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Exploring Early Childhood/Early Childhood Special Education Personnel Preparation for Teaching Social Emotional Skills and Addressing Challenging Behavior

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EXPLORING EARLY CHILDHOOD/EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION

PERSONNEL PREPARATION FOR TEACHING SOCIAL EMOTIONAL

SKILLS AND ADDRESSING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

By

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ABSTRACT

Social emotional development is crucial for all young children. Children who develop age-appropriate social emotional skills engage in positive peer relationships, establish friendship skills, and have competent problem-solving skills. Without adequate social emotional skills, young children are at risk for detrimental long and short-term consequences such as academic failure, exclusionary practices, and school dropout. Interventions and support from well-trained teachers are essential for young children to acquire these skills. Using an explanatory mixed method approach, this study investigated how early childhood (EC) and early childhood special education (ECSE) teachers were trained to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behavior. A quantitative survey explored Pyramid Model strategies covered in coursework and implemented during fieldwork, while qualitative focus groups delved into experiences and proposed innovations for improvement. Results revealed that EC/ECSE teachers felt more prepared to provide universal supports but less prepared to address more complex strategies and interventions. In addition, EC/ECSE teachers felt underprepared to teach social emotional content upon entering the workforce. Suggestions for innovations were also discussed. The findings of this study help inform policy, practice and future research to enhance teacher preparation to effectively address social emotional content.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my children, Benjamin, Harrison, and Ryleigh. Your support, love, and understanding have been the greatest sources of strength. Your smiles have brightened even the most challenging days, reminding me of the profound importance of this work. Your presence in my life is a constant reminder of the incredible potential that lies within each of us.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

All domains of child development are integral to supporting young children's learning. Each domain is interconnected, multifaceted, and crucial for young children's well-being and long-term success (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2020). Changes in one domain impact other areas and often highlight the other domain's importance. For example, language development, such as speaking in three-word sentences, impacts a child's ability to participate in social interactions, including taking conversational turns with a friend, therefore strengthening social emotional development. Furthermore, a child's ability to regulate their emotions also stimulates cognitive development and growth by helping a child engage in problem solving needed to navigate frustrating situations. Although it is known that social emotional development is vital to children's holistic development and learning, this domain is often overlooked or minimized in early childhood education to focus on cognitive and language development (U.S. Department of Education, 2021) Social emotional development in young children refers to their ability to create and sustain meaningful relationships with adults and their peers, express and manage their emotions, and respond appropriately to others' emotions (Ho & Funk, 2018). Along with physical, cognitive, and linguistics development, social emotional development is an equally important domain of child development.

Child development occurs at varying rates between children. Children's learning among the domains of child development are fluid and often vary day to day based on individual and environmental factors. Gains in one area of development might cause temporary regression in other domains of development (NAEYC, 2020). Social emotional competence is critical for all young children. More specifically, social emotional development encompasses a variety of skills

such as self-regulation, self-concept, self-efficacy, and prosocial behavior with both adults and peers (Domitrovich et al., 2017; Fox et al., 2011). Social emotional competence is influenced by many different factors such as peer, family, social, and cultural characteristics (Brown & Conroy, 2011; Guralnick, 2010; Odom et al., 2008). Young children who have age-appropriate social emotional skills are able to solve social problems, negotiate complex social contexts, persist on challenging tasks, regulate emotions, engage and develop deep and positive interactions with peers, and develop friendships (Brown & Conroy, 2011; Buysse et al., 2008; Hemmeter et al., 2006; Hemmeter et al., 2015). This leads to children being more likely to be happy; have greater motivation to learn and have a more positive outlook on school; and are more eager to participate in activities in the classroom (Ho & Funk, 2018; Hyson 2004). Furthermore, social emotional competence is a predictor of school readiness and later school success as young children with strong social emotional skills have increased academic and behavioral functioning in kindergarten and throughout their academic careers (Fox et al., 2011; Nix et al., 2013). For example, students with social emotional delays might be socially isolated from peers which impacts their cognitive development by limiting cooperative play opportunities. Delays might also hinder their development in expressive language because children are not able to socialize and engage with their peers appropriately (Nelson et al., 2011). Lastly, delays could also impact their academic performance because young children are not able to follow directions, persist at challenging tasks, and participate in classroom activities (McClelland et al., 2006; Nix et al., 2013). Without continued intervention in the early years, children may have difficulty interacting with their peers and may fall behind in academic skills and there could be a continued trajectory of social, behavioral, and academic problems (Bulotsky-Shearer & Fantuzzo, 2011; Gilliam, 2005).

It is estimated that approximately 10% to 20% of young children exhibit social and emotional challenges (Brauner & Stephens, 2006; Hemmeter et al., 2016). Some examples of social emotional challenges in preschool-aged children are difficulty regulating emotions, identifying and expressing their emotions, difficulty engaging with peers appropriately, and difficulty solving social problems that arise in classroom settings (Conroy et al., 2014). Young children who have delays in their social emotional development often exhibit challenging behaviors. Challenging behavior is defined as "any repeated pattern or perception of behavior that interferes with or is at risk of interfering with learning or engagement in interactions with peers or adults" (Smith & Fox, 2003, p. 6). Challenging behaviors are not responsive to proactive and preventive strategies and other individualized behavioral strategies. They are often described as intense, persistent, and violent (Conroy et al., 2014). These challenging behaviors manifest in many different ways. Challenging behavior is separated into two categories: externalizing behaviors and internalizing behaviors. Externalizing behaviors are directed outwards to others or objects. Some examples include throwing, biting, kicking, tantrumming (e.g., falling to the floor, crying), hitting, self-injurious behaviors (e.g., banging own head), withdrawing, and eloping (e.g., running away from instruction and/or out of classroom), shouting/swearing, prolonged whining/crying. Internalizing behaviors are behaviors directed inward and are often less noticeable than externalizing behaviors. These behaviors include social withdrawal, isolation, and being nervous or irritable (Bornstein et al., 2010).

Exhibiting challenging behavior during early childhood is linked to reduced peer acceptance, maladaptive teacher-child relationships and engagement in delinquent activities in adolescence (Fox et al., 2009; Gormley et al., 2011). Challenging behavior also puts children at risk for a more restrictive placement in classroom settings which has detrimental consequences

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resulting in less exposure to the general education curriculum and lack of socialization with peers (Brock & Beaman-Diglia, 2018).

