. Activity Theory was used as the theoretical framework upon which the study was based because it allowed analysis and understanding of human interaction, in this case, the teachers, through their use of tools, that is the strategies with which to provide SEL. Activity Theory is particularly relevant to the study of education as the participants, their purpose and their tools are constantly changing (Hashim & Jones, 2007).

The project involved semi-structured interviews so as to glean extra information as it came up in conversation, even if I had not planned to ask for it. Qualitative interview studies are able to provide descriptions of people and settings (Creswell, 2007). Using Activity Theory as a basis for the interview questions I ensured that all aspects of the activity system (the school) were covered by

---

\(^1\)Pseudonym
my questioning. This study enabled examination of the experiences of the teachers by recording their perspectives on the use of SEL at the school. The results will be of practical use to those at the school because the recommendations are specific to the lived experiences of teachers who work there, and to other schools as they evaluate and develop their SEL practice.

Research Questions

1. What are the teachers' perceptions about the principles behind SEL?
2. How do the teachers address SEL in their classrooms?
3. How does the school support their teacher development of students' social-emotional skills?
4. What would assist the teachers in improving their SEL practice?

Definition of Terms

**Implementation.** Putting into practise an idea or program. The practise may be an imposed one or else has been chosen by decision makers for the organisation. The practice is planned so that it can be modified throughout the implementation process in order to take into consideration the needs of the specific organisation that is attempting to bring it on board (Fullan, 2007).

**Social and Emotional Learning.** The process that people go through in order to learn the knowledge and skills that are necessary to understand and manage emotions, understand goal setting, feel empathy for others, enjoy positive relationships and make decisions (Dusenbury, Calin, Domitrovich, & Weissberg, 2015)

Significance of the Study

There has been a significant amount of research dedicated to the effective implementation of SEL programs in schools. Most of the research indicates that it is the structures in place to support this implementation (or lack thereof) that dictate whether the programs will provide the academic and social and emotional benefits to the students and teachers that have been reported (Brackett et al., 2012; Durlak et al., 2011; Meyers et al., 2015). The case study presented in this thesis will use Activity Theory to add to the research and provides a different, theoretically grounded, way of looking at an SEL implementation system, compared to what has typically been used in SEL implementation reports and evaluations. When asked to take on the teaching of an SEL teaching program, teachers may feel that it places extra burden on an already heavy workload (Collie et al., 2015). The examination of teachers’ experiences illuminates where support may be needed and in turn offers strategies to assist the teaching process.
Literature Review

This study aims to identify teachers’ perspectives on what support they may require to successfully provide SEL as a way of developing their students’ social-emotional skills. In order to demonstrate the significance of the study, this literature review will first examine what is involved in SEL and why it is important, followed by why and how it should be provided in a school setting. Finally, it will assess any obstacles that could hinder successful provision of SEL and possible solutions to them.

What is SEL and why is it needed?

The goals of SEL are to foster the development of five competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making, according to CASEL (2015). Given the potential impact of schools in developing the basics for mental health and to prevent mental health problems, many interventions are being initiated in schools under names such as ‘mental health’, ‘SEL’, ‘emotional literacy’, ‘emotional intelligence’, ‘resilience’, and ‘life skills’ (Weare & Nind, 2011).

SEL is required because it is central to the development of students’ mental health, as well as the cultivation of positive feelings, behaviours and cognitions (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). Research has found that positive emotion and engagement fights depression, engenders more life satisfaction and promotes creative learning (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009). Worldwide, depression is the top cause of illness and disability among adolescents and suicide is the third cause of death (WHO, 2016a). SEL is fundamental to mental health and may contribute to alleviating the escalating mental health issues in our society.

Implementation of SEL in Australian Schools

Why? There is evidence that SEL should be provided in schools because it has been found to be effective in reducing social and emotional difficulties (Slee et al., 2009), and because it supports the goals for education in Australia, as per The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008). Schools are one of the most important developmental contexts in young people’s lives (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2009), thus, they are an obvious context in which social and emotional skills may be developed. Evidence suggests that relationships with peers and teachers, as well as a positive school culture, are linked to mental health and wellbeing of students (Chu, Saucier, & Hafner, 2010; Way, Reddy, & Rhodes, 2007). Effective intervention in the early stages of a mental health difficulty has been found to be a key strategy for achieving successful outcomes (Littlefield, 2008), and thus schools are ideal entry points for the delivery of preventative services (Slee et al., 2011).

The Melbourne Declaration (Ministerial Council on Education, 2008) outlines the goals for education in Australia and addresses what needs to be done in order to ensure these goals will be
achieved. It has informed how the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) has set the direction for Australian schooling over a ten year period from 2008 – 2018 (ACARA, 2013). There are two overarching goals for Australian schooling, the first, that equity and excellence are promoted in Australian schools, and the second, which is focused on the individual student. It states that as a result of their Australian education, young people are to become confident and creative individuals who have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that will enable them to manage their overall wellbeing. It declares that young Australians will be active and informed citizens who act with moral and ethical integrity and appreciate Australia’s rich multicultural society. The Australian Education system is thus assigned the responsibility for the social and emotional, as well as the academic development of young people. The Declaration (Ministerial Council on Education, 2008) makes general statements about the desirability of certain traits in young Australians, however, it does not include detail as to the ways in which schools are to help develop them. It does not include detail for academic development either, though unlike academic development there is no follow-up documentation to do this. There is agreement in the United States between policy makers, educators and the public that it is the job of the education system to support students to be successful in academic subjects, able to work well with others across a variety of settings, and behave responsibly and successfully (Greenberg et al., 2003). In order to achieve this in Australia, educators may look to SEL as a way to assist students with the development of the skills they will need to overcome challenges that lie outside the academic sphere.

**How?** Social-emotional skills can be taught, modelled, practised and applied to diverse situations in a safe and controlled environment such as school so that students can apply them to real-life contexts when necessary, and avoid problem behaviours such as violence and bullying (Zins & Elias, 2006). The ways in which SEL programs enable students to gain skills may be described by Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1986). The theory states that humans learn their behaviours through observation of models, and the reciprocal interaction between individuals' behaviour and their environment (e.g. a person's aggressive behaviour may creates an environment that elicits further aggression). He proposed that prevention programs should be implemented in an individual's natural setting and carried out by people with whom they would have regular contact.

SEL is currently implemented in schools in a variety of ways; the main methods are outlined below.

**i) Whole School Approaches.** Positive Education has evolved from Positive Psychology, which is said to contribute a comprehensive approach to mental health by investigating positive emotions in addition to existing knowledge of mental illness (Norrish & Vella-Brodrick, 2009). Positive education is defined as a traditional education focused on academic development complemented by approaches that nurture wellbeing (Seligman et al., 2009). Focus upon positive psychology concepts within schools has been found to foster higher student self-control and better life outcomes (Park, 2013). Positive education programs exist in three modes: scientifically informed well-being
intervention programs, proactive strategies produced for whole school settings, and specific well-being education lessons (White & Murray, 2015).

Geelong Grammar School is one example of a school that has established a whole school approach to SEL, based on positive education. In order to implement their program they have professional development to help their staff to ‘live’ the concepts they are teaching so that they are in a position to act as role models. The school also conducts explicit teaching of the positive education concepts from year five to ten to develop student understanding and implicitly embed the concepts into the academic curriculum so that students can apply what they have learned into real life contexts (Seligman et al., 2009).

The Kids Matter framework is another whole school mental health and wellbeing approach, which gives schools a selection of methods, tools and support to implement mental health promotion, in conjunction with families and the wider community (KidsMatter, 2006). Kids Matter is an optional framework that schools can choose to adopt and which involves the provision of SEL as part of one of the components. It is an initiative that was developed in collaboration with the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, Beyondblue: the national depression initiative, the Australian Psychological Society, and Principals Australia; it is supported by the Australian Rotary Health Research Fund. A study of 101 schools utilising the Kids Matter framework found an associated enhancement in students’ measured mental health and support for a ‘whole school’ approach as protective for students (Slee et al., 2009).

ii) SEL Program. Another SEL initiative that is available for use in schools are standard teaching programs such as the Bounce Back! resilience program (Noble & McGrath, 2011), which can be implemented in individual classrooms. Bounce Back! was developed to be taught to Kindergarten through to Year Eight as a wellness curriculum for classroom teachers to incorporate into their teaching, and aims to promote a positive whole school culture (Noble & McGrath, 2015). In order to successfully implement the Bounce Back! program, the authors have offered an organising framework named PROSPER that serves to outline relevant teaching strategies, classroom organisation, curriculum units and methods for working with parents (Noble & McGrath, 2015). The Bounce Back! program has been found to have positive effects on pupils’ and teachers’ personal resilience as well as positive effects on school ethos and teaching and learning (Axford, Blyth, & Schepens, 2010).

iii) Academic teaching strategies that promote social-emotional skills. SEL may also be promoted in schools through teaching strategies that incorporate the practise of social-emotional skills. These are not teaching strategies to provide SEL, rather, they are strategies for academic learning that also support SEL. These teaching strategies can be categorised under social constructivism, a theory of learning which considers knowledge to be individually constructed via an individual’s own experiences (Schreiber & Valle, 2013). The use of social constructivist teaching strategies emphasises the impact of social and cultural effects on the students, the way in which their backgrounds and experiences shape the way they perceive what is being taught, and the fact that learning is a social and collaborative activity where people create meaning through their
interactions with one another (Vygotsky, 1989). A classroom in which social constructivist teaching strategies have been utilised allow participants to bring their own worldviews to the learning context and collaborate in order to develop an appreciation for personal and cultural differences (Powell & Kalina, 2009). By their nature these strategies develop students’ SE skills and thus provide SEL because when one individual interacts with another they socially negotiate meanings to develop understanding of a topic (Schreiber & Valle, 2013).

Cooperative learning is one such strategy, and is a pedagogical practice that promotes socialisation and learning (Gillies, 2016). It is a successful strategy if four elements are present including the positive interdependence of the students, the promotion of a willingness of the students to encourage each other, individual accountability and explicit discussion of the interpersonal skills that are needed for group work to succeed (Gillies, 2016). Other teaching strategies that support the development of social-emotional skills are controversy strategies in which differing opinions are stated and discussed (Marzano, 2007), and collaborative philosophical inquiry, involving rational questioning and intelligent controversy between students (Millett & Tapper, 2011).

Evidence of the outcomes of SEL. Some schools implement programs that are yet to have their effectiveness established (Askell-Williams, Lawson, & Slee, 2009), and it is important that SEL is implemented on the basis of evidence in order to achieve the positive outcomes referred to above (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Indeed, there is for some a perceived lack of valuable evaluation of classroom based SEL programs as they are said to offer inconclusive evidence of short or long term benefits, as well as a need to challenge claims and assumptions about well-being and the industries that promote them (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2008, 2009). Problems lie in the fact that it is difficult to establish a standardised measure for students’ social and emotional well-being, especially in the short term. In the past, measures of childhood development focused on deficiencies in achievements or problem behaviours however the absence of problems or failures does not necessarily suggest ideal growth and success (Lippman, Anderson Moore, & McIntosh, 2011). When reviewing the success of SEL, it is important therefore to develop and use indicators of social and emotional well-being that take into account the current context of the students’ lives (Pollard & Lee, 2003); consideration of the wellbeing of the children at the present time is also preferable to a sole focus on long term outcomes (Statham & Chase, 2010)

Obstacles hindering successful implementation of SEL

The provision of SEL is becoming a priority of schools, however, consultants seeking to help schools implement these SEL programs face a number of difficulties (Elias, Bruene-Butler, Blum, & Schuyler, 2000). These include lack of knowledge about SEL, teachers’ own social-emotional skills, a lack of executive commitment, and constraints on time and resources.
Lack of knowledge about SEL. Knowledgeable teachers are a crucial feature of successful programs (Graczyk, Domitrovich, Small, & Zins, 2006), because they are influential as the primary providers of SEL. Teachers often receive minimal background information however, about the interventions as part of the professional development that is aimed at promoting them (Cohen, 2006). An important finding of meta-analysis is that classroom teachers and other school staff were able to effectively implement SEL programs, suggesting that they can be broadly incorporated into routine school practices (Durlak et al., 2011). Parker (2008) suggests though that without explaining change processes and thus generating buy-in from teachers, education reforms are bound to fail.

Program fidelity (adhering to the original principles of the program) is strongly correlated with the success or failure of the program to produce a desired effect (Han & Weiss, 2005). If teachers are uncomfortable about their knowledge they may neglect or resist the teaching of it (Greenberg, Domitrovich, Graczyk, & Zins, 2005). They may consider themselves to have a lack of training in the field, they may not wish to invest time and energy when they are being asked to learn so many new skills such as those associated with technology, or they may not believe that they will be able to make a difference even if they do attempt to teach these skills (Elias et al., 2000).

Teachers’ social-emotional competencies. Children’s learning of social and emotional skills is directly related to their teachers’ own social and emotional competence (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). The interpersonal skills of teachers has been found to affect their students’ outcomes (den Brok, Brekelmans, & Wubbels, 2004), thus, it is expected that teachers’ feelings and attitudes may have a significant impact on the program model, especially when the program is complex (Parker, 2008). The importance of teachers in actively teaching and modelling SEL skills is being recognised (Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Fox, 2006) many feel that they are only moderately prepared to deal with students’ emotions (Onchwari, 2010). Although SEL programs are written to be facilitated by the classroom teacher, few make allowance for the teachers’ social and emotional development; rather, they assume that the teacher has a sufficiently high level of wellbeing to effectively model the skills they are teaching (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

When teachers have high levels of social and emotional competencies, they are better able to master challenges and they feel efficacious (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk, 2004). While a great deal of time has been spent on students’ development, not so much has been allocated to the wellbeing needs of teachers. Without social and emotional competencies, they can experience emotional stress, which has a negative effect on their classroom teaching in general, and specifically the implementation of programs (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Teachers have an impact on their students not only by the content of their teaching and their pedagogy, but also by how they teach and model social and emotional skills. A student’s formal learning is shaped to a large degree by their teacher, and socially and emotionally competent teachers are better able to provide a supportive and encouraging environment in which students’ may learn (Eccles & Roeser, 1999). Thus, these skills are conducive to optimal student outcomes.