Young children engaging in challenging behavior can lead to exclusionary practices (i.e., expulsion, suspension) from early childhood programs. These practices have detrimental short and long-term consequences on children's development. It is estimated that children in early childhood programs are suspended at a rate three times higher than the suspension rate from the K-12 education system because of challenging behavior (Buell et all., 2022; Gilliam, 2005; Zeng et al., 2019). According to Gilliam (2005) seven out of every 1000 preschool aged students are expelled. When children with significant behavior problems are not addressed early, the severity and intensity of the behaviors increase (Gilliam & Shabar, 2006). In the United States, over 5,000 preschool children experienced at least one suspension, with 2,500 children experiencing more than one suspension (U.S. Department of Education for Civil Rights [OCR], 2014). Zeng et al. (2019) found that 174,309 preschoolers were suspended, and 17,248 preschoolers were expelled annually. The instances of weekly suspension and expulsions were about 4,842 and 479 respectively (Zeng et al., 2019). Notably, exclusionary practices disproportionally impact children of color, boys, and children with disabilities, particularly those not yet identified with development delays and disabilities (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services/Department of Education [DHHSDOE], 2016; Zeng et al., 2021). Expulsion and suspension lead to a disruption from the children's routines and sense of security. Negative school experiences directly impact future school experiences; therefore, increasing the likelihood of dropping out, academic failure, retention, and incarnation (Mitchell et al., 2016; Zulauf & Zinnser, 2019). Exclusionary practices also impact families of young children. When children are removed from a program, families experience emotional stress to urgently find alternative care. Often, this

stress impacts a family's ability to meaningfully attend to their employment and education (DHHDOE, 2016; Steglin, 2018) and deflates families' confidence in their parenting and future educational programming for their child (Stegin, 2018). With the increase of school age children displaying challenging behavior, there is a growing interest to provide interventions to young children to promote social emotional competence and to prevent challenging behaviors from occurring (Dunlap et al., 2006; Hemmeter et al., 2016).

Practices to Teach Social Emotional Skills and Address Challenging Behavior

All young children need support to develop their social and emotional skills (Hemmeter et al., 2015; Steglin, 2018); therefore, practices across early childhood education (EC) and early childhood special education (ECSE) should include explicit attention to this area of child development. Additionally, in fostering inclusive experiences for children, implementing recommended practices and differences in state licensure and district composition, it is also difficult to separate ECE and ECSE into distinct areas. For example, a report from the Early Childhood Personnel Center (2019), there were 23 different configurations of age ranges and disciplines among ECE and ECSE licensures nationally. Therefore, for this study, EC and ECSE will be presented holistically as programs that serve young children under 8 years old with and without disabilities.

Multi-Tiered System of Support to Foster Social Emotional Skills

Multi-tiered systems of support is a framework that addresses all needs of student both academically and behaviorally by using continual cycles of assessment to make data-driven decisions to best foster children's learning, Multi-tiered systems of support include levels of intervention from universal strategies that support all children to intensive strategies that provide individualized support to children (Division for Early Childhood [DEC], 2021; Shepley &

Grishman-Brown, 2019; Wackerle-Hollman et al., 2021). This framework helps schools identify students who need more support and provides evidence-based interventions and progress monitoring to make sure that all students learn and grow. The use of multi-tiered systems of support are required by the Individuals with Education Disabilities Act (IDEA; 2004) under the provision of 612(a)(3) which requires states to have policies in place to help locate and evaluate students with suspected disabilities. While the IDEA does not dictate what kinds of multi-tiered system of support is used, school districts are required to have multiple tiers of instruction that are progressively more intense and that students receive high quality research-based instruction in their general education setting (IDEA, 2004).

DEC (2014) also recommends the use of a wide range of services and practices that support children who are experiencing delays in their social emotional development and demonstrating challenging behaviors. DEC (2014) recommends the use of multitiered approach to practice: (a) universal, (b) secondary, and (c) tertiary to best address challenging behavior in young children. More recently in DEC's multi-tiered system of support position statement (2021), they reinforce using tiered practices to support children's development, including their social emotional development.

Pyramid Model for Promoting Social Emotional Competence

The Pyramid Model for Promoting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children (hereafter referred to as *the Pyramid Model*) is an example of an effective multi-tiered system of support to address social emotional development and prevent challenging behavior for EC and ECSE programs (Hemmeter et al., 2016; Shepley & Grisham-Brown, 2019). Now the foundation for the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education early childhood social emotional technical assistance center (i.e., National Center on Pyramid Model

Innovations), this multi-tiered system of support includes evidence-based practices to help young children learn social emotional skills and manage challenging behaviors in the classroom (Hemmeter et al., 2015; Hemmeter et al., 2016). The Pyramid Model began in 2001 with the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning which was funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service and the Administration for Children and Families. It has also been funded in collaboration with the Office of Special Education Programs. In addition, this work has informed multiple research grants and scholarly work conducted by Pyramid Model researchers and students. The Pyramid Model is currently being funded by the US Department of Education, Institute of Education Science and the Office of Special Education Programs/Office of Early Learning (National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations, n.d.).

The Pyramid Model has four different tiers of support (see Figure 1). Most children, in an inclusive setting, will respond to the interventions in the universal tier (i.e., tier I). A smaller number of students will need tier II interventions, and an even smaller number of students will require tier III interventions (Hemmeter et al., 2015).

Figure 1

*Diagram of the Pyramid Model for Promoting Social Emotional Competence in
Infants and Young Children*
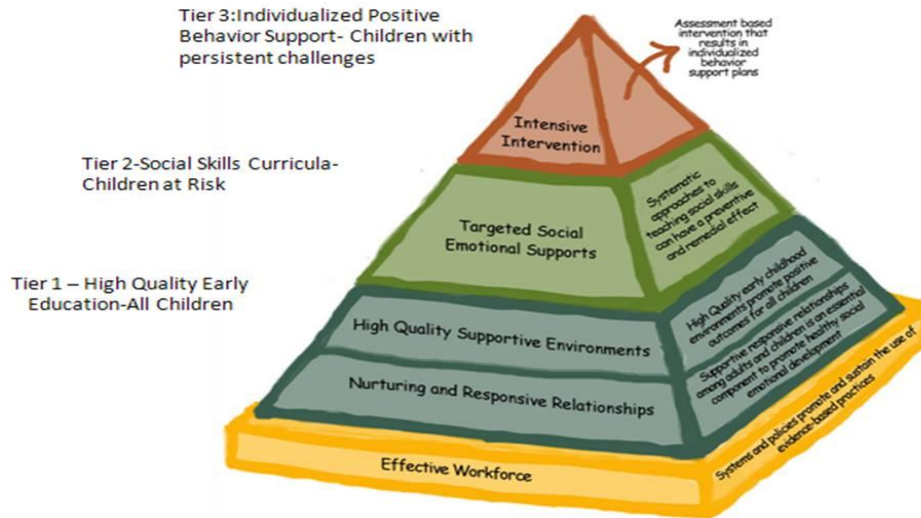
Note. Adapted from *the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (n.d.).*

(https://challengingbehavior.org/pyramid-model/overview/basics/). In the public domain

      Pyramid Foundation: Effective Workforce. To support the foundation of the Pyramid

practices, an effective workforce is needed. Systems and policies are necessary to ensure that the

workforce, including all professionals working across programs with young children, is able to

sustain and implement the evidence-based practices within the Pyramid Model framework

(University of South Florida, 2019). Training, professional development, and technical assistance

are essential to building the capacity for EC and ECSE teachers and to implement practices with

fidelity. This system supports professionals to team together and to use and implement their

evidence-based practices. Leadership personnel such as school district administrators must

promote and encourage the use of this evidence-based model to make sure that practices are being implemented and professional feels supported to do so (Neddentrip et al., 2016).

Tier I: Nurturing and Responsive Relationships and High-Quality Supportive Environments. In tier one of the Pyramid Model, universal supports are provided for all children through the use of responsive relationships and high-quality environments. According to Ho and Funk (2018), one of the most important practices to promote young children's social emotional development is building relationships. Children must build trusting relationships with adults and other children to provide the child with security and confidence needed to be comfortable in asking questions, solving problems, verbally expressing themselves and trying new things. Strong positive relationships with caring adults help children develop trust, empathy, and compassion which teaches children how to form friendships; understand, regulate, and communicate their emotions as well as deal with challenges that may arise (NAEYC, 2020). Positive interactions with caring adults allow children to feel cared for and validated allowing them to confidence to explore and learn in their environments. Professionals need to intentionally create positive relationships with children by embedding opportunities throughout the day to have meaningful conversations and interactions with young children (Dombro et al., 2011; Ho & Funk, 2018). Tier I also consists of implementing universally-designed high quality early childhood environments. The universal tier includes setting up the physical environment; creating predictable routines, expectations, and transitions; encouraging positive teacher and child relationships; providing a nurturing positive environment for students to learn in; and regularly implement developmental screenings to inform instruction (Hemmeter, et al., 2015).

Tier II: Targeted Social Emotional Strategies. The secondary tier provides targeted social-emotional supports by teaching foundational teaching social emotional skills. This

includes teaching friendship skills, peer relationships, anger management, emotional literacy, and problem-solving skills. This includes explicit instruction and support for children who are at risk for engaging in challenging behavior. To effectively support children, a teacher can direct activities through explicitly teaching the behavior, modeling the behavior, role playing the desired behavior, and providing positive feedback when children engage in desired behavior. Materials such as scripted stories, visual supports (e.g., feeling cards, calming strategy cards), and games can be used to teaching young children these concepts. According to Hemmeter et al. (2013), when an explicit approach is used, children can practice these skills more frequently in natural and routine-based context which helps children generalize the skills and desired behavior that are taught. For example, by teaching a child how different emotional feel in your body throughout the day, when a child gets angry that can identify in themselves and tell an adult how they are feeling and ask for help to feel better.

Tier III: Intensive Interventions. The tertiary tier is designed to provide individualized intensive interventions for children with persistent challenging behaviors (Hemmeter, et al., 2015; Hemmeter et al., 2021). The interventions are often developed by a team and include functional behavior analysis assessment and behavior intervention plans. In this tier, a team of people, including the child's family, will develop an individualized behavior plan to assist with collecting data for a functional behavioral assessment in order to determine the function of the child's behavior. Then the team addresses replacement behaviors and use positive consequences to help reinforce the desired behavior. When the plan is put into place, data are collected to determine progress towards intervention goals (Dunlap et al., 2015).

Recommendations from Professional Organizations Related to Social Emotional Development

Professional organizations in EC and ECSE such as the NAEYC and DEC address social emotional development in their recommended practices and personnel preparation standards. NAEYC's (2020) developmentally appropriate practice recommends educators: help children develop self-regulation skills; provide clear and reasonable limits on children's behavior; and listen to and acknowledge children's feelings and frustrations. DEC (2014) recommended practices in instruction and interaction urge educators to:

- utilize functional assessment and use strategies for prevention, promotion and intervention cross various settings to anticipate and manage challenging behavior

- foster children's social emotional growth through observation, interpretation and responsive engagement with the full spectrum of the child's emotional expressions

- encourage the child's social development by promoting them to initiate and maintain positive interactions with peers and adults during routines and activities. This can be achieved through modeling, teaching, providing feedback, or offering guided support.

As embedded into IDEA (2004), professionals need to be highly-qualified in order to best support positive child outcomes. Furthermore, to promote children's social emotional development, professionals need to be adequately trained as indicated on the foundation of the Pyramid Model. NAEYC's (2019) *Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators* outline the competencies educators should be prepared for when they enter the workforce. These include providing social and emotional support and using positive guidance principles, understanding and demonstrating positive, caring, and supportive relationships and interactions, planning and implementing developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate learning experiences that promote social emotional development of young children. Similarly, DEC's (2020) early childhood personnel preparation standards include that teacher

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candidates are expected to enhance young children's social and emotional competence as well as their communication skills to proactively design and execute intervention based on functions to prevent and manage challenging behaviors.

In addition to professional organization's recommendations and position statements, social emotional development is also addressed in many states' early learning standards. Early learning standards provide a comprehensive set of expectations for children's learning that help professionals guide the curriculum, assessment, and instructional practices in EC and ECSE classrooms (Scott-Little et al., 2007). In a national survey conducted by Scott-Little et al. (2007), 35 U.S. states adopted early learning standards for preschool aged children. In states that have adopted early learning prekindergarten standards, all address social emotional development in their standards (NAEYC, 2002; Nevada Department of Education, 2023; Scott-Little et al., 2007). In the state of Nevada, the state this study took place, social emotional development early learning standards focus on self-confidence, self-direction, identification and expression of feelings, interaction with adults and other children, pro-social behaviors, and attending and focusing skills (Nevada Department of Education, 2023).