Lack of executive commitment. The extent to which teachers feel that their broader school culture (such as leadership by school principals) is committed to SEL programs is considered to influence the impact of the program (Brackett et al., 2012). Programs are the strongest when
principal support and implementation quality is high (Kam, Greenberg, & Walls, 2003), and a systemic change cannot take place if the executive of the school does not support the program (Makoelle, 2014). Supportive school leadership can make a program a priority in the school as reflected in the time, resources, incentives and training allocated for it (Han & Weiss, 2005).

**Time Constraints and Resources**. Time constraints and a lack of resources are a problem for the implementation of SEL programs. Given the emphasis placed on literacy and numeracy in the curriculum (BOSTES, 2015), some teachers feel as though Literacy and Numeracy are the priority areas, with little time left over to devote to other subjects, including the development of their students’ SE skills (White, 2016). Discourse on the place of well-being in schools has become contested within the political arena as schools are called on to provide the necessary skills for students to participate successfully in The National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing, as well as delivering all of the content within the Australian curriculum (Authority, 2013; Ormerod, 2012). It therefore understandable that teachers may feel that there is a time constraint placed on the delivery of SEL.

**Possible Solutions to Obstacles**

The combination of the science of positive psychology with best practice teaching is recommended to encourage and support schools and their communities to flourish, though while this goal is clear, practical implementation is complex (Norrish, Williams, O’Connor, & Robinson, 2013). Successful implementation can be achieved through professional development and technical assistance to educators to extend knowledge about and motivation for the programs (Devaney, O’Brien, Resnik, Keister, & Weissberg, 2006). Possible solutions to the obstacles hindering implementation are outlined below: they include professional development, autonomy, executive commitment, teacher SEL and clear organisation.

**Professional Development**. School based SEL promotes a role for the classroom teacher, that encompasses the social and emotional skill acquisition of their students (Freeman, Strong, Cahill, Wyn, & Shaw, 2003). A key facet contributing to the success of a program is teacher commitment, and given that professional development increases the likelihood of a program's successful implementation (McCormick, Steckler, & McLeroy, 1995) it is necessary for a commitment to SEL professional development coordinated/implemented by an experienced consultant.

Many teachers admit that their classroom practices are not always modified by professional development as they often remain in their comfort zones (Hunzicker, 2004). Thus, professional development needs to be addressed in such a way that renders it effective. Fullan (2007) advocates a system in which the teachers are given continuous and sustained learning within the context of their own school, along with the opportunity to observe and be observed by other teachers at their own and other schools. Ongoing support is vital: once a program is installed it requires monitoring.
through careful scrutiny and action research in order to measure progress, to assess how the program is evolving and to make any necessary modifications.

Performance feedback provided by a program consultant can increase teachers’ use of the intervention, improve program fidelity and produce greater improvement in students’ outcomes. Consultation can improve teachers’ motivation to implement programs by focussing their attention on the improvements of their students’ behaviour and skills and by evaluating the immediate effects of a program (Han & Weiss, 2005). Eventually, the teachers’ motivation should become self-sustaining and the need for the consultant would therefore cease. It is through the observation of the positive impacts on their students that teachers continue to implement the programs with fidelity (Datnow & Castellano, 2000).

**Autonomy.** Several studies suggest that implementation is more successful when some degree of adaptability to the program is approved. Given that contexts change, it is important that teachers are able to adapt the program to suit their needs (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Han & Weiss, 2005). As long as teachers have a sufficient knowledge of the content, having the autonomy to be able to change a program to fit individual contexts should make it more effective, as long as the core program components are retained. A key factor to ensuring teachers understand the program is through consultant feedback to identify areas for further training, to help adapt the program, and to support teachers to assess the development of their students’ skills (Han & Weiss, 2005).

**Executive Commitment.** The commitment of the executive to the principles underlying the provision of SEL in a school is vital for the motivation of the staff who are tasked with its implementation (Makoelle, 2014). Individuals at a school relate to each other according to the protocol of authority and responsibility, and thus the notions of power and equity cannot be divorced from the process of change (Matthes, 2013). In order for SEL to be taken seriously it requires committed and clear leadership with ideas about how to develop schools from being good to excellent, and to challenge the existing views of education as solely focused on reading, writing and mathematics (White, 2016).

**Providing Teacher SEL.** While students need to think and behave in certain ways, it is equally important that teachers and administrators develop their own SE skills. A conducive environment for SEL can be achieved by promoting the concepts across the broader school environment (e.g. school disciplinary structure) (Elias et al., 1997). The curriculum in an SEL program relies on modelling from teachers, administrators and peers to reinforce the newly acquired skills, thus, specific instruction for teachers about how to maintain social and emotional wellbeing in their own lives would make it easier for them to relate the concepts to their students.

**Clear organisation.** A clear mandate as to how the school is going to provide SEL provides guidelines for those who are expected to deliver SEL, whether it be via a whole school approach such as Geelong Grammar (Seligman et al., 2009), the Kids Matter framework (KidsMatter, 2006), structured program such as Bounce Back! (Noble & McGrath, 2011) or with a range of social constructivist teaching strategies that support the students’ SE skills (Hattie, 2009; Millett & Tapper, 2011; Schreiber & Valle, 2013). Even for those who believe that they are developing their students’
social-emotional skills already, there is still a need to program collaboratively for these lessons in the same way as other academic subjects in order to take it out of the individual teacher’s domain and into the wider school team (Elias et al., 2000). When embarking on the implementation of an SEL program, teacher involvement in the planning has been found to be important in its success (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Thus, clear organisation is important in order for the chosen method(s) of SEL provision to be effective.

Conclusion

SEL aims to foster the development of the five competencies identified by CASEL and aims to provide students with the necessary skills to overcome social or emotional challenges they may face. It should be provided in a school setting because it is one of the most important developmental contexts in young people’s lives, as recognised by The Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008) which places social emotional skills as central to the goals for Australian schooling. SEL can be provided in a variety of ways including whole school approaches such as the Geelong Grammar model and Kids Matter Framework using a SEL program such as Bounce Back!, or through academic teaching strategies such as cooperative learning. It is important that chosen methods of SEL are evidence based so as to ensure that they are able to provide the positive outcomes for which they are designed. Factors that hinder the successful implementation of any approaches to SEL need to be identified and overcome. Solutions include professional development that grants autonomy to the teachers, school leadership commitment to the initiatives, SEL for the teachers themselves, as well as the provision of clear organisation and the delivery of enough time and resources.

Given that the provision of SEL is not necessarily without obstacles, there is a requirement for research that establishes the perceptions of the teachers regarding the need for it, and whether and how they implement it. Using the perceptions of those who are directly involved in providing tuition in this area is likely to provide valuable insight for leaders who are attempting to implement SEL most effectively at their schools. The way in which SEL is provided by the teachers at NPS will be addressed in this study. The use of Activity Theory (Engestrom, 2000) to analyse the teachers’ actions will allow examination of the interconnection between various elements of the school (the ‘activity system’). These include the teachers, the rules under which they work, the wider community and the resources they use in the successful provision of SEL. Activity Theory is useful because it allows for the fact that the teachers’ perceptions will be shaped by their own experiences, as per the tenets of social constructivism. Having examined the teachers’ perceptions of the activity system, observations may be made which will support the provision of SEL at NPS and other schools.
Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this case study is to explore teachers’ perceptions of why and how they provide SEL to develop their students’ social and emotional skills, and what, if any, support is required to ensure effective implementation. The methodology is designed to conduct a qualitative study of three teachers at NPS who provide SEL through classroom based practices. The data was collected by conducting semi-structured, open-ended interviews with the three participants. Data was analysed using Activity Theory to gain a clear understanding of the teachers’ perceptions of the activity engaged in supporting student SEL within the school, including the presence of contradictions that hinder the activity, and boundary objects that may alleviate such tension. This design allowed me to understand teachers’ perceptions of the implementation of SEL programs at their school and to identify whether any support structures are necessary. This section describes the research methodology, specific methods for data collection, and the ways in which data was analysed.

Qualitative Design (Case Study and Activity Theory)

Case Study. Qualitative research is characterised by studying people in the natural world and discovering how they construct meaning from their experiences and interact with each other. Furthermore, it enables the researcher to report their findings within the context and in the everyday language of the participants (Hatch, 2002). Case study research as a type of qualitative research is appropriate for this project as it investigates a bounded group of teachers at a specific school and their specific experiences about the same program. Disciplines such as education use case studies in research with an emphasis on detailed description and an understanding and explanation of a social process or phenomenon (Swanborn, 2010). It is a useful way of conveying an understanding of a complex issue through the use of interviews and can add weight to what is already known through previous research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

Case study is a useful tool with which to produce context dependent knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Furthermore, experts commonly operate on the basis of in depth knowledge about many concrete cases as opposed to one generalised theory, focusing on describing and explaining developments within a single case (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Forming conclusions based on case studies may provide some cautious ideas about a phenomenon in general or as a minimum some suggestions for designs for further research (Swanborn, 2010). Falsification is one of the most rigorous tests to which a scientific proposition can be subjected: if just one observation does not fit from the proposition, then the proposition is not valid generally (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Describing certain successive behaviours or situations in detail along with their motivations may obtain insights into micro level social processes which would remain hidden if we were restrained to simply survey like methods (Swanborn, 2010). For this reason qualitative research
methodology, and specifically case study, is the most useful for this research question: it attempts to ascertain the processes behind the implementation of the SEL Program. If we want information about what people perceive and decide in relation to their interaction during a certain period a case study is the optimal strategy (Swanborn, 2010).

**Activity Theory.** Activity Theory is the central theoretical framework of the project. Activity Theory focuses on activity as the unit of analysis for mental development. It distinguishes activity from action (Feryok, 2009): while activity concerns social motives, action is simply directed towards a goal. Activity Theory is an approach that views human development as embedded within socio-cultural contexts and intrinsically interwoven within them, for example, the provision of SEL by teachers in a school setting.

Central to Activity Theory is the distinction between *actions*, as directed towards short term goals, and the more durable object oriented *activity* (Engestrom, 2000). The object is that around which an activity system works (e.g. for teachers, a program of lessons in a school) while the motive is embedded in the object (e.g. successful implementation). Actions can only be analysed when placed against a backdrop of an entire system of activity, otherwise they are independent (Engestrom, 2000) The prime unit of analysis within Activity Theory is a collective activity system seen in its relations to other activity systems.

The identification of inconsistencies in an activity system enables practitioners to make recommendations regarding the redesign of any problematic areas. Due to the fact that it describes activities as hierarchical in nature, Activity Theory provides a model for dissecting activities into actions and operations. It states that activities are mediated by the tools that are used, which enables us to explain the relationship between the user and the tool (Hashim & Jones, 2007). This renders the theory useful for the present research since the aim is to explain the relationship between the teachers (subjects) and the delivery of SEL (tool). Examination of the activity system also provides a means by which to explore the perceptions of the teachers in relation to NPS’ approach to SEL.

Through analysis of the key relationships between the elements (nodes) of any given activity, that is, between the subjects, rules, tools, objects, community and division of labour, it was possible to identify any contradictions that were leading to problems relating to the research question (Figure 1). In this project, the subjects were the participant teachers, the rules were the school and governmental policies pertaining to SEL, the object was the successful development of children’s social and emotional skills through SEL, the community was the teachers, students and families and the division of labour the way in which the teachers took responsibility for the provision of SEL.
In turn, recommendations have been made based on cycles of expansive learning model (Figure 2) that begin with actions of questioning and analysing the existing standard practice (Engestrom, 2000). While standard theories of learning focus on a process where a subject is taught identifiable knowledge or skills with the aim that a corresponding change in behaviour will be observed, most kinds of learning contradict this assumption of how people learn. People in activity systems such as the school are always learning things that are not stable or even understood ahead of time (Engestrom, 2001). Thus, it is necessary to analyse the activity system, identify contradictions, design a new model for the activity, implement the model, reflect upon the new model and re-evaluate: expansive learning at work produces new forms of work activity (Engestrom, 2001). Social Constructivism and Activity Theory are related as they both acknowledge the importance of social interaction with the development of knowledge and understanding as well as overall outcomes from any situation in which multiple actors are present. Activity Theory was chosen as it provided an effective structure with which to measure the effects of social interaction.

The purpose of this research is to examine teachers’ perceptions of SEL in their classrooms and at NPS, and to identify what support is needed, if any, to effectively deliver it. Utilising the Activity Theory model allows me to make recommendations in this way and effectively address the research questions.
Research Questions

This project will aim to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the teachers' perceptions about the principles behind SEL?
2. How do the teachers address SEL in their classrooms?
3. How does the school support their teacher development of students’ social-emotional skills?
4. What would assist the teachers in improving their SEL practice?

Contexts for the Study

School Overview. The school is an established state primary school in a beachside suburb in Sydney. There are approximately six hundred students and twenty-four classes. The average socio-economic status of the school families is upper middle class. There are classroom teachers for each class including four teaching assistant principals (stage leaders), and a non-teaching deputy principal and principal. There are various programs in place at the school including a kitchen and garden program promoting healthy eating, language classes and enrichment classes in each stage catering for the needs of gifted and talented students. The school also embeds Philosophy for Children (Millett & Tapper, 2011), a program that teaches comprehension skills through encouraging deep questioning techniques and discusses the moral issues in texts, which helps build resilience and respect for differing opinions. The school is supported by an active Parents and Citizens Association that organises school events and initiatives for fund raising and to build an inclusive school community.