Preparing Educators to Support Social Emotional Development

Perceptions on Training

With the increase of young children exhibiting challenging behaviors and the detrimental consequences that when children's development and behavior is not appropriately addressed (e.g., exclusionary practices), early childhood professionals need to be adequately trained to teach social emotional skills and to address challenging behaviors in the classroom in order to support children's development. However, EC/ ECSE professionals consistently report that addressing challenging behaviors in the classroom is the most pressing training need (Fox et al.,

2011; Hemmeter et al., 2006). Professionals often report that they feel that they are ill-equipped to handle children with persistent challenging behaviors (Fox et al., 2011). EC/ECSE educators also report that addressing the needs of children with challenging behaviors is a major source of stress and anxiety and that it is the most challenging part of their job (Gilliam & Reyes, 2018).

EC and ECSE Preparation Programs

Although the field of EC and ECSE agrees on what teachers' initial knowledge and skills should be, universities and personnel preparation programs that prepare EC and ECSE teacher often lack a common vision on how to prepare educators (Spear et al., 2018). There are many variations of teacher preparation programs across the country that prepare EC and ECSE including traditional EC general education programs, ECSE programs, alternative or accelerated routes to licensure programs, certification or endorsement programs, and dual licensure EC/ECSE (Early Childhood Personnel Center, 2019). Formal coursework is often not comprehensive and does not delve deep enough to give students a thorough understanding concepts that are considered critical to becoming a successful EC teacher such as child development and implementing developmentally appropriately practices (Bornfreund, 2011; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010). Many prospective teachers have limited practice in the classroom with highly effective teachers (Bornfreund, 2011). Field placements are one of the most important elements of teacher preparation programs; however, experiences, supervision, and standards vary greatly from one institution to another (Bornfreund, 2011; Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2020; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010). According to a report by the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (2020), often the quality of fieldwork matters more than the duration of the fieldwork experiences in addition to the supervision they receive such as site-based mentors and

program clinical faculty are an integral part to a successful fieldwork experience. While the K-12 community has increased student teaching experiences, introduced it earlier in programs, and strengthened pre-service student supervision during fieldwork placements, the early childhood community has not widely implemented standards of field experience (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2020). Personnel preparation standards and recommendations from NAEYC, DEC, and state prekindergarten standards all articulate the importance of supporting young children's social emotional development, appropriately addressing challenging behaviors, and avoiding exclusionary practices; however, personnel preparation programs persistently lack related content and practical experiences.

Preparing Teachers to Teach Social Emotional Skills

There are 1,179 institutions in the United States that prepare EC and ECSE educators (Frank Porter Graham Institute [FGP], 2006; Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2020). Less than two-thirds of the EC and ECSE preparation programs report having a required course that addressed social emotional development of young children (FGP, 2006). In a study conducted by Hyson et al. (2009), faculty members stated that addressing challenging behaviors in early childhood was a pressing need in pre-service teacher preparation experiences and course work. According to national reports, about 50% of higher education institutes offered at least one course in social and emotional development of young children or classroom or behavioral management of young children (Maxwell et al., 2006).

According to National Survey of Early Care and Education (2012), only 20% of teachers serving children under the age of 5 years old reported receiving specific training in their preservice programs on children's social emotional development and growth. EC and ECSE professionals' express frustration with lack of preparation to help children who exhibit

challenging behaviors in their classrooms (Hemmeter et al., 2016). For example, teachers and administrators are often unaware of developmentally appropriate behaviors of young children; therefore, it may be difficult to distinguish between developmentally appropriate behaviors and challenging behaviors due to the lack of training and professional development for professionals in the early childhood field (DHHSDOE, 2014; Garrity et al., 2017). Without a proper foundation from preservice teacher preparation programs, professionals most likely will not be successful in fostering social emotional skills and addressing challenging behaviors in their classrooms (Hemmeter et al., 2015). Therefore, the lack of training and implementation of social emotional focused practices in early childhood, many young children are at risk of developing social emotional delays and increase engagement in challenging behaviors (Brock & Beaman-Diglia, 2018). With the rise in early childhood exclusionary practices and the increase in the number of children who are being identified with social-emotional needs in elementary school, studies addressing pre-service early childhood professionals' preparedness to address social emotional competence and challenging behaviors is imperative.

Statement of the Problem

In a review of research in EC and ECSE personnel preparation, studies on social emotional content in teacher preparation was extremely limited with the majority of studies focusing on academic content areas such as math, science/STEM and language/communication. Currently, literature on teaching young children social emotional competence and addressing challenging behaviors was focused on providing professional development and training to in-service teachers with limited research available on the training and preparation of pre-service teachers prior to entering the field. Of the limited literature, faculty perspectives of how pre-service professionals were trained on social emotional development for young children is more

prevalent (Early et al., 2001; Hyson et al., 2006; Maxwell et al., 2006) with perspectives from pre-service teachers in personnel preparation programs missing from the literature. Faculty members have a unique insight into the preparation of pre-service educators; however, without the voices of students in pre-service preparation programs to supplement the faculty perspective, the field is missing out on what the educators' insight into their own pre-service preparation to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behavior.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore pre-service EC and ECSE teachers' preparedness to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors, and their perceptions of their teacher preparation program's effectiveness in adequately preparing them to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behavior.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What training, intervention strategies, and evidence-based practices were included in EC/ECSE teachers' personnel preparation programs to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors for young children?

2. What are the perceived levels of preparedness for EC/ECSE teachers to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors for young children?

3. What components and experiences are necessary in personnel preparation programs to adequately prepare EC/ECSE teachers to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors?

4. What innovations are needed to better prepare EC/ECSE teachers to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors upon initial entry into the workforce?

Conceptual Framework

Pre-Service Personnel Preparation

According to DEC (2022), NAEYC (2019), and Nevada Prekindergarten Standards (2023), EC/ECSE teachers need to know how to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors. EC/ECSE teachers are trained through high quality personnel preparation programs (i.e., undergraduate programs, masters level programs, alternate route to licensure programs, certificate programs) to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors. This occurs through personnel preparation experiences such as coursework, lectures, classroom activities, fieldwork, student teaching, internships and observations. Preparation should incorporate field experiences that includes a diverse population of children and families as well (DEC, 2022). These field experiences should be aligned with coursework to prepare preservice educators to integrate research and theory with practical hands-on approaches (Bornfruend, 2011; Macy et al., 2009; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010) These experiences help pre-service EC and ECSE teachers increase their knowledge and application of teaching social emotional skills and addressing challenging behaviors in early childhood settings.

In-Service Professional Development

Once the teachers enter the workforce, they are expected to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors. Ongoing professional development is important to building confidence and competency within the EC and ECSE teachers' ability to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors. Some key frameworks for providing high quality professional development are through the use of coaching practices, reflection, mentoring and feedback, and providing authentic and integrated opportunities for learning within their practice (DEC, 2022). In their recent statement of personnel preparation, DEC (2022) recommends using resources that support alignment between the DEC standards and the recommended practices.

Resources such as mentoring/coaching, supervision, self-reflection and evaluations all should be aligned with the DEC recommended practices and the standards.

Immediate Outcomes

When EC and ECSE teachers teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors there are several immediate outcomes. First, teachers become more confident and competent in teaching social emotional skills and addressing challenging behaviors. Second, teachers address social emotional needs for young children in a developmentally appropriate manner which treats young children with respect and dignity. Third, there is a reduction of expulsion and suspension practices in early childhood setting due to proactively teaching social emotional skills to young children. Lastly, teachers promote equity and inclusion in early childhood settings by helping all children learn these skills.

Distal Outcomes

These outcomes impact students in many different ways and have a long-lasting impact. There will be improved academic outcomes for children throughout their school career, there are improved social relationships with peers and adults and finally, there are improved child and family outcomes. Figure 2 is a visual representation of the conceptual framework for this research study.

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework

| Pre-Service Personnel Preparation | In-Service Professional Development | Immediate Outcomes | Distal Outcomes |

According to Division for Early Childhood (DEC), National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and Prekindergarten State Standards, teachers need to know how to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors.

Teachers trained through high quality personnel preparation programs to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors

Personnel Preparation Experiences

Coursework, lectures, classroom activities, fieldwork, student teaching, internships, observations

Teachers teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors

Knowledge and application of teaching social emotional skills and addressing challenging behaviors

Teachers become more confident and competent in teaching social emotional skills and addressing challenging behaviors

Teachers address social emotional needs for young children in a developmentally appropriate manner

Reduction of suspensions and expulsion of young children

Teachers promote equity and inclusion in early childhood settings

Improved academic performance for students

Improved social relationships with adults and peers

Improved student and family outcomes

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Definitions

Challenging behavior: any repeated pattern of behavior that interferes with or at risk of interfering with the child's optional learning or engagement in pro-social interactions with peers and adults (Smith & Fox, 2003).

Exclusionary practices: common practices that suspend and expel students from school such as removing children from their classrooms and sending young students' home from school early (Gilliam, 2005).

Individuals with Education Disabilities Act (2004): law that makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related service to those children (IDEA, 2004).

In-service training: professional development that occurs after professional enters the workforce (Early & Winton, 2001).

Multi-tiered systems of support: proactive and preventative framework that integrates data and instruction to maximize student achievement and support students social, emotional, behavior, and academic needs (DEC, 2022).

Professional development: on-going training, practice, feedback and follow up support that involves teachers in learning activities and encourage development of teachers learning (Fox & Hemmeter, 2009).

Personnel preparation: training of individuals who work with young children with and without disabilities (DEC, 2022).

Pre-service training: training of individuals who work with young children with and without disabilities prior to entering the workforce. Pre-service training can include fieldwork, observations, coursework, reflection, discussions etc. (Maxwell et al., 2006).

Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children: comprehensive, multi-tiered framework of evidence based [practices that promotes the social, emotional and behavior competence of young children with and without disabilities (Hemmeter et al., 2015).

Social/emotional development: a specific domain of child's development. Refers to a child's ability to understand the feelings of others, control their own feelings and behavior and get along with peers; how children form and sustain positive relationships, experience, manage and express emotions and engage with the environment (Bornstein et al., 2010).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Child development is a multifaceted process encompassing various domains which each play a crucial role in shaping a child's learning and overall well-being. Among these domains, social emotional development not only influences a child's immediate interactions but also lays a foundation for long-term academic and personal success. The early years serve as a foundational period for the acquisition of critical social-emotional skills such as learning problem-solving skills, emotional regulation, and friendship making skills (Hemmeter et al., 2006). Proficiency in social emotional skills serves as a predictor for school readiness and academic success. Young children with strong social emotional skills have increased academic and behavior functioning which paves the way for positive educational outcomes (McClelland et al., 2006; Nix et al., 2013). However, children who experience delays in their social emotional development have difficulty interacting with peers, and may fall behind in academic skills. This could potentially lead to an ongoing path of challenges in social, behavior, and academic domains.

Children who experience delays in the social emotional development often engage in persistent challenging behaviors. Approximately 10% to 20% of young children face social emotional challenges which are characterized by difficulties in regulating emotions, expressing feelings, engaging with peers appropriately, and solving social problems (Brauner & Stephens, 2006; Hemmeter et al., 2016). Delays in social emotional development often manifest as challenging behaviors which are defined as intense, persistent, and sometimes violent behaviors. Some examples of challenging behaviors are throwing, hitting, biting, social withdrawal, and nervousness (Bornstein et al., 2010; Conroy et al., 2014; Smith & Fox, 2003). Young children who exhibit challenging behavior may face exclusionary practices such as expulsion and

suspension from early childhood programs. This leads to determinantal short and long-term consequences. Exclusionary practices affect around seven out of every 1000 preschools and disproportionately impact children of color, boys, and those with disabilities (Buell et al., 2022; Gilliam, 2005; Zeng et al., 2019). These practices disrupt children's routines, jeopardize their sense of security, and contribute to negative school experiences which can increase the risk of dropout, academic failure, retention, and incarceration (Dunlap et al., 2006; Steglin, 2018). With the associated risks of the impact of exclusionary practices and the increase of school age students displaying challenging behaviors, there is a need to provide interventions to young children to help them learn social emotional skills (DHHDOE, 2016; Dunlap et al., 2006; Steglin, 2018).

Young children require support to develop their social emotional skills. One way to address challenging behavior and teach social emotional skills to young children is by using a multi-tiered systems of support which is recommended to address both academic and behavioral needs (Hemmeter et al., 2015). The Pyramid Model is a multi-tiered system of support that provides evidence-based tools and interventions to promote social emotional competence and to prevent challenging behavior in EC/ECSE programs. It comprises of three tiers ranging from universal support for all children to more targeted and intensive strategies and interventions (Hemmeter et al., 2015; Shepley & Grisham-Brown, 2019). Professional organizations like NAEYC (2019) and DEC (2021) both emphasize the importance of using developmentally appropriate practices by helping children develop self-regulation skills, identifying and expressing emotions appropriately, conducting functional behavior assessment, and using positive guidance strategies (DEC, 2021; NAEYC, 2019).