SEL policy. The social and emotional development of the students at the school is directed by a number of policies put in place by the school itself, the NSW Department of Education and the federal Australian government.

Federal policy requirements. The Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008) is a federal agreement between the States that outlines the goals for education in Australia. The second of the two broad goals focuses on the individual students and states that they are to become confident and creative individuals who have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that will enable them to manage their overall wellbeing. The National Safe Schools Framework (SCSEEC, 2013) provides school communities with a set of principles and practical tools and resources that will help build a positive school culture. It is a nationwide policy that all schools’ individual policies are guided by.

State policy requirements. At a State education level, the NSW Wellbeing Framework (DEC, 2015) was introduced in 2015 and aims to support students’ physical, social, emotional and spiritual development. The NSW Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) K-6 Syllabus (BOSTES, 2007) is mandated by the NSW government and documents the content that should be covered in PDHPE classes. It aims to encourage an understanding and valuing of self and others,
promotes physical activity and emphasises informed decision making leading to effective and responsible action (BOSTES, 2007).

**School policies.** The NPS Discipline Policy (see Appendix #10) focuses upon providing a learning environment that is safe and secure, inclusive and free from bullying and harassment. Support options for students who are struggling to follow the rules and requirements of the school as per the policy include teacher/student conferences, parent/teacher conferences, behaviour monitoring cards, referral to Learning Support Team, individual behaviour plans and student counselling. *Kids Matter* (KidsMatter, 2006) is a nationwide, federally funded optional initiative that promotes the resilience and wellbeing of students. NPS has chosen to embed the program, which consists of four components including the development of a positive school community, social and emotional learning programs (of which *Bounce Back!*, used at NPS, is one) and working with parents and carers. NPS uses *Bounce Back!* as its main SEL program.

**Measures for Ethical Protection**

I work at the school at which the research was conducted. The risk of conflict of interest and coercion was minimised by asking the Deputy Principal (DP) to present an overview of the study to all staff along with the Participant Information Statement and Consent Form and ask them to consider being involved. Any teachers who were interested in taking part contacted me directly to avoid any feelings of pressure from the DP should they decide not to take part.

The DP signed a consent form stating that she would share information with and ask teachers to be involved without coercion. Pseudonyms have been used for the participants and I have not disclosed the name of the school. The Principal and DP are not identifiable outside the school but they were asked to sign a consent form to state that they are happy to be identifiable within the school.

**Role of the Researcher**

My fascination with psychology began when I was at school and was offered the opportunity to do it as a subject for my Higher School Certificate. The teacher was extremely passionate and transferred her enthusiasm of the subject on to me. I went on to study Psychology as one of the subjects for my undergraduate degree and assumed I would use all I had learned in a workplace environment. Several years after completing my undergraduate degree I decided to become a teacher, the main reason being so that I could incorporate the themes of psychology into a classroom with the aim of giving my students some of the tools I had learned regarding resilience and social skills.

Having finished my teaching degree, I started to teach at a school and was introduced to *Bounce Back!* as the program the school was implementing for social and emotional learning. I was interested in it and began to use the resource. It became apparent that other teachers however,
were not using it to its full capacity – they were giving it to other teachers to teach in their release time, or they simply weren’t including it in their teaching program at all. So I began to ask what their thoughts were about the program, to mixed responses including “if it isn’t taught at home there is nothing we can do” and “it takes too much time to prepare, and some of the books aren’t even in print anymore.”

These responses lead, ultimately, to this research project. I believe it to be the classroom teacher’s role to do provide SEL opportunities for their students given that it is they who have relationships with the students and can tailor it to meet their needs. I conduct professional development workshops on the program and will incorporate teachers’ perspectives on the support they need into the training sessions so as to assist other teachers with their implementation.

Participant Selection

The justification for choosing certain types of individuals for participation in a study is essential for the strength of the study’s findings (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006). A sample of three participants was selected based on criterion sampling, a type of purposive, nonprobability sampling that involves selecting participants that meet to some degree a set of predetermined criterion (Patton, 2002). The participants recruited for this study met the criteria of being teachers of Kindergarten to Year Six classes, who had been at the school for at least a year and as such had some degree of experience with the Bounce Back! program and SEL in the school. These teachers were able to provide insight as to their own and others’ perceptions of the approach to SEL at NPS.

Once a list of suitable candidates was determined based on the criteria, the deputy principal of the school (DP) sent out an email to invite these teachers to participate in the study, directing them to contact me directly. The teachers were selected on a ‘first come, first serve’ basis and as such the first three teachers to respond were selected to take part in the study.

The participants completed one full interview of approximately one hour each, as well as a follow up interview of approximately fifteen minutes in order for them to add any information they may have omitted. This research design could advance the research on the topic of the successful implementation of SEL because it enabled me to ask questions in order to glean knowledge of their understanding and use of SEL strategies in the classroom and at NPS as a whole.

Data Collection Strategies

Interview questions informed by previous research were used in order to ascertain whether conclusions previously drawn about teachers’ perceptions of the implementation of SEL programs hold true in this particular circumstance. The formal interview questions (see Appendix #9) were recorded on an IPhone and followed the stages set out by Robson (2002), including:

- the arrival, crucial for the establishment of a relationship between the participant and myself,
• the introduction of research in which the purpose was reiterated and built upon from the participant information statement,
• asking the interview questions that guided the participant through the key themes, and finally,
• the ending, in which the interviewer thanked the participant. If extra information was raised at this stage, the IPhone was set to record again.

The formal interview questions were related to each of the research questions. While the project is focused on teachers’ perceptions of SEL in general, the interview questions were based around the *Bounce Back!* program as this was the program that had been chosen by NPS as the main formal provision of SEL. Interviews in a qualitative study are not usually as structured as interviews conducted in a quantitative study: unstructured interviews were more flexible and likely to yield information I hadn’t planned to ask for (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). In order to glean as much information as possible, I utilised a number of probes (Kvale, 1996) including:

• amplifactory probes, that encouraged further elaboration in order to obtain a full description of a concept,
• explanatory probes that elicited further information such as why the subject had chosen to share the information, and
• clarifactory probes that explained terms, explored language, details and sequences, and challenged inconsistency.

The length of the interviews was constrained by the interviewer but also reflected how long each interviewee wanted to spend. The venue choice was left to the participants, and was in their own classroom in each case, as it was an environment that was conducive to privacy and comfort for each participant. I recorded the conversation and avoided taking notes and making assumptions and extraneous comments.

**Data Analysis**

Central to the analysis are the views of the subjects (Engestrom, 2001), which is particularly salient for this, a project based upon teachers’ perceptions. Furthermore, it is important to take the five main principles of Activity Theory into consideration:

1. the system is the unit of analysis and that all analysis must be interpreted in relation other relevant systems,
2. many perspectives need to be heard, as the subjective experience of an activity will be different for each individual,
3. the history of the activity system is of great importance,
4. contradictions are the driving forces of change in a system,
5. new understandings arise from the subjects assessing the contradictions that are found.
Having conducted and recorded three responses from three teachers, I analysed them using thematic coding (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013) in relation to Activity Theory (Engestrom, 2000), as detailed below.

1. **Organisation of details**: each of the interviews were listened to three times each, in order to get a sense of what the participant was talking about. I wrote half a page after listening to each interview to consolidate my initial understanding of what they were telling me. The interviews were transcribed and printed.

2. **Grouping and Interpretation of single instances**: to begin, I highlighted and grouped all the participants’ comments that related to the same theme together. Activity systems are comprised of six nodes including the Object, Tool, Subject, Rules, Community and Division of Labour; I went through the comments I had grouped into themes and identified which node they related to. Then, those phenomena that could not be grouped were assessed and the meanings behind them interpreted. This was done by reviewing previous research to ascertain whether these findings had occurred before.

3. **Identification of patterns**: axial and selective coding. The former was the process of relating the themes to each other and was used in order to identify meaningful relationships within the data between the nodes. The latter involved choosing the core relationships around which the findings were to be grouped, for example, the relationship between Tool and Subject.

4. **Synthesis**: once the core relationships between the nodes were established, they were compared to previous research and each other. In addition, school and government policies pertaining to SEL were examined and compared to the interview data I had just analysed. Tensions between the data were identified at this point, that is, any contradictions between observations of different areas of the activity system. Once this analysis was complete I was ready to communicate my synthesised findings formally.

5. Finally, I analysed school and government policy documents that related to the interviews and to the separate nodes of the Activity System.

**Validity Threats**

As a research design, a case study can involve any combination of interviews, observations, documents, past records and more. Given the time constraints this project features interviews only. As such it is limited by the fact that the data represents participants’ perceptions of what is happening in their classrooms as opposed to an objective record: people are apt to recall what should happen, based on their beliefs, rather than what happens in reality (Brainerd & Reyna, 2005). Thus, the data is biased as the participants’ views are not substantiated with observations or other relevant data (Locke, 2009). The intention of the study however was to explore teacher perceptions...
to better understand their engagement with SEL and what may better support them, as opposed to someone observing them and informing them of what they need.

Limited also by the small sample size with participants from the same demographic and location, the project’s findings cannot necessarily be generalised. Generalisation is not necessary however, as per the discussion of case study above states. It also presents expansion options for the research; further examination can be done to establish whether the support systems that are identified in this study for this particular context are similarly needed in different settings.

In order to ensure credibility, member checking was used (Creswell, 2007). Participants were given the opportunity to read their transcripts in order to confirm the accuracy of their portrayal. Given that the focus of the study is on their perceptions, the teachers needed to verify that the data truly represents their beliefs about the topic.

Given my employment at the school I was careful to maintain as much objectivity as possible when analysing the results. Before assuming any data automatically counted as evidence to prove a certain statement, I made sure that I looked for additional evidence of every fact within their interviews so as to me sure I was accurately representing what they meant.
Findings

The Activity System is comprised of its Object, that is, the provision of SEL at NPS, and other nodes that work together to achieve this objective including the Subjects, Rules, Tools, Community and Division of Labour (Figure 1, above). This section defines each of the nodes and reports on the findings within each element, followed by the tensions and contradictions that were present between them. The nodes of the activity system were identified from the participants’ responses, for example, the fact that there was more than one tool used to provide SEL at the school, despite the fact that one official program had been chosen by the executive to address it. While a number of contradictions were identified, they have been organised into key themes including the low priority given to SEL by the teachers, and the reasons why:

1. Lack of knowledge about the importance of SEL, and teaching strategies used in the program,
2. Conflicting systemic policies that seem to assign different levels of value to SEL,
3. Unclear expectations from the school without a whole school approach to SEL, and
4. Perceived lack of relevance of the SEL program.

The Object of this activity system is the effective development of the students’ social and emotional wellbeing. In order to attain this objective a number of facets play their parts in the system. The Subjects of the study are three classroom teachers from NPS, each with varying degrees of experience in the classroom and with facilitating SEL programs. The Rules of the activity system are varied and extensive and cover government policies and expectations, the expectations and priorities of the executive at the school as well as self-generated goals. The teachers identified more than one Tool that is utilised in the system to support the objective. These include those that the school has chosen to employ such as the Bounce Back! program, the Philosophy for Children program and optional Ethics classes as well as the mandated NSW PDHPE syllabus. The Community is comprised of the school students and their parents, the classroom teachers and executive staff including the Assistant Principals, Deputy Principals and Principal, and finally the broader local community. Finally, the Division of Labour refers to the way in which SEL is programmed and supported, as well as the overall structures under which the school is run, for example the staff hierarchy. At this school the activity is divided between the teachers, who have the autonomy to decide what is programmed for in their timetable, and when.

Objective: supporting the development of social emotional skills of students.

The Object of this activity system is to support the development of the social and emotional skills of the students at the school, clarified by Harriet who stated that “kids need to be explicitly taught social and emotional skills” (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 22). After establishing the teachers’ perceptions of the importance of SEL, it seemed they agreed that a greater understanding of SEL entailed that a higher level of importance was attributed. Thus, the requirement for more professional development was discussed. The teachers all spoke of the need for SEL to be relevant to their specific students, and for SEL concepts to be embedded across the curriculum.
To begin, I considered it necessary to establish the teachers’ general attitude to SEL, and the level of importance they attributed to it. With teachers granting SEL a high degree of importance, it follows that their commitment to the development of their students’ skills in the area would be strong. Harriet’s commitment to her students’ social and emotional development is clear as she spoke about going through [the program] with the kids and reflecting on it (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 35), and Anika’s perception was that wellbeing as a concept [was] growing (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 44) at the school. Anika agreed with Harriet that “as a teacher you have to do the general social and emotional wellbeing all day nonstop” (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 24) and said that “talk is good for communication so kids can open up about things that are happening on the playground or that are bothering them that you otherwise wouldn’t know about” (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 26). Finally, Georgie seemed particularly passionate about the need for SEL, saying that if we do things like Bounce Back! at primary school level then things like the Safe Schools Program2 (SCSEEC, 2013) “won’t be controversial because they won’t be needed” (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 78). In turn, it is interesting to analyse the way in which the teachers view the Bounce Back! program itself. That is, whether it is understood as a program that should be taught rigidly according to the lesson plans or as a resource, that can be used to complement other SEL initiatives.

The participants shared the opinion that those who are given the facts about the need for SEL are more likely to understand its significance; they judged that valuing it could be attributed to cause and effect. Harriet stated that “people [need to] understand why they’re doing it” (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 16) while Anika advocates hands on training and lesson observations (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 63). To this end Georgie believed that having consultants come and assist individual teachers with implementation would be beneficial, and recalled the implementation phase at her last school when she had the behaviour specialist to talk to if there were any issues (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 9). This line of reasoning lead to comments on the provision of such information. Georgie thought that for this to happen it must be driven by the Principal, Deputy and Aps (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 20), which Harriet agreed would “show the importance of it” (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 109).