For young children to acquire social emotional skills, EC/ECSE teachers need to be component and confident in addressing challenging behaviors and teaching social emotional skills. However, EC/ECSE teachers consistently report that the most stressful part of their job is addressing challenging behaviors with young children (Hemmeter et al., 2017). Therefore, there is a need for EC/ECSE teachers to learn skills necessary to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behavior. Only 20% of EC/ECSE teachers reported receiving specific training in their personnel preparation programs on social emotional development (National Survey of Early Care and Education, 2012). Therefore, there is a need to explore what is known about pre-service EC/ECE teacher preparation to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors.

Summary of Review

The purpose of this literature review was to gain an understanding of the existing research on ECE and ECSE pre-service teacher preparation to better understand the needs of pre-service teachers to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors. The research questions that guided this review were:

1. What is known about pre-service ECE/ECSE teacher preparation for preparing pre-service professionals to teach social-emotional skills and address challenging behavior in the classroom?

2. What are the implications for further research in the field of pre-service teacher preparation for teaching social emotional skills and addressing challenging behaviors in the classroom?

Method

To explore what is known about pre-service EC/ECSE teacher preparation for preparing

professionals to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors, a systematic

literature review was conducted. An electronic search of educational databases including

PsycINFO, ERIC, and Professional Development Collections was conducted. Search terms for

the topics of early childhood, teacher training and social emotional were used. Table 1 lists all

the search terms used for this systematic review for each topic.

Table 1

List of Search Terms

Topic	Search terms
Early childhood	"preschool" "pre-school" "kindergarten" "prekindergarten" "pre-kindergarten" "prek" "pre-k" "young child*" "early childhood"
Teacher training	"teacher training" "teacher pre*" preservice pre-service "teacher candidate" "teacher education" "student teaching"
Social emotional	"social" "emotion*" "social-emotion*" "social emotional" "behavior" "socioemotional"

Within each topic area, search terms were searched separately and them combined with OR. Next, the results from topic area searches, results were combined using AND. This yielded 1,984 results. The following limiters were applied: (a) article was peer-reviewed, (b) published between 2000 - 2023, (c) published in English. Reports, practitioner and concept articles, and dissertations and theses were excluded. After the limiters were applied, 824 results remained. A title search was completed using the following criteria: (a) main topic was about teachers in the education field, (b) included teachers who were pre-service professionals, (c) included pre-service preschool professionals who were studying birth - 5 years old age (excluding kindergarten), (d) study was empirical, (e) study had to primarily address social emotional development, skills, or challenging behaviors, and (f) study was conducted in the US. Eight hundred articles were eliminated for the following reasons: not about teachers (124), not about early childhood (155), not empirical (41), not in English (one), not preservice (262), and not about social emotional or challenging behaviors (205). Thirteen additional articles were eliminated because they were conducted internationally. Therefore, 24 articles remained. After reading the abstracts for the 24 articles remaining, an additional 12 articles were eliminated for the following reasons: international context (four), not preservice (one), not about social emotional development, skills or challenging behavior (seven). Therefore, 12 articles remained for analysis. After reading the articles, an ancestry search was completed by searching reference lists of articles. Two additional articles from this step met inclusion/exclusion criteria. The 14 remaining articles are listed in Table 2. Figure 3 reviews the literature review method.

Figure 3

Systematic Literature Review Method

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            ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
   ╲         │                                                       │
    ╲        │  • Records identified through database searching      │
Identification│     (n=824)                                          │
    ╱        │                                                       │
   ╱         └─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘

            ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
   ╲        │                                                       │
    ╲       │  • Records identified after title search (n= 24)      │
 Screening  │  • Records identified after abstract screening (n = 12)│
    ╱       │                                                       │
   ╱        └─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘

            ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
   ╲        │                                                       │
    ╲       │  • Records identified after full text screening (n = 12)│
 Eligibility│  • Ancestry search (n=2)                              │
    ╱       │                                                       │
   ╱        └─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘

            ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
   ╲        │                                                       │
    ╲       │  • Studies included in systematic literature review   │
  Included  │     (n = 14)                                          │
    ╱       │                                                       │
   ╱        └─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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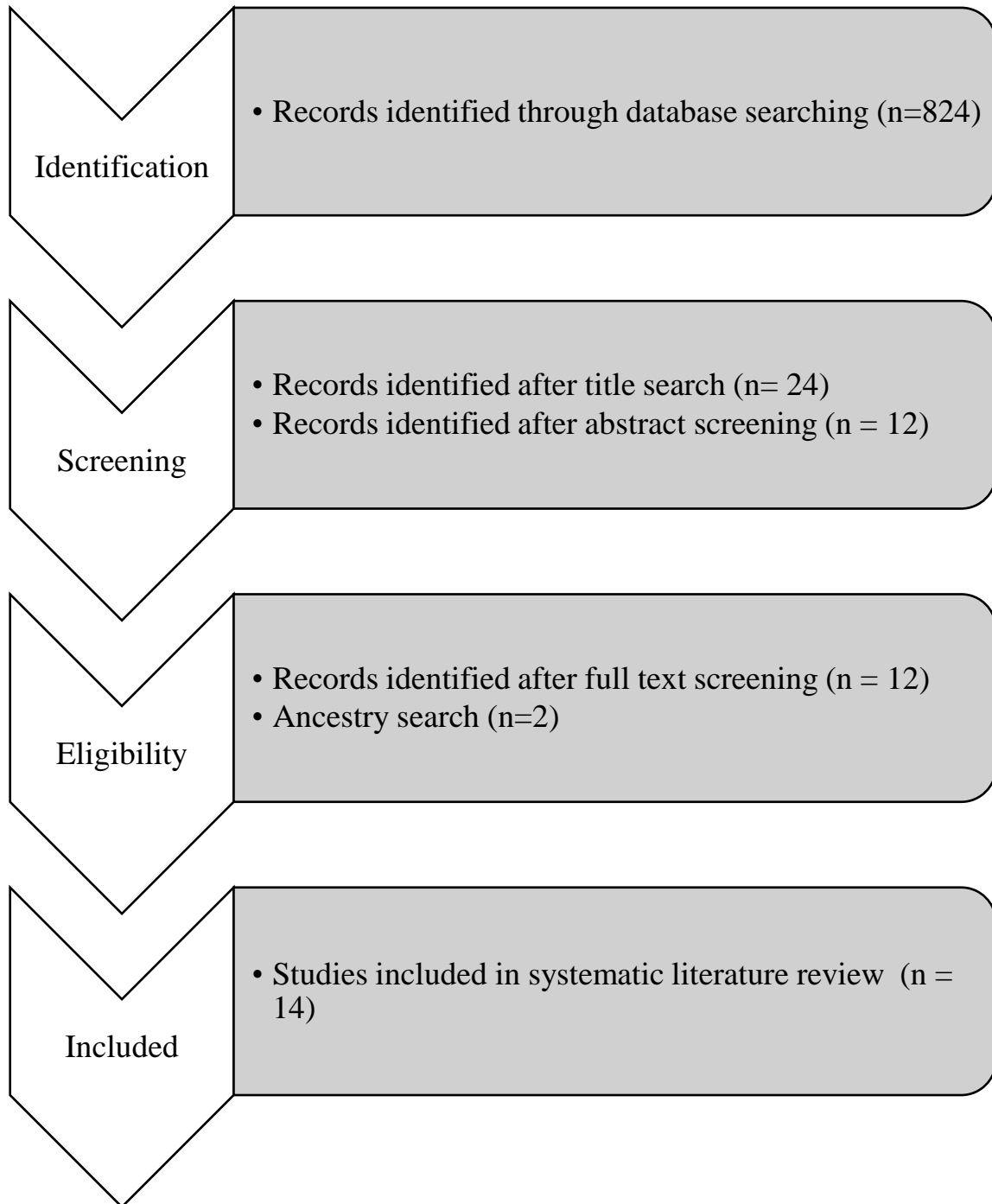
Table 2

Summary of Articles Included in Systematic Literature Review

Author(s) (year)	Participants		Method	Article focus
	Sample size	Age		
Appl & Spencier (2008)	82 enrolled college students	Not listed	Qualitative—documentary analysis	Promoting positive social environments
Ascetta et al. (2023)	80 college juniors	Not listed	Qualitative—multi-case	Knowledge and skills of challenging behavior
Beers Dewhirst & Goldman (2020)*	20 college juniors	19 - 34	Mixed Methods—survey and questionnaire pre and post	Mindfulness training
Buettner et al. (2016)*	175 university EC program directors for associate degree seeking and bachelor seeking institutions	Not applicable	Quantitative—survey	Higher education curriculum
DellaMattera (2011)	61 college juniors and seniors	Not listed	Qualitative—questionnaire	Social development
Garner et al. (2018)	87 enrolled college students	19 - 26	Quantitative—pre and post experimental design	Mindfulness/reflection

Author(s) (year)	Participants		Method	Article focus
	Sample size	Age		
Hegde & Hewett (2021)	101 undergraduate students	Not listed	Qualitative - Comparative analysis & survey	Online teaching modules
Hemmeter et al. (2008)	125 program coordinators or faculty members at higher education institutions	Not applicable	Quantitative—survey	Higher education program survey
LaParo et al. (2012)	46 college seniors	Not listed	Quantitative—pre and post design	Classroom interactions
LaParo et al. (2020)	143 college juniors and seniors	20 - 24	Quantitative—survey	Classroom interactions
Lee & Choi (2008)	23 college juniors	Not listed	Qualitative—pre and post essays	Web-based case study instruction
McClain (2021)	15 college juniors	Not listed	Qualitative—survey design	Trauma
McFarland et al. (2008)	63 college juniors and seniors	19 - 25	Quantitative—pre-post survey	Positive guidance
Swartz & McElwain (2012)	24 college students enrolled in introductory course	20 - 25	Quantitative—comparative correlational design	Emotional intelligence

*Note. *Found in ancestry search*

Data Analysis

Fourteen articles were included in this review between 2000 – 2023. Each article was read completely. Articles were organized into a table by author(year), participants including sample size and age, method, and article focus (see Table 2). Additionally, data was assessed for major themes across the findings. Themes include methodologies to teach social emotional skills, specific content in pre-service teacher preparation, practicum experiences, developmentally appropriate practices, wellbeing and mindfulness, classroom management and positive guidance, classroom interactions and relationships, and higher education perspectives and curriculum.

Results

Summary of Methodological Approaches

Participants

Most of the studies included undergraduate pre-service teachers (mostly juniors and seniors) with two articles addressing faculty in higher education. Seven hundred and forty-five preservice teachers were included as participants across the 12 studies. In addition, 300 coordinators or full-time faculty were included as participants across two studies that addressed higher education faculty. Overwhelmingly, most of the participants included were women and mostly identified as Caucasian. When age was reported, most of the participants were between the ages of 20-24 years of age. However, McFarland (2008), LaParo et al. (2012), and LaParo et al. (2020) included a more diverse sample of participants which included participants who identified as African American, Asian American, and Hispanic. One article specifically focused on students in an introductory course (Swartz et al., 2012). In the two articles that addressed higher education faculty, Buettner et al. (2016) addressed only ECE general education curriculum while Hemmeter et al. (2008) addressed both ECE and ECSE faculty perspectives

and curriculum. In eight articles, the participants included pre-service teachers in early childhood general education programs only while two articles addressed pre-service teachers in both ECE general education programs and ECSE programs. It is of importance to note that none of the articles addressed only ECSE pre-service teachers.

For the 12 articles that included pre-service teachers, nine of those studies included students in practicum or student teaching experiences (Appl & Spenciner, 2008; DellaMattera, 2011; Beers Dewhirst & Goldman, 2020; Hegde & Hewett, 2021; LaParo et al., 2020; LaParo et al., 2012; McClain, 2021; McFarland et al., 2008; Swartz & McElwain, 2012). All of the nine articles included an in-person component and a practicum/student teaching component. One article used real-life videos but did not include a practical hands-on component in their study (Lee & Choi, 2008). In addition, two studies included pre-service teachers who were in introductory early childhood courses and were not engaging in in practicum or student teaching yet (Ascetta et al., 2023; Garner et al., 2008).