In order to achieve the objective, the teachers wanted the specific social and emotional skills that they were teaching to be relevant at the time of teaching them. Anika spoke about the need to address issues that were current in the classroom and reflected on a time when she “had massive issues with stealing so I did that lesson earlier than the scope because of the needs of the kids” (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 14). The need to relate SEL directly to the specific needs of the students was echoed by Georgie who said it’s “quite effective for students to discuss issues that either they themselves or their peers are going through” (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 2). She thought that to develop students’ social and emotional skills “teachers should know [their] children well enough and know if [they’re] going to push buttons” (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 27) when guiding the conversation.

2 a government initiative for student mental wellbeing

Page 28 of 78
The anecdotes described above suggest that the participants believed in the need to embed SEL into all areas of their teaching, contrasted with simply utilising one program to achieve the objective. Thus, programs such as Bounce Back! are likely to be seen as a resource to assist in their provision of SEL as opposed to the only method with which it is done. Harriet summed up what an effectively implemented program would look like in her classroom, envisaging a happy classroom where everyone is getting along and is respected, and kids getting along, having good relationships with each other, trying to speak positively” (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 88).

Subjects: Interviewees.

The subjects of the activity system were the interviewees, who, having volunteered to take part in a research project about SEL programs, had predictably clear opinions about SEL and the Bounce Back! program. Each of the three participants had different levels of experience with teaching, and SEL in particular, which is discussed before. These differing degrees of experiences lead to varying views of SEL and the initiatives that may be used to provide it.

Harriet had been teaching for eight years at the time of the interview, and had been working at the school for just over a year, having had experience in other school environments. She was new coming from a different school and didn’t know much about it, so did some research (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 2). She said that she “now has some ideas about [Bounce Back] but [doesn’t] know the research behind it and whether it is actually effective” (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 14). Harriet believed that it was her role to teach [SEL] explicitly and to program for it. She says that because of time constraints she “will merge the lessons” (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 53).

Anika had been at the school for more than a couple of years, and she too had experiences elsewhere. She said that her “only understanding [of Bounce Back] was from what [she’d] read herself” (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 2). While she tries “to stick to the program as much as possible, it had always been [her] RFF (Relief from Face to Face teaching) subject since the first year [she] started teaching it” (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 2). Anika conceded that she “missed out on some discussions because [she] has the RFF teacher doing it, so she tries to do little things in the classroom to check in [with the students] every day” (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 43).

Georgie has had over ten years’ teaching experience in this and other schools and is the most experienced with the Bounce Back! program. Georgie was introduced to the program at another school where she was aided by a behaviour specialist (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 9). She has seen various approaches to implementation including a peer support setting (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 46). Her own experiences of implementing the program have involved linking it in with whatever is current for [her] class (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 3). At this school, she has it on her timetable with a list of ten topics for the term (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 33).
All of the interviewees commented on the other teachers at the school throughout the interviews. Harriet sensed that “some of the staff had not bought into the program” when she first started at the school, though said that “other people’s opinions didn’t affect [her]” (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 105). While the three participants had a range of teaching experience they were all aware of a need for SEL at the school, and had different ways of embedding it in their classrooms.

Rules: School and Government Policies

The school and its use of educational programs is governed by a number of rules, including school policies (such as extracurricular programs and professional development topics), government policies as well as rules imposed by teachers themselves pertaining to their own personal expectations of themselves.

The NSW Board of Studies (BOSTES, 2015) mandates a specific amount of time to be devoted to literacy (35%) and numeracy (20%). With all the elements that take up time in school days, these time allocations can result in a perceived lack of time to incorporate SEL effectively. Indeed, Harriet told me that finding time with everything else is a challenge (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 102). Of other staff, she thinks that with the crowded curriculum it’s seen as another thing they don’t have time for (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 99). Similarly, Anika respondents that timetabling is a challenge, “I don’t have time as so hard to find space in the syllabus” (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 55). Georgie thinks that it’s one of the things that gets dropped like sport and art when we don’t have time (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 39).

Within the school itself, policies exist that have been put in place by the executive and overseen by the Department of Education, that govern the programs that are taught and in turn the priorities of the staff. The School Discipline Policy is based upon three tenets: Be Safe, Be Responsible, Be a Learner. The effective observation of these concepts by students and teacher will contribute to SEL, even though there is not a specific mention of social and emotional skills in the policy. Georgie thought that SEL needs to be valued by leadership (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 77) in order to work properly. These school policies were not in fact mentioned by the teachers in the interviews, suggesting perhaps that they are not valued by the staff as documents that guide their decision making and that other approaches could mandate SEL more effectively.

The professional development schedule is determined by the executive team at the school. Given that not all teachers have received professional development for Bounce Back!, Anika told me that a lot of people just have to read the manual (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 64) to work it out for themselves. She said that “while we’re trained in other areas [we’re] not [trained in] Bounce Back!” (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 49). According to the professional development schedule over the last three years (see appendix #11) there was in fact a staff training day for Bounce Back! at the beginning of 2014. Given some staff turnover it follows that not all staff would have been at the school for this professional development, though the fact that those who were there have
forgotten it suggests that more embedded longitudinal teacher education is needed than a one-day session at the beginning of the year, when people are returning from summer holidays and may have other priorities on which to focus their attention.

Tools: Programs and Initiatives Utilised to Support Students’ SEL.

In order to fulfil the objective of supporting students’ social and emotional learning needs, the school chooses to enlist a number of tools. Such tools provide mediums with which to aid this purpose, in addition to the *NSW PDHPE syllabus* (BOSTES, 2007), in which outcomes such as the development of interpersonal and communication skills could be seen as addressing SEL. Other tools include *Bounce Back!* (Noble & McGrath, 2011), *Philosophy for Children* (Millett & Tapper, 2011), *Ethics and Kids Matter* (*KidsMatter*, 2006). Every child takes part in a *Philosophy for Children* (Millett & Tapper, 2011) lesson once per week which focusses on critical and creative thinking, central to the development of social and emotional skills. Comparing *Bounce Back!* to other programs in the school, Georgie noticed that “Philosophy is given high priority – if we can match *Bounce Back!* with philosophy it could be [really effective]” (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, 41).

*Kids Matter* (*KidsMatter*, 2006) is a framework run by the Australian Department of Health, and its purpose is to support the wellbeing of students. It is designed as an ‘umbrella’ program, under which *Bounce Back!* and other school programs fit in order to make the school into a community that supports students’ mental wellbeing. The framework was introduced at the end of the previous year and as such the teachers were becoming familiar with the concept of SEL. Anika noted that “people are more aware [of the need for SEL] since we've had *Kids Matter* training” (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 43).

Finally, *Ethics* classes are run as an option for students during their weekly scripture time. Given that not all students take part in this program it cannot be defined as a schoolwide medium for social and emotional learning, though those who are enrolled are supported to contemplate the sorts of issues that they may face in society, which in turn can have a positive effect on the development of their social skills. It is important to note however that these classes were not raised by the teachers in the interviews, suggesting that they are a sufficiently small part of the school program that they are overlooked.

Synonymous with the statement above that the object can be achieved if the content is relevant for the students, the participants agreed that the SEL resources should be modernised so as to maintain their relevance for today’s students. Harriet found that the resources suggested by the *Bounce Back!* program (such as specific books) are sometimes difficult to locate if the school library doesn’t have it or she can’t find a YouTube version on the internet. She said “resource wise it’s a bit outdated (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 26) given that some of the texts she wanted were out of print”; the fact that resources are out of date/print reduces the chance that they are any longer relevant to children’s lives. The problem is compounded for her given that in her
experience there aren’t many resources that are online and multimedia that can be used on the Smartboard (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 36).

Similarly, while Georgie approves of teaching SEL at school and has seen Bounce Back! successfully implemented at a former school she has found that a lot of the resources aren’t relevant (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 52) for her students anymore because while it worked well at her last school, “a program written ten years ago is not relevant for these kids – the kids I teach now know a lot more about the world than even the kids I taught ten years ago” (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, 86). All interviewees stated that online resources would be good to capture the attention of the kids as a ‘hook’, in other words, it would be good to modernise the program (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 85). Georgie doesn’t want a book anymore, [she doesn’t] need it. [She] just needs something [she] can access at home (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 54). In summary, she reflected that Bounce Back! is not prioritised because of the lack of time, resources and inclination. “It’s a busy school with lots of programs” (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 71).

In terms of the composition of the Bounce Back! (Noble & McGrath, 2011) program, Anika said that it was “good having a program to work off, that it’s like a dummy’s guide” (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 21). She likes to know that the topics are being covered and sees that Bounce Back! builds the concepts over time. Looking back to the question posed during discussion of the objective, this statement suggests that Anika views the Bounce Back! program as a guide that she can follow precisely, and not as a resource to be used to complement other SEL initiatives. She did mention however that the books aren’t straightforward to use as you look at the resource books and have to refer to the handbook to find out about the teaching strategies. “It’s not a simple way to use the resource” (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 71). Conversely, Harriet loved reading it through and learning about all the information that was in there (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 80) and likes the way it’s set out because she can choose the activities and concepts behind it (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 26). Anika and Harriet raise two very different ways of implementation and design of teaching program, the latter suggesting more creativity and differentiation for her own students.

**Community: School Staff and Families.**

**Staff attitudes.** There is a mixture of attitudes surrounding the program in the school community, comprised of the groups identified above. Harriet thought that some teachers don’t teach it, or they offload it to other teachers, saying that “a lot of teachers don’t understand why they should do it” (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 16), and lots are hesitant and resistant to teaching it because they don’t know the research behind it (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 17). As a result, she stated that the program is not very effective school wide because people don’t teach it (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 31). Similarly, Anika said that it is something “a lot of teachers think is being added on and don’t see the importance of” (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 38).

**Staff knowledge.** Georgie stated that we’ve all done various trainings but would like specialists who will come and consult with teachers about Bounce Back! (Georgie, Interview 3,
Anika agreed that staff need more development in teaching strategies. While some teachers don’t know there is a scope and sequence, those who do just “look at it to see the topic and then make up their own lessons” (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 46). To explain this approach, Anika suggested that “staff are a bit hesitant, it’s like child protection. They may be nervous of coming across something they can’t handle” (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 47). According to Georgie and Harriet, there isn’t a strong message from the executive team as to how and when to implement Bounce Back! and therefore teachers don’t prioritise it (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 70).

**Broader school community.** There is an apparent misunderstanding of the broader school community by the teachers, as stated by Georgie. While teachers are encouraged not to have prejudices, she thought there was an underlying assumption that “[the students are] rich white kids who know how to behave so don’t need [SEL]. Actually they do not – they lack the capacity to play and lack skills, I've had to write behavioural plans for so many people in kindy because they've had this issue. They are tired so end up saying and doing dumb things” (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 75). Given that parents were only mentioned once throughout the interviews by Harriet, who had five kids who have anxiety and their parents have expressed it as a concern (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 22) it seems there is a lack of involvement of members of the community when it comes to SEL which may explain this miscalculation of the school community.

**Division of Labour: Division of Responsibility for SEL.**

The ways in which workload and information is shared between staff is organised through the executive and communicated to the staff through general and team specific staff meetings. RFF teachers are in charge of teaching Languages, Philosophy and Music and therefore these subjects are not the responsibility of the classroom teachers. The staff had transitioned to individual programming at the beginning of the year, which ruled the way that staff work with each other, and can use their own judgement as to what can be prioritised in their classroom. This should have changed the way in which programming was undertaken, however the comments about the responsibility of organising Bounce Back! suggest that it is still viewed as a program that could be taught uniformly to all students. Organising the program in year or stage cycles (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 32) would be beneficial according to Harriet, and Anika adds to this having said that “one person [should be] doing the program for you[r stage]” (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 76).

Harriet was of the belief that the program should be made a priority for it to be effectively implemented, that is, given a timetabled delivery time school wide, and some sort of accountability to show that it is being done. She commented that there is no accountability from stage supervisors (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 109) regarding the program. Georgie would like to see a whole school fortnightly focus in a peer support setting (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 17). Anika agreed that there should be a weekly time for explicit teaching but that there is flexibility in terms of content so that she can move around what [she teaches] based on what the kids need at that time (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 12).
Not all stage groups in the school have someone who has taken on the role of *Bounce Back!* planner, though some do. Harriet stated that her role is to teach it explicitly and program for it (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 43) but feels that the organisation of the program should be shared across the teaching teams, reflecting on the fact that when she came to the school she perceived that it was not programmed collaboratively and that she was always the one who said let’s have [the program] all together (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 79). Anika understood that it would be good to have one person to program and explain strategies (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 75) within the team while Georgie believed that it was necessary to share or talk about it as a team to work out topics and then do your own research and decide how you want to teach it (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 25). This last comment is more in line with the notion of *Bounce Back!* as a resource, not a standardised program, however Anika has the kids doing it with the librarian in [her] RFF (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 30) which is further evidence for the view that *Bounce Back!* is not seen as a resource but a strict program that should be adhered to.

**Tensions and Contradictions**

Analysis of the individual parts of the activity system and their interaction with each other suggests that there are a few key tensions that inhibit the effective implementation of SEL in the school. It seems that its perceived importance is low for some of the staff, which could be attributed to a lack of professional development and therefore knowledge about SEL. Furthermore, conflicting policies result in uncertainty for teachers as to what they are mandated to do and have time for, unclear schoolwide expectations make prioritising SEL less likely and the perception of irrelevant programs means that they are unlikely to have any of the documented positive effects of other SEL initiatives (Meyers et al., 2015; Oberle et al., 2016; Slee et al., 2009).

**Lack of knowledge about SEL.** Anika focused on the need for training that provided strategies and lessons to teach. Harriet agreed that having a refresher of what it is, why we’re teaching it, showing resources (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 92) would make people more likely to ensure that they teach it. She said that she now [has] some ideas about it but [doesn’t] know the research behind it and whether it is actually effective (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 14), having read Kids Matter information material. Both these comments suggest that the teachers don’t have a high level of confidence of themselves as the teachers of SEL. While all agreed that giving the program a specific time with a whole school focus would be a positive step, this is the sort of policy change that they had no control over as classroom teachers.

The Australian Teacher Performance and Professional Development Framework (AITSL, 2012) is a measure of accountability that teachers must complete to show how they address a range of teaching standards, and is set out by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). The framework does not specify any professional development for teachers that relates to SEL, which may create a conflict for the subjects between what they think they should be doing regarding the teaching of social and emotional skills and what is in fact required of them by the
professional accreditation body. Teachers must complete one hundred hours of professional development in their first five years of teaching in order to move through the accreditation framework (AITSL, 2012). This professional development is discretionary and gives the teachers choice as to the areas in which their training lies. Thus, teachers can choose to develop their knowledge of SEL though are not required to do so. There are many options available of SEL professional development, thus creating a bewildering choice without clear support for teachers to select what is most appropriate or effective.

**Conflicting policies regarding SEL.** The implementation of a SEL program such a *Bounce Back!* requires adequate time allocated to it on the class timetable. A combination of school and government policies interact however, making it difficult to allot such a time, without ‘taking it away’ from other areas. Although Harriet suggested that as a school we could have a certain time when we could do it (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 103), Georgie commented that it is such a busy school with so many programs (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 71) it is difficult to fit it in. She concedes though that if the program were to be given the same value as philosophy, it could be done (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 40).

Given the overlain demands of policy directives, the teachers stated that it was hard to find the time for SEL. Harriet refers to NSW curriculum requirements, stating that finding the time [for *Bounce Back!*] with everything else is a challenge (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 102). Literacy and Numeracy are expected to be focused upon 55% of the time (BOSTES, 2015), while programs such as *Bounce Back!*, if taught as a standalone program, compete with the other four Key Learning Areas (Science, Human Society and Its Environment, Personal Development, Health and Physical Education and Creative And Performing Arts) for space on the timetable.

The Wellbeing Framework has recently been published by the NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC, 2015), outlining that schools must create opportunities for young people that strengthen their physical, social, emotional and spiritual development. It would seem that this is a positive step for programs such as *Bounce Back!*, which aims to cover identified content. The framework, however, appears to conflict with other Department policy: despite stating the importance of incorporating wellbeing into planning and processes, it may be that time allocation, reporting and curriculum requirements render this aim unrealistic for some teachers. It is unsurprising then, that the participants feel, as stated above, that finding the time [for *Bounce Back!*] is a challenge.

**Unclear schoolwide expectations of SEL.** The subjects’ choices as to how they prioritise programs when writing their timetables are governed to some degree by the value given to them by their colleagues and superiors. There was a perception among the interviewees that if the executive staff [were] driving the whole school program it would be more likely to be done. Harriet commented that having supervisors monitoring the delivery of the program (Harriet, Interview 1, 9/3/16, line 111) would act as an incentive. The autonomous nature of the program at the school may mean that the subjects are less likely to implement the program in their classrooms.
**Lack of relevance of SEL.** Flexible initiatives and up to date resources were seen by the participants as required to ensure the relevance, and subsequent effectiveness, of SEL at the school. Given more up to date resources and adaptable lesson plans, SEL will be made more significant for the students.

**Integration of SEL initiatives.** In order for a SEL program to permeate across all areas of a student’s life, the content must be referred to across all areas of the curriculum (Meyers et al., 2015). The tool selected by the school executive to support SEL at NPS was the *Bounce Back!* program. There were other programs at the school that complemented it however, including *Philosophy for Children, Ethics and Kids Matter.* While the latter is in fact a framework under which all other programs exist, it has at the time of data gathering only just been introduced at NPS and as such has been made to feel somewhat like another program. Programs concerned with the development of the students’ social and emotional skills have been positioned at NPS in the same way as programs for other academic areas, suggesting that they can be used in a one size fits all manner. That is, the teachers have been given the *Bounce Back!* program, and the other programs have been put in place for the children, with the view that the same programs will be relevant and appropriate for every student in the same way. Given that students have different social and emotional needs at different times, it follows from the data that SEL should be addressed in a way that caters for these needs, as opposed to simply following a scope and sequence.

Anika said that the program is like a dummies guide, so that those teachers who may be nervous of coming across issues they can’t handle (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 21) can follow it precisely. This suggests she sees that guide as an antidote to the fact that there has not been enough professional development surrounding SEL. In an effectively implemented SEL program however, the concepts that are covered are integrated across all areas of the curriculum and therefore depart from the program at some points depending on the particular class. Anika’s above statement suggests that the true nature of a SEL program (Dusenbury et al., 2015; Meyers et al., 2015) has not been communicated to the teachers and as a result they are not implementing the program in the correct manner. Furthermore, the fact that some teachers are nervous to teach content pertaining to social and emotional skills implies that they need further training to increase their confidence when delivering it.

**Resources.** Georgie cited the need for relevance and modernisation of the *Bounce Back!* program, given that these kids know more than the kids ten years ago (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 87), around the time the program was written. Given the static nature of the program, that is, hardcopy, it is difficult to update the product on an ongoing basis. Another hurdle the participants faced was the need for flexibility in terms of content (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 12). Georgie wants the students discussing issues that are current, linking it with what’s going on at the time (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 3). Georgie suggested that online resources would make life easier. Given her work schedule, she said don’t give me a book anymore, I don’t need it. I just need something I can access at home (Georgie, Interview 3, 15/3/16, line 54). The fact that the
program is in hardcopy format seems to be a recurring issue; Anika commented that rather than locate the books teachers were more likely to just look at scope and sequence to see topic and then make up their own (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 47).

Conclusion

There are a few key tensions that inhibit the effective implementation of SEL in the school. It seems that its perceived importance is low for some of the staff, which may be attributed to a lack of professional development and therefore knowledge about SEL. In addition, inconsistent policies result in uncertainty for teachers as to what they are ‘meant’ to do. The participants were unsure of school wide expectations, making the high priority of SEL less likely and their perception of irrelevant programs means that they were unlikely to have any of the documented effects positive effects of other SEL initiatives (Meyers et al., 2015; Oberle et al., 2016; Slee et al., 2009).

Figure 3: Interaction of the Activity System at NPS
Discussion

Having identified the tensions and contradictions that are present in the activity system, it is necessary to apply the findings to the greater field of research; to examine the similarities between these findings and those from other research projects. As discussed in the findings above, there are significant tensions between the objective that is promoting the need for and development of social and emotional skills with the amount of time that is devoted to the facilitation of SEL programs. Analysis of the professional development surrounding SEL, the systemic policies mandating its provision, the executive commitment to a whole school approach and the relevance of SEL programs to the students and their families indicate tensions in the activity system that, if alleviated, would serve to further the goal of effective SEL implementation by placing SEL higher on teachers’ lists of priorities. Indeed, a range of conditions such as the background knowledge of students and teachers, existing SEL programs, the provision of resources and leadership commitment to a schoolwide program have been found to influence the effectiveness of SEL initiatives (Askell-Williams et al., 2009).

Professional learning for teachers concerning social and emotional skills, both regarding their importance as well as their relevance for the teachers’ own wellbeing, is vital. It will ensure that teachers have adequate knowledge of why SEL is effective and the strategies with which to teach the concepts, as well as develop their own social and emotional skills. These factors combined may address the question of how and whether to make time to teach the skills, an issue that was recognised by all the participants. Discussed further below, it is after all the will and skills of the teachers themselves that hinders or drives forward the implementation efforts given that the task of integrating social and emotional skills into their current teaching programs can have physical, mental and emotional effects (Ransford, Greenberg, Domitrovich, Small, & Jacobsen, 2009). The aim for the teachers at this school would be to ensure that SEL is high on their list of priorities, and greater knowledge of the programs is one way of encouraging this.

A particular concern for all participants was the pressure they felt to accommodate all the demands on their teaching time. This is echoed in research by (Oberle et al., 2016) who found that educators felt anxious to address competing priorities in the school curriculum such as addressing the requirements of the syllabus, ensuring their students’ academic success and supporting those with special needs. The fact that teachers felt SEL to be an additional burden on their high workload indicates the need for teaching priorities and the integration of SEL content teaching skills to be examined. The tensions in the activity system suggested that contradictory policies concerning SEL and its relationship with other curriculum areas dictate these priorities and as such should be addressed.

A traditional perspective on academic and social-emotional skills is that they are separate areas of development, though research supports their interrelatedness (Oberle, Schonert-Reichl, Hertzman, & Zumbo, 2014). Many educational planners and policy makers are fixated with achievement tests and measures of cognitive skills at the expense of valuable non-cognitive skills.
and motivation that comes from SEL programs (Heckman, 2004). There is a growing recognition of the importance of mental health in the Australian context (Slee et al., 2011) and as a result policies such as The Wellbeing Framework for Schools (DEC, 2015) have been introduced as a reference for schools regarding SEL. The need for policy alignment will be discussed below.

Participants in this study cited that increased knowledge about SEL would influence their prioritising of the program as well as the importance given to it as a school. This reflects the school policy (as opposed to the systemic policy described above) which is governed by the leadership team. The perception that such mandates would make a difference in the practical functioning of the school was reflected in the statement by one participant that since Kids Matter (KidsMatter, 2006) had been introduced by the executive, awareness of the importance of mental health education had gone up among the staff (Anika, Interview 2, 10/3/16, line 43). A whole school approach to the implementation of SEL, supported by the school leadership team, is fundamental and incorporates the needs of students, staff and the wider community (Oberle et al., 2016).

The relevance of lessons for the development of social and emotional skills to the students’ lives was discussed by all participants, who cited the need for modern resources and flexibility in programming so as to address current issues. That parental involvement was only mentioned once across the interviews suggests that collaboration between the school and families could be increased. Literature indicates that partnerships with families can assist schools through the provision of resources and support (Dix et al., 2011) and that each party should place value upon the input and perspective of the other in order to build such partnerships (Epstein, 1995).

The following sections examine the professional development relating to SEL at NPS, the systemic and schoolwide guidelines directing its provision, the executive commitment to a whole school approach and the relevance of the SEL for the students it is catering for. A comparison of this research data with other studies ascertains the extent to which they make a difference to the effectiveness of SEL provision at the school.

**Professional Development**

All of the participants commented in some form that social and emotional skill development lessons were among the first to be set aside when they perceived they were time poor. This reflects a lack of knowledge about the program and what it is about – with professional learning it is likely that SEL would be higher on their list of priorities, as per the findings of Durlak et al. (2011) that the development of an evidence based intervention is not sufficient for success, it must be well executed by the teachers. It has been found that in order for a new school based initiative to be implemented effectively, professional learning must be in place and must address staff attitudes, perceptions and beliefs so that staff are motivated to adopt new practices and feel confident to do so (Durlak & DuPre, 2008).
In order to address the challenges cited by the participants in terms of prioritising the program and feeling confident to teach it, the professional development program should focus upon why SEL is so important and specific teaching strategies to address the concepts, as well as the teachers’ own social and emotional skills. It is recommended that such programs are based upon the connection between social and emotional health and wellbeing with improved academic learning; developing an awareness of how mental health impacts everything we do, including our ability to learn (Dix & Murray-Harvey, 2011).

Addressing the importance of SEL. As stated above, it is vital that teachers understand the positive correlation between mental health and wellbeing with improved academic results so that they may see the relevance of fostering it for their own classroom, quite apart from the other benefits it brings to their students’ lives. A significant positive relationship existed between the implementation of the *Kids Matter* initiative and the academic achievement of primary school students; (Dix et al., 2011) found that the effect was equal to up to six months of schooling.

Though the evidence base for SEL programs has grown significantly in recent years (Oberle et al., 2016), there are critics who assert that the consensus that the mental health of young people is declining is unchallenged and that there is therefore a preoccupation with vulnerability (Eccleston & Hayes, 2008). The case for SEL asserts that rather than focusing on mental illness, these programs address the promotion of mental health, specifically the five core SEL competencies as listed above (CASEL, 2003). It can be argued however that this is a deficit approach, assuming that all students require SEL at school to develop these skills. To balance this argument, it may be useful to view social emotional skills on a continuum of how useful they may be in a given situation (Niemiec, 2014). Independent and systemic assessments of many SEL programs are necessary in order to establish the full range of implications of SEL in schools (Hoffman, 2009).

Teachers who are made aware of the imperative for early intervention may recognise that their classrooms are the ideal environment for the delivery of the preventative services that will address their students’ physical and mental health (Slee et al., 2011). This knowledge has implications for the way the teachers may see SEL; rather than an extra burden on top of regular teaching programs, it may be seen as a way to address the academic achievement of the students (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Research has identified that staff were likely to become disinterested in programs where expected radical change did not eventuate within the short term (Humphrey, Lendrum, & Wigelsworth, 2010).

The Introduction of Appropriate Teaching Strategies for Integration and Confidence. As well as the relationship with academic success being likely to change the teachers’ view of teaching SEL, so too would having integrative teaching strategies to eliminate the challenge of being time poor, and of not having the confidence to teach the concepts successfully. While there is much evidence to suggest the benefits of promoting SEL programming, many teachers feel under prepared to implement it properly (Bierman et al., 2008). This is consistent with the view of one of
the participants in this study, who perceived that the staff lacked the confidence to teach the concepts.