Study Designs

Overall, seven studies used quantitative designs. Notably, only two studies employed interventions while other studies focused on survey and correlational activities (Garner at el., 2018; La Paro et al., 2012). Swartz and McElwain (2012) used correlation and regression analyses to examine the correlation between emotion-related regulation and cognition of preservice teachers as predictors of responses to children's emotional displays. Buettner et al. (2016), Hemmeter et al. (2008), LaParo et al. (2020), and McFarland et al. (2008) used quantitative survey designs. Buettner et al. (2016) and Hemmeter et al. (2008) surveyed higher education faculty in both two year and four-year institutions of higher education to examine what was being taught in preservice personnel preparation programs. La Paro et al. (2020) examined

relationships between student teachers in preservice programs and their mentor teachers in relation to their emotional support and needs. McFarland et al. (2008) surveyed EC/ECSE to investigate the knowledge to positive guidance and the use of positive guidance strategies in fieldwork experiences.

Six articles presented qualitative studies including open-ended surveys and artifact analysis. Three studies examined documents such as student essays, student discussion boards, course syllabi, and student work samples (Appl et al., 2008; Ascetta et al., 2023; Lee & Choi, 2008). Appl et al. (2008) analyzed work samples to understand how preservice teachers can provide a positive social environment for children. Ascetta et al. (2023) used these documents to examine preservice teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward Pyramid Model practices after having Pyramid Model practices embedded into university coursework. Lee and Choi (2008) examined student essays to analyze students' responses to various classroom management dilemmas after engaging with web-based modules. Three articles presented qualitative questionaries (Dellamattera, 2011; Hedge & Hewett, 2021; McClain, 2021). Dellamattera (2011) explored the perceptions of preservice early childhood teachers on their understanding of preschoolers' behaviors, assumptions about interventions, and beliefs in the role they play in supporting young children's social emotional development. Hedge and Hewett (2021) explored student satisfaction and student learning after engaging in online modules about developmentally appropriate practices. McClain (202) analyzed two questionaries to understand preservice teachers' perceived preparedness to support children who were experiencing trauma.

Beers Dewirst and Goldman (2020) was the only study to employ a mixed-method design. The authors used a quantitative survey designed to measure mindfulness traits that were self-reported. This survey was given three times over the course of the semester. Then they used

a follow-up open-ended questionnaire at the end of their study to determine what mindfulness strategies they were practicing and how they were using mindfulness strategies in their fieldwork placements.

Themes Across the Literature

The articles reviewed describe various aspects of pre-service teacher education programs and their impact on promoting positive social environments, addressing challenging behaviors, and supporting social emotional development in EC/ECSE. Themes emerged throughout the articles and these will be discussed in the following sections.

Methodologies for Including Social Emotional Content

Six of the articles reviewed described the teaching methods for intentionally including social emotional content into higher education courses for EC/ECSE students (Appl & Spencier, 2008; Beers Dewhirst & Goldman, 2020; Garner et al., 2018; Hedge & Hewett et al., 2021; Lee & Choi, 2008; McFarland et al., 2008). While most of the methods were delivered through in-person instruction, asynchronous online modules were are used to teaching social emotional content used. While new materials, lectures and modules were often created, the new content was embedded into existing courses.

For in-person approaches, researchers examined a variety of strategies. For example, Garner et al. (2018) used two-hour sessions once per week for six sessions for a total of 12 hours of instruction embedded within an existing course while Appl and Spenciner (2008) embedded social emotional content across existing courses over four semesters. Beers Dewhirst and Goldman (2020) embedded mindfulness and social emotional content into existing coursework in one course by delivering in-person sessions for a total of 7 hours of practice over a 16-week period. Interestingly, McFarland et al. (2008) embedded classroom management techniques into

the lecture and discussion components of an existing course which was 2 hours per week for 3.5 months and then had students practice these techniques in the university lab school for an additional 4 hours per week.

Two studies used online modules to deliver social emotional course content (Hegde & Hewett 2021; Lee & Choi, 2008). Lee and Choi (2008) embedded web-based online modules that were created by the research team which were comprised of case studies into an existing social emotional course for undergraduate students. Hegde and Hewett (2021) also used online modules in a hybrid undergraduate course on guiding young children's behavior. This course was delivered both face-to-face and online with the modules used during the online portions. Each module included teacher-recorded interviews on the topic, video examples of children's behavior in the classroom was provided, and teachers explaining how they used developmentally appropriate practices to respond to the child's behavior in the video (Hegde & Hewett, 2021).

Specific Content Taught in Pre-Service Teacher Programs

There were several practices and strategies that were addressed in pre-service teacher preparation programs in the articles reviewed. While most of the articles focused on specific social and emotional strategies such as positive guidance strategies (McFarland et al., 2008), encouraging friendship skills (Hegde & Hewett, 2021), and problem-solving skills (Lee & Choi, 2008), two articles addressed mindfulness skills (Beers Dewhirst & Goldman, 2020; Garner et al., 2008) and one article did not specifically report which social emotional components were embedded (Appl & Spencier, 2008). McFarland et al. (2008) taught positive guidance strategies to pre-service undergraduate students. This included positive guidance techniques such as conflict negations and positive language, cultural and gender issues and general child development. Lee and Choi (2008) taught classroom management skills including the five stages

of problem solving where students had to identify problems, analyze those problems, and then create solutions and make decisions on how they would address these problems. Hegde et al. (2021) addressed many different social emotional strategies such as how to support children's emotional development, encouraging friendship skills, setting up the physical classroom, teaching and empowering children with conflict resolution skills and working with children with disabilities.

Finally, in addition to social emotional strategies for young children, Beers Dewhirst and Goldman (2020) and Garner et al. (2008) included many different components of mindfulness as well as social emotional content for the students' themselves. For example, Garner et al. (2008) taught pre-service teachers how to learn about their own emotional competence, how to understand and regulate their own emotions, the role of their emotions in relationships building with students and adults, coping with children's' challenging behavior, promoting awareness of social emotional learning for fostering their own resilience. Pre-service teachers were training in mindfulness techniques such as breathing awareness meditation, mindfulness breathing, sitting meditation, walking meditation, mindful yoga, and body scanning (Beers Dewhirst & Goldman 2020; Garner et al., 2008).

Practicum Experiences

Across the dataset, it was clear that pre-service teachers' experience in practicum or student teaching experiences were the most impactful (Appl & Spencier, 2008; McClain, 2021; Swartz & McElwain, 2008). While many of the studies included participants who were engaging in practicum and student teaching experiences, not all of the studies explored how practicum and student teaching experiences can influence teachers' use of social emotional skills (Dellmattera, 2011; Hedge & Hewett et al., 2021, LaParo et al., 2012). Five articles addressed how practicum

and/or student teaching experiences