Professional development and the use of consultants to guide teachers through the most effective ways of integrating SEL across all key learning areas may show the teachers that they can easily incorporate the concepts into their programs without forgoing other perceived necessities. Supporters of integrated SEL have found that teachers can develop positive self-concept, social skills and emotional empathy through engaging students in discussions relating to how the people in the classroom are feeling when learning; similarly, emotional self-control can be developed through waiting their turn and being taught to recognise perseverance (Weare, 2004). SEL can be assimilated into the existing English or Social Studies teaching program, by drawing from literature that offers natural opportunities for discussing emotions, behaviours and relationships (Yoder, 2013). The possibility of combining SEL with traditional academic subjects is not confined to English but can be developed across the Arts, through expressing emotions with paint or movement, Science through learning about the physiology of emotion and History through understanding others’ emotions and taking their perspectives in various historical situations (Weare, 2004).

Professional learning can illuminate for teachers the fact that as well as formally integrating SEL into their programs, effective implementation of SEL programs also involves modelling social-emotional competence. It highlights the importance of giving students opportunities in the classroom to build and practise their social-emotional skills through the activities they set such as group work projects (Bierman & Motamedi, 2015).

The provision of professional learning regarding specific teaching strategies may give the teachers confidence to incorporate social-emotional concepts into their lessons because what teachers demonstrate in the classroom does not depend solely on their motivations but also on what they have been trained to do (Leithwood & McAldie, 2007). Teachers with low levels of conviction of their ability to teach a particular subject may be more likely to have ineffective instruction skills and lower achievements from their students, while higher confidence results in the motivation to try new teaching strategies (Fullan, 2007). Thus, it follows that with extended professional development in this area, teachers will be supported to integrate SEL into their classrooms.

Professional development enhancing teacher wellbeing and its effects. As mentioned above, the successful implementation of an SEL program is dependant not only on how the concepts are embedded into the standard curriculum, but also the way in which the teacher presents themselves as a role model for their students. Effective teachers can present scenarios in which their students must exercise problem solving, as well as nurturing a learning environment that promotes the social-emotional skills (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

The lack of knowledge about and confidence in the program was discussed by all the participants which suggests. It can also be assumed that these teachers have not had the additional
benefit of SEL teacher training that is related to their own wellbeing and subsequent effective implementation techniques. Much research about SEL has outlined the benefits for the students but some has also found that the benefits of SEL may also extend to teachers (Axford et al., 2010; Cain & Carnellor, 2008). Teachers who had integrated an SEL programme with a behaviour intervention reported higher levels of efficacy and personal accomplishment than those who implemented the behaviour intervention alone (Domitrovich et al., 2015).

Policy alignment

The teachers’ priorities are not determined by their knowledge base alone but also by the demands placed on them from external policy makers such as regulatory bodies and government departments. School policy has an effect on teacher priorities also, and will be discussed in the next section.

Participants cited that they felt that they had inadequate time on their timetables to fit in all the programs the school had to offer, as well as the curriculum requirements in place by the Board of Studies. Given the emphasis on academic testing and recording as noted above, it is little wonder that teachers feel that they must put all their efforts into addressing academic achievement. The relationship between SEL and academic achievement is of course discussed above, but it is important to give consideration to the fact that without a clear mandate of what teachers need to do with regard to SEL they will have to focus on the policies they do have, pertaining to how much time should be spent on what area (BOSTES, 2015). And, while SEL can be integrated into subjects across all learning areas, the fact remains that without clear guidelines it is difficult for teachers to know what to prioritise. Given that, as previously mentioned, the introduction of a school wide mental wellbeing framework was cited by a participant as having started to change teachers’ perceptions of SEL, it suggests a wider policy intervention would have an even greater impact.

It has been noted that despite mental health becoming a higher priority for national governments (Greig, MacKay, Roffey, & Williams, 2016), there has not been a great deal of progress in terms of deliverable intervention strategies. As discussed, there is a clear role for education to play in addressing the mental health problems of young people, and it seems that governments have been heeding the calls for action (see, for example, (DoHA, 2010). There needs to be a much greater focus at systemic policy level on school interventions however, or the potential benefits of such programs will not be realised (Durlak et al., 2011).

The development of students’ social-emotional competencies has been found to require a systemic approach to SEL implementation (Oberle et al., 2016). The tensions in the activity system surrounding conflicting calls on teachers’ time prompt examination of the current state of mental health education policy and the arguments for and against systemic policy intervention.

The World Health Organisation has evaluated the research that relates to the development of mental health and is working with national governments to disseminate the information and to
integrate effective strategies into policies (WHO, 2016b). In addition, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development considers that well-being should be a key outcome of learning (OECD, 2007). In Australia, mental health has become a national priority, as exhibited by the Council of Australian Governments’ National Action Place for Mental Health (DoHA, 2010). The positive evaluation of the Kids Matter mental wellbeing framework for schools (Slee et al., 2009) led to the federal government giving support for more extensive roll out of the program.

The argument for formal SEL systemic policies is compelling. Doyle, Colm, Harmon, and Heckmanc (2009) discuss other arguments in favour of SEL policies for primary schools, apart from the physical, social and psychological. They identify the economic imperatives for social-emotional skills and say that there are gains, based on a cost-benefit analysis, to be made from investing at different stages of life. This sentiment is echoed by the assertion that investment in social policies that intervene in the early years have higher rates of return than those for the later years, and that the benefits are seen in terms of “social performance” (Heckman, 2004). Finally, there is some evidence to acknowledge the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement in the bid to reduce inequality (Emery, 2009).

SEL programming is likely to be successful if the support is in place from school district leaders and other educational stakeholders (Mart, Weissberg, & Kendziora, 2015). School area leaders that are accountable for groups of schools are in a position to campaign for policies that support the integration of SEL and organise the required resources. When this systemic support is provided there are positive outcomes including a shared vision for SEL, motivated staff and a positive school climate (Oberle et al., 2016).

A school-wide approach to SEL

The prioritising of SEL by teachers at the school is also likely to be influenced by the policies undertaken by the school to address mental health promotion. Participants commented that SEL did not seem to be prioritised by the school in general, which suggests that a uniform approach was not being taken across all levels of the school. It would seem that a whole school approach, in which the whole school community is the unit of change and integrates SEL into daily practices (Jones & Bouffard, 2012), would be likely to affect teachers priorities in relation to SEL.

Vostanis, Humphrey, Fitzgerald, Deighton, and Wolpert (2013) found that many interventions used by school staff were reactive, as opposed to being focused on prevention. With a whole school approach, SEL tends to take the form of policies and structures that promote a positive school environment in which students can develop academically, socially and psychologically (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Having a systemic approach means that schools move away from a disjointed response and towards coordinated programs in which teachers know what is expected of them (Greenberg et al., 2003).
In order for a whole school approach to be effective, key personnel such as the principal or other executive staff may take the lead on the implementation of the program (Dix & Murray-Harvey, 2011). Key staff members such as these, who are decision makers and hence set the tone for the school priorities, should be not only knowledgeable about SEL but also a visible change agent (Marzano, Waters, & McNully, 2005). Given that the participants did not feel as though there was a strong mandate in place concerning SEL, it is likely that leadership such as this would have a positive impact on the teachers’ prioritising of SEL. Furthermore, in order for the professional learning discussed above to be most effective, it must align with the school goals – thus, the vision for this school, as defined by the school executive staff, will need to incorporate SEL if the professional learning is going to make any difference (Jourdan, Stirling, McNamara, & Pommier, 2011).

In support of school wide programming are the four tenets of SEL progression, as reviewed by (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). These include

- fostering SEL skills consistently,
- developing SEL and academic skills at the same time by incorporating strategies that integrate SEL into all learning areas,
- placing an emphasis on teacher-student, peer and staff-student relationships to reflect the fact that social-emotional skills develop in social contexts and finally,
- the operation of classrooms and schools as unified systems in order to shape the social climate of the school (Oberle et al., 2016).

All staff at the school must be involved in the whole school approach, including teachers, librarians, support staff, administrators, counsellors, in order for it to be effective (Dusenbury et al., 2015).

Relevance

All the participants discussed the importance of having flexibility to teach topics that are relevant to the students at a specific point in time. Ensuring the relevancy of an SEL program could affect the likelihood of it being utilised given that, as has been noted, assisting students with tackling social and emotional challenges is a fundamental role of the teacher. Ways to make the program relevant include ensuring best practise in terms of integration of the content into all areas of school, collaboration between school, families and the community, and the modernisation of resources.

Integration of content. The integration of SEL across all learning areas was discussed above, with regard to the teaching strategies that educators may use to ensure that the skills are addressed in the classroom, and to increase their confidence while doing so. Here, the need to integrate the teaching and learning of social-emotional skills will be considered with the aim of applying them to a variety of situations, as opposed to simply during the explicit SEL programme, and as a result increasing their relevance in their students’ lives.

It is important that SEL programs are practical and effective under real-world circumstances, that is, they must be included in routine educational practice and delivered by educators throughout
the school day (Durlak et al., 2011). Such integrated programs have been met with influence and government sponsorship (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009) because they complement and are develop skills at the same rate as all other academic programs. In order to ensure that this integration is effective and the SEL is flexible and relevant to their students, the teachers must be presented with accessible techniques to do so. Such professional learning for the staff will not only have ramifications for their self-efficacy and confidence to teach SEL as asserted above, it will also make the programs more relevant for the students; another means by which to increase their priority among the staff.

Making SEL relevant for students need not stop at the end of the school day. The school would be well advised to promote partnerships with families and community so as to connect the topics that are covered at school with home and to develop a common language with which to describe social-emotional challenges and skills (Howland, Anderson, Smiley, & Abbott, 2006). This could be achieved through initiatives such as school open days, parent teacher meetings and regular communication through newsletters.

**Collaboration between School, Family and Community.** The involvement of parents was mentioned only once in the interviews, which suggests that a collaboration with families in regards to SEL is limited at NPS. If opportunities to practise and reflect on the social-emotional skills that are introduced in the classroom extend across all areas of a student’s life the consolidation will affect the rate at which the concepts are adopted (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Indeed, partnerships between school and family have been found to be especially important at the early stages of a child’s life, given their main focus is on the family for defining their values and social behaviour. Furthermore, community partnerships provide opportunities to practise these skills, for example at sport or other programs (Fagan, Hawkins, & Shapiro, 2015). Bronfenbrenner (1977) observed that home and school are the two fundamental contents in a child’s life and as such, accepting their shared interests and responsibilities for a child’s development would encourage a caring community to develop. In turn, effective cooperation is most likely to promote a child’s wellbeing.

Heckman (2004) points out that the development of social-emotional skills begins with the family. He states that to be successful at school, students must able to address a variety of concepts such as a sense of confidence and belief in their ability to succeed, most of the time. Students require curiosity and persistence, and the ability to communicate effectively and work cooperatively with others. These are all skills that are developed at school and specifically concern SEL, but that can begin to develop at home. Thus, the transition from home to school in terms of the messages that are communicated about social and emotional skills should be as seamless as possible; they are, for most, two of the three environments (the third being community activities) in which children spend most of their time (Gullotta, 2015).

In order for an effective collaboration to occur, the school may make a concerted effort to put the necessary construct in place. The school may become an access point for parents to learn about social-emotional skills and their role in fostering them, knowledge that is likely to influence
whether they become involved with the school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). This would likely result in the creation of a sense of community, helping teachers understand their students, and increasing parents’ confidence to address SEL at home. As such, the partnership would serve as a protective factor for children’s mental health (Howland et al., 2006). The extended knowledge about the students from a teacher’s point of view will enable them to conduct lessons that are relevant to their students’ lives and, in turn, address challenges they are facing.

**Contemporary Resources.** There was discussion between the participants about the need to make the SEL program in question more contemporary, to accommodate the needs of both students and teachers by incorporating a technology component, and in turn increasing the relevance of the program for all stakeholders. This was in reference to the fact that the students require modern resources, and that by reducing the time spent on preparing lessons teachers were more likely to prioritise them. Indeed, Prensky (2010) identified that ‘millenials’ reason and process information differently to their forerunners, while Blair (2012) found that the use of technology in classrooms reduced time spent created lecture style lessons and increased the time available for class activities that deepened students’ knowledge.

Millenials are people born between 1982 and 2002 (Wilson & Gerber, 2008) and have certain characteristics that should be taken into account when planning lessons or programs that will address their needs. These needs have been documented as a preference for environments that support group activities and accommodate social aspects of learning, and information connectedness 100% of the time (McMahon & Pospisil, 2005). Given this access to information and collaborative experiences in other areas of life, it makes sense that SEL should incorporate these features if it is to be relevant to their lives. Prensky (2010) supports the need to adopt methods of instruction that accommodate the needs of the learners, and found that many teachers are using active learning activities in order to engage their students, including the use of technology.

**Implications for Further Study**

This research study has evaluated the perceptions of three teachers at a primary school as to what support they require to effectively implement SEL. As discussed, it is important the SEL is integrated into the curriculum so that it is both relevant to the students as well as accessible to the teachers. Effective teaching depends less on the content that is taught and more upon what teachers do and ask students to do, that is, it is more about the teaching strategies that are utilised (Hattie, 2009). Rather than simply teaching social-emotional skills as though they were explicit facts to be learned, students should be given the opportunity to understand the concepts according to their own individual life view, informed by their experiences. Ritchhart, Church, and Morrison (2011) echo this, stating that educators should shift from a teaching centred model towards learner centred, that they should move from memorising facts towards deep understanding, achieved through active and constructive processes. Strategies that encourage higher order thinking skills such as analysing, evaluating and creating, as identified by Bloom’s Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), have a positive effect on learning and achievement (Hattie, 2009; Marzano,
2003). Thus, recommendations for further study include an examination of what teaching strategies would be most useful to achieve this aim.

Such strategies include controversy strategies in which divergent opinions are elicited and are resolved through sustained discussion (Marzano, 2007), and cooperative learning, resulting in positive peer relationships and higher academic achievement (Roseth, Johnson, & Johnson, 2008). In addition, collaborative philosophical inquiry is a pedagogical strategy that involves rational questioning and intelligent controversy between students (Millett & Tapper, 2011). There is an in-built social dimension to these strategies as they require students to listen and respond to each other carefully and respectfully, and to thinking about topics together. Therefore, they encourage both cognitive and social development and lend themselves to the provision of SEL. Further study into the most effective provision of SEL could focus upon the most effective teaching strategies for students’ resilience and wellbeing.
Conclusion

This research study examined the perspectives of three teachers at a primary school in order to establish their perceptions of the school’s support for SEL. Activity theory was used to first identify and describe the components of the school activity system in order to establish common themes in the teachers’ perceptions of SEL provision at NPS. Then, tensions and contradictions were observed and recommendations made in order to enhance its effectiveness. The literature review examined what is involved in SEL and why it is important, followed by why and how it should be provided in a school setting. It then assessed the obstacles that could hinder successful implementation of SEL such as lack of teacher knowledge, teachers’ own social-emotional skills, lack of executive commitment, and time and resource constraints. Possible solutions to these obstacles were reviewed including

- teacher professional development,
- SEL for teachers,
- teacher autonomy,
- effective leadership and
- clear organisation.

Analysis of the professional development surrounding SEL at the school in question, the systemic policies mandating its provision, the executive commitment to a whole school approach and the relevance of SEL programs to the students and their families indicated tensions in the activity system that, if alleviated, would serve to further the goal of effective SEL implementation by placing SEL higher on teachers’ lists of priorities. A recommendation for further study into the provision of SEL in schools would be to examine the use and effectiveness of different teaching strategies incorporating the development of social emotional skills. The examination of these teachers’ experiences has illuminated which areas need support and in turn offers strategies and resources to assist the whole school provision of SEL.

This thesis has added to current understanding of the requirements for successful SEL programs with the use of Activity Theory. It allowed the program implementation process to be analysed against a backdrop of an entire system of activity, that is, the running of the school as a whole. In comparison to what has typically been used in SEL implementation reports and evaluations, this approach provided a different and theoretically grounded way of looking at an SEL implementation system within a socio-cultural context.
References


Parker, S. (2008). *Teacher Concerns and Elementary Student Outcomes in a School-Based Preventive Intervention*. The State University of New Jersey. Graduate School - New Brunswick Rutgers.


Appendices

Appendix #1: University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) approval
Tuesday, 12 January 2016

Dr Nicole Brunke
Education Faculty Admin; Faculty of Education & Social Work
Email: nicole.brunke@sydney.edu.au

Dear Nicole

I am pleased to inform you that the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has approved your project entitled ‘Teachers’ perspectives: What support systems are needed to ensure effective implementation of SEL programs by classroom teachers?’. Details of the approval are as follows:

Project No.: 2015/908
Approval Date: 12 January 2016
First Annual Report Due: 12 January 2017
Authorised Personnel: Brunke Nicole; Pennington Rose;

Documents Approved:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Document</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16/12/2015</td>
<td>Advertisements/Flyer</td>
<td>PIS for interviewees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/12/2015</td>
<td>Advertisements/Flyer</td>
<td>PIS for Deputy Principal and Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/10/2015</td>
<td>Participant Consent Form</td>
<td>Participant Consent form - teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/10/2015</td>
<td>Participant Consent Form</td>
<td>Participant consent form - principal / deputy principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/10/2015</td>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HREC approval is valid for four (4) years from the approval date stated in this letter and is granted pending the following conditions being met:

Special Condition(s) of Approval

1. It is a condition of final approval that you obtain Principal and SERAP (public school) or any other necessary approvals prior to commencing the research. You should retain evidencing documents on your study files (you do not need to provide these to the Ethics Office).

Conditions of Approval

- Continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans.
TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES: WHAT SUPPORT SYSTEMS ARE NEEDED TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF SEL BY CLASSROOM TEACHERS?

- Provision of an annual report on this research to the Human Research Ethics Committee from the approval date and at the completion of the study. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of ethics approval for the project.

- All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC within 72 hours.

- All unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.

- Any changes to the project including changes to research personnel must be approved by the HREC before the research project can proceed.

- Note that for student research projects, a copy of this letter must be included in the candidate’s thesis.

Chief Investigator / Supervisor’s responsibilities:

1. You must retain copies of all signed Consent Forms (if applicable) and provide these to the HREC on request.

2. It is your responsibility to provide a copy of this letter to any internal/external granting agencies if requested.

Please do not hesitate to contact Research Integrity (Human Ethics) should you require further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Professor Glen Davis
Chair
Human Research Ethics Committee

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council’s (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), NHMRC and Universities Australia Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) and the CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice.
Appendix #2: NSW DET State Education Research Approval Process (SERAP) approval

Miss Rose Pennington

Dear Miss Pennington,

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in NSW government schools entitled Teachers' perspectives: What support systems are needed to ensure effective implementation of SEL programs by classroom teachers? I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved.

You may contact principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation. You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send to principals.

This approval will remain valid until 22-Jan-2017.

As this research does not involve face-to-face contact with children, no researchers or research assistants have been screened to interact with or observe children.

I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in NSW government schools:

- The privacy of participants is to be protected as per the NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998.
- School principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time. The approval of the principal for the specific method of gathering information must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school’s convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the research approvals officer before publication proceeds.
- All conditions attached to the approval must be complied with.

When your study is completed please email your report to: serap@det.nsw.edu.au

You may also be asked to present on the findings of your research.

I wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Robert Stevens
Manager, Research
22 January 2016

School Policy and Information Management
NSW Department of Education
Level 1, 1 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst NSW 2010 – Locked Bag 53, Darlinghurst NSW 1300
Telephone: 02 9244 5000 – Email: serap@det.nsw.edu.au
Appendix #3: Participant Information Sheet for Interviewees

Teachers' perspectives: What support systems are needed to ensure effective implementation of SEL programs by classroom teachers?

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

(1) What is this study about?

You are invited to take part in a research study about the necessary support systems for a standardised Social Emotional Learning program such as Bounce Back!

You have been invited to participate in this study because you work at the school in which the case study is to be performed and have been exposed to Bounce Back! for one year or more. This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don’t understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary.

By giving your consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:

✔ Understand what you have read.
✔ Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
✔ Agree to the use of your personal information as described.

You will be given a copy of this Participant Information Statement to keep.

(2) Who is running the study?
The study is being carried out by the following researchers: Dr. Nicole Brunker and Rose Pennington (Student Researcher).

Rose Pennington is conducting this study as the basis for the degree of Master of Education (Research) at The University of Sydney. This will take place under the supervision of Dr Nicole Brunker, Lecturer of Primary Curriculum Studies.

To avoid a conflict of interest given that the student researcher is an employee of the school at which the study is being undertaken, the Deputy Principal of the school will advise participants of the study and inform the researcher of those who wish to take part.

(3) What will the study involve for me?

You will be asked to take part in one interview with the student researcher that will subsequently be analysed and used for data.

The interview will take place on school grounds and will involve questions about your perception of the Bounce Back! program.

The questions will be based upon three research questions:

1. What are teachers' perceptions about the principles behind the Bounce Back! social and emotional learning program?

2. How effective do they consider themselves to be at implementing the program?

3. What support systems, if any, need to be implemented in order for them to commit to teaching the program?

The interviews will be recorded on two audio devices and there will be no personal information requested.

At the conclusion of the research project a lay summary of the findings will be provided to the Deputy Principal if you wish to read it.

(4) How much of my time will the study take?

The interview will last between thirty minutes and one hour.

(5) Who can take part in the study?

Teachers who work at the case study school and who have been expected to teach the Bounce Back! program for at least one year. This is to ensure that they have a firm basis of knowledge about the program and can therefore have an educated viewpoint on the subject.
(6) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I've started?

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney.

If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind later, you are free to withdraw at any time. You can do this by informing the student researcher of this decision via telephone (0416227123) or email (rpen5672@uni.sydney.edu.au).

You are free to stop the interview at any time. Unless you say that you want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information you have provided will not be included in the study results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview.

(7) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study.

(8) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

We cannot guarantee that you will receive any direct benefits from being in the study.

(9) What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?

- A summary of your perspectives on the Bounce Back! program will be collected in the interview.
- The audio recording of the interview will be transcribed and used for analysis only.
- This report will be disseminated through a dissertation, conference paper and journal article.
- The data will be stored on a password protected computer by the student researcher during the study and by Dr Nicole Brunker on completion of the study. It will be kept for seven years and then shredded.

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting personal information about you for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise.

Your information will be stored securely and your identity/information will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but you will not be individually identifiable in these publications.

(10) Can I tell other people about the study?
Yes, you are welcome to tell other people about the study.

(11) **What if I would like further information about the study?**

When you have read this information, Rose Pennington will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact Dr Nicole Brunker (nicole.brunker@sydney.edu.au or +61 2 93513113).

(12) **Will I be told the results of the study?**

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell us that you wish to receive feedback by checking the box on the consent form that states you wish to receive feedback about the study. This feedback will be in the form of a one page lay summary of the report. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished.

(13) **What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?**

Research involving humans in Australia is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the HREC of the University of Sydney [INSERT protocol number once approval is obtained]. As part of this process, we have agreed to carry out the study according to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). This statement has been developed to protect people who agree to take part in research studies.

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the university using the details outlined below. Please quote the study title and protocol number.

The Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney:
- **Telephone:** +61 2 8627 8176
- **Email:** ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au
- **Fax:** +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile)

This information sheet is for you to keep
Appendix #4: Participant Information Sheet for Deputy Principal and Principal

Teachers' perspectives: What support systems are needed to ensure effective implementation of SEL programs by classroom teachers?

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

(14) What is this study about?

You are invited to take part in a research study about the necessary support systems for a standardised Social Emotional Learning program such as Bounce Back!

You have been invited to participate in this study because you work at the school in which the case study is to be undertaken and have been exposed to Bounce Back! for one year or more. This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don’t understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary.

By giving your consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:

✔ Understand what you have read.
✔ Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
✔ Agree to the use of your personal information as described.

You will be given a copy of this Participant Information Statement to keep.

(15) Who is running the study?

The study is being carried out by the following researchers:
Dr. Nicole Brunker and Rose Pennington (Student Researcher).

Rose Pennington is conducting this study as the basis for the degree of Master of Education (Research) at The University of Sydney. This will take place under the supervision of Dr Nicole Brunker, Lecturer of Primary Curriculum Studies.

(16) What will the study involve for me?

You will be asked to allow teachers at your school to take part in one individual interview with the student researcher that will subsequently be analysed and used for data.

To avoid a conflict of interest given that the student researcher is an employee of the school at which the study is being undertaken, you will be asked to provide information statements to possible participants and ask them whether they would like to take part. In turn you will be asked to collect consent forms from them.

The interview will take place on school grounds and will involve questions about your perception of the Bounce Back! program.

The questions will be based upon three research questions:

1. What are teachers' perceptions about the principles behind the Bounce Back! social and emotional learning program?

2. How effective do they consider themselves to be at implementing the program?

3. What support systems, if any, need to be implemented in order for them to commit to teaching the program?

The interviews will be recorded on two audio devices and there will be no personal information requested.

At the conclusion of the research project you will be provided with a lay summary of the findings to give to participants should they wish to read it.

(17) How much of my time will the study take?

It will take up to an hour of your time.

(18) Who can take part in the study?

Teachers who work at the case study school and who have been expected to teach the Bounce Back! program for at least one year. This is to ensure that they have a firm basis of knowledge about the program and can therefore have an educated viewpoint on the subject.

(19) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I've started?
Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney.

If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind later, you are free to withdraw at any time. You can do this by informing the student researcher of this decision via telephone (0416227123) or email (rpen5672@uni.sydney.edu.au).

You are free to stop the interview at any time. Unless you say that you want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information you have provided will not be included in the study results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview.

(20) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study.

(21) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

We cannot guarantee that you will receive any direct benefits from being in the study.

(22) What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?

- This report will be disseminated through a dissertation, conference paper and journal article.
- The data will be stored on a password protected computer by the student researcher during the study and by Dr Nicole Brunker on completion of the study. It will be kept for seven years and then shredded.

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting personal information about you for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise.

Your information will be stored securely and your identity/information will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but you will not be individually identifiable in these publications.

(23) Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you are welcome to tell other people about the study.

(24) What if I would like further information about the study?
When you have read this information, Rose Pennington will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact Dr Nicole Brunker (nicole.brunker@sydney.edu.au or +61 2 93513113).

(25) **Will I be told the results of the study?**

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell us that you wish to receive feedback by checking the box on the consent form that states you wish to receive feedback about the study. This feedback will be in the form of a one page lay summary of the report. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished.

(26) **What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?**

Research involving humans in Australia is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the HREC of the University of Sydney [INSERT protocol number once approval is obtained]. As part of this process, we have agreed to carry out the study according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*. This statement has been developed to protect people who agree to take part in research studies.

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the university using the details outlined below. Please quote the study title and protocol number.

The Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney:

- **Telephone:** +61 2 8627 8176
- **Email:** ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au
- **Fax:** +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile)

This information sheet is for you to keep
Appendix #5: Participant Consent Form for Interviewees

ABN 15 211 513 464

Dr Nicole Brunke
PhD(Sydney), BEd(Hons)(Sydney)
Lecturer, Primary Curriculum Studies

Teachers' perspectives: What support systems are needed to ensure effective implementation of SEL programs by classroom teachers?

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, ............................................................ [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

✔ I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.

✔ I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.

✔ The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.

✔ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney now or in the future.

✔ I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.
✓ I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don’t wish to answer.

✓ I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.

✓ I understand that the results of this study may be published, but these publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

I consent to audio-recording

YES □ NO □

..................................................
Signature

..................................................
PRINT name

..................................................
Date
Appendix #6: Participant Consent Form for Deputy Principal and Principal

Teachers' perspectives: What support systems are needed to ensure effective implementation of SEL programs by classroom teachers?

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, ................................................................. [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

✓ I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.

✓ I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.

✓ The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.

✓ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney now or in the future.

✓ I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.
✓ I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don’t wish to answer.

✓ I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.

✓ I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that if you are referred to in the report I will be identifiable in these publications only to those who know that the study is based at [redacted] Public School, given that only I hold my position (which may be referred to in the report) at the school.

I consent to audio-recording  YES □  NO □

..................................................
Signature

..................................................
PRINT name

..................................................
Date
Appendix #8: Sample Interview Questions

IQ1. What do you know about the Bounce Back! Program?
IQ2. How do you think the program should be delivered?
IQ3. What do you believe is your role in implementing the program?
RQ2. How effective do they consider themselves to be at implementing the program?
IQ4. How do you deliver the program in your classroom?
IQ5. How effective is the delivery of the program?
IQ6. What challenges do you face regarding the Bounce Back! Program?
RQ3. What support systems, if any, need to be implemented in order for them to commit to teaching the program?
IQ7. What could the school do to support your delivery of the program?
IQ8. What else would support your delivery of the program, aside from what the school can do?
Appendix #9: Sample Interview Transcript

What do you know about bb?
It’s quite effective for students to discuss issues that either they themselves or their peers are going through or texts or topical things from the news. My experiences have been really linking it in with whatever is current in the class has lead to behavioural changes or improvements in attitude

So you look at what’s going on and find something in the bb text book to go with that?
More using the bb as the resource to support what you’re seeing. Makes it quite reactive. We do go through and look at what are the topics we would want to cover over term or semester but has to be flexibility to see what’s going on with your cohort. May years ago when I used it at a very different school we had a behaviour specialist would come and sit with me and the other year 2 teacher because we had quite a violent group from that we had her support to go through and be really specific about what we did so we did it on a daily basis

Do you think it should be delivered?
Yes. Short answer. If done properly with the support of the whole school, it can’t be done piecemeal it can’t be done just me doing it

How do you think it should be delivered?
Whole school perspective. One of the more effective versions I’ve seen of it is whole school fortnightly focus. Which means the whole school is talking about the goals, you can tie in your bb lessons (still have flex to look at cohort) but very cohesive across the school

And who was the driver of that?
The principal and the Aps in that school

Were you there when it started?
The e.g. I’m thinking of was based off the two classes I was talking about. From that the AP could see the value in putting it across the school

What do you believe is your personal role in implementing it? In terms of day to day running?
You need to do your research and think about where you need it to go or want it to go. Know your children well enough and I think it is important that the classroom teachers does it for that reason. Know if you’re going to push buttons. Know the resource enough to be able to guide the conversation but not preach. Sometimes you can see there’s a tangent you can come back to so be able to control and steer in a positive manner so have boundaries set so its always positive.

Reword their comments or their conclusions but definitely not preach.

So then, that’s the lesson once it’s happening in terms of how you deliver in your classroom – what about admin etc?
I have it on my timetable and we actually have a list of ten topics for the term, grab the resource book, share or talk about it at the beginning of the I trust me team that they’re doing it for their class, because I also know that its going to look different. We’re all different teachers with different kids.

Given that it is how you’ve orgd it, how effective do you think it is? And how would you define effective?
I think its one of the things that gets dropped – up there with sport and art. I think it’s always going to depend on leadership’s perspective of it and value of it. For example philosophy has the potential to be similar at times, is timetabled as high priority level and given that priority. Perhaps something like bb should be given that same priority.

When it is delivered I think its good but I’d suggest that its one of the things that I think is last on the list of priorities.

What could the school do to support – you suggest priority time?
Yes I’ve been at schools where its done in a peer support setting. The whole school spends half an hour mingled, mixed doing similar.

I guess that gives the indication to kids that it’s important as well

Yes everyone stops what they’re doing and does bb or peer support

Thinking of the prog as a resource, is there anything you would change about BB in terms of resources?

A lot of books are out of print, a lot of the resources aren’t relevant, if anything, they could create resources, put them on there so I can go for gold – don’t give me a book anymore, I don’t need it, just need something I can access at home. At the mo there is one resource between five of us. Have a login in, have some youtube clips to get the kids engaged, have some sort of

Whatever the engagement task is, I understand you can put the whole book up but often you don’t need it – just a picture or a reminder of a certain story. Have it online, that for me would be far easier.

So that would be a time saver?

And maybe someone in a school or coming around at a district level who could guide that. My first experience I had a specialist working with us and showing us. She came and modelled it for us. We’ve all done various training at this school but sometimes to have a specialist or far more experiprienced person in the room (and I wasn’t fresh out) to have someone alongside, to have someone you could ring to ask a question, or email support. Like sometimes you don’t have time to find the specific lesson, so on the website if there was a search function that you could just write ‘kids hitting’ so a search function across all stages – because there is stuff for kindys that could be used for all ages

Flexibility seems to be key. In terms of your experiences at this school, what is the general perception and what do you think would change it?

I feel like it’s something that isn’t prioritised there isn’t the resource time energy desire,. Its such a busy school with so many programs. I think there’s an underlying assumption that they’re rich white kids who know how to behave when in actual fact at grass roots they don’t. they lack the capacity to play. The amount of skills that have started kindy who I have had to write behavioural plans for because they don’t know how to play , initiate conversations, do stuff without lashing out. Part of it is they don’t have the skills. They are tired so when it comes to playing they say dumb things, filter is off so they lash out

So it had to come from leaderships and above. At the moment they’re talking about safe schools should be canned – well, if we do things like bb at primary school level then things like the safe schools prog won’t be controversial because they won’t be needed. Bb is teaching to treat others with respect

Do you think as programs go, you’re happy to stick with bb in particular?

Is it because its another program, is it because its been put in place half-heartedely. Depends on how its been lead, rolled out, resourced,

So bb is fine, as long as it has time resource leadership?

Yes. There’s a few things to tweak to modernise to review but any prog should be continually monitored anyway because a program written ten years ago is not relevant for these kids. They know so much more about the world than the kids I taught ten years ago. They react very differently.
Appendix #10: NPS Discipline Policy

Discipline

The Public Schools of New South Wales exist to provide a first-class education for all young people. The public school system has three over-riding priorities:
- Raising educational standards and levels of educational achievement;
- The provision for quality education for all and the care and safety of the students in its charge.

In achieving these priorities, it provides young people with their foundation for life.

The priorities at Bondi Public School are to:
- Enhance student achievement by providing a challenging, caring and supportive learning environment that is:
  - Safe and secure
  - Inclusive
  - Free from bullying, harassment, intimidation and victimisation
- Recognise and value each child's academic, social and emotional potential.
- Value and model tolerance and acceptance.
- Develop a school atmosphere based on trust, fairness and respect.
- Promote a positive, supportive and effective learning community.
- Promote Quality Teaching and Learning.

The School Discipline Policy informs and guides students, staff and parents about the aims, expectations, strategies and responsibilities for student discipline.

When parents enrol their children at public schools they enter into a partnership with the school staff to support ‘Student Welfare, Good Discipline and Effective Learning’. Each family will receive a copy of the Discipline Policy.

Outcomes are achieved through the implementation of:
- The Discipline Code.
- Strategies and practices to promote positive student behaviour, including specific strategies to maintain a climate of respect.
- Strategies and practices to recognise and reinforce student achievement.
- Strategies and practices to manage inappropriate student behaviour.

1. The Discipline Code (school rules)

The Core Rules in NSW Government Schools and Positive Behaviour Intervention System (PBIS) are incorporated into Bondi School Rules. The school rules come under three main expectations (The 3 Bs)

1. Be Safe
2. Be a Learner
3. Be Respectful

Under these expectations are sub-rules outlined in a matrix that is displayed in all classrooms and is explicitly taught to students. The matrix clearly outlines the expectation for students in different environments in and outside the school.

Student engagement and challenge through the:
- Implementation of the Bounce Back emotional resilience program in Personal Development lessons. The Bounce Back program teaches social and emotional wellbeing for effective learning and positive, respectful relationships.
- Implementation of Restorative Practice social justice program implementation of Three-way conferencing to resolve problems and incidents.
- Implementation of the Philosophy for Children Program.

Page 75 of 78
• Access to school support programs: Learning Assistance, School Counsellor and English as a Second Language (ESL).
• Access to programs for Gifted and Talented students and for those requiring enrichment.
• K-6 Child Protection, Drug Education, Road Safety, Anti-Racism and Anti-Bullying programs.
• Teachers model appropriate behaviours and attitudes.
• Teacher Professional Development and training programs.
• Collaborative whole school decision making through the Parents and Citizens Association (P&C), parent support groups, class parents and Student Representative Council. (Further information or policy documents on the above programs are available upon request.)

2. Strategies and practices to recognise and reinforce student achievement.

• Verbal praise, encouragement and positive reinforcement that is genuine and valid.
• Stickers, Assembly Awards and certificates
• Ongoing communication with parents
• Merit award hierarchy.
• Academic, sporting and Citizenship certificates awarded at the annual Presentation Day Assembly.
• Ongoing quality assessment, evaluation and feedback to students and parents through regular informal and formal reporting. E.g. Student reports, teacher/student/parent conference.

3. Strategies and practices to manage inappropriate behaviour

Support Options
• Teacher/student conference
• Parent/Teacher conference
• Behaviour monitoring card
• Home/School Communication book
• Referral to Learning support Team
• Individual Behaviour Plan
• Student Counselling
• Referral to District Learning Support Team

Sanction Options

Sometimes pupils break school rules. When this happens there needs to be some form of sanction so that the pupils are reminded of the rules of the school and of their responsibilities to help keep those rules. Generally the following sanctions will apply to breaches of school rules. However, each situation that occurs must be judged on its effect on the total school population and on individual student circumstances.

Strategies for dealing with unacceptable behaviour
1. Reprimand and reminder of the school/class rules
2. After three reminders, a time out in class
3. Time out in ‘buddy’ class (timed out for 1 minute per age of child)
4. Teacher to inform Parent/s
5. Formal Detention with Principal - parental note
6. Parental interview
7. Referral to Learning Support Team & School Counsellor
8. Individual Behaviour Plan developed
9. Short Suspension - Up to and including 4 school days.
10. Long suspension - Up to and including 20 school days.
11. Expulsion - Recommendation to the Minister for Education that the student be expelled from the Public Education system.

Suspension

School’s Suspension policy is consistent with the DET Suspensions and Expulsion of School Students Policy. (Students Discipline in Government Schools PD 2006 0316)

Suspension allows the students time to reflect on their behaviour, to acknowledge and accept responsibility for the
behaviours which led to the suspension and to accept responsibility for changing their behaviour to meet the school's expectations in the future. It also allows time for school personnel to plan appropriate support for the student to assist with successful re-entry. Students demonstrating the following behaviours will be immediately suspended from school:

- Possession of an illegal substance. Suspension is to occur immediately if a substance is being represented by a student as an illegal substance.
- Violence resulting in pain or injury, or seriously interferes with the safety and wellbeing of other students, staff or other persons
- Possession or use of a weapon or threatening to use a weapon
- Use of an implement as a weapon or threatening to use an implement as a weapon
- Persistent disobedience, misbehaviour, harassment, racist remarks or bullying
- Criminal Behaviour

**Short Suspension**

In circumstances where the above Supportive Options have been unsuccessful in resolving the inappropriate behaviour, the Principal may choose to impose a short suspension of up to and including four school days. Short suspensions may be imposed for the following reasons and will be reported in the following categories:

**Continued Disobedience.** This includes, but is not limited to, breaches of the school discipline code such as: refusal to obey staff instructions; defiance; disrupting other students; minor criminal behaviour related to the school; use of alcohol or persistent use if tobacco.

**Aggressive Behaviour.** This includes, but not limited to: hostile behaviour directed towards students, members of staff or other persons, including verbal abuse and abuse transmitted electronically such as by email of SMS text messages.

**Long Suspension** If short suspensions have not resolved the issue of inappropriate behaviour, or the misbehaviour is so serious as to warrant a long suspension, the principal may impose a long suspension of up to and including twenty school days. In determining if a student's behaviour is serious enough to warrant a suspension the principal must consider:

- the safety of students and staff
- the merit and circumstances of the particular case
- factors such as the age, individual needs, any disability and developmental level of students.

**Suspension Procedure**

Parents/Carers will be contacted by telephone or in person to inform them of the suspension of their son/daughter from School and informed of Appeal Procedures. Parents will be provided with copy of NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) Resolution of complaints. Parents/Carers will be provided with an appeals contact and number should they wish to appeal the suspension. A resolution meeting between parents and the principal will occur as soon as possible. Parents/Carers will be provided with a written statement of their child’s behaviour. A planned program of support and sanctions will be negotiated. Return to BPS from suspension is conditional on an agreed program of counseling and demonstration of appropriate behaviour.

While on suspension a student:

- Needs to complete assigned school work;
- Needs to be provided with adult supervision;
- Is not permitted on school grounds;
- Is unable to enrol in another government school

Page 77 of 78
### Appendix #11: NPS Professional Development Schedule

#### Term 1 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sun</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tue</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thu</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Feb 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yrs 1-6 Return K Best Start</td>
<td>K Best Start</td>
<td>K Best Start</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wk 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kindergarten Start</td>
<td>Swimming Carnival</td>
<td>Welcome to School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wk 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meet the teacher</td>
<td>Swimming Carnival</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wk 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wk 4</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Mar 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8:30 Stewart House in Staffroom</td>
<td>Staff meeting: benchmarking with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wk 5</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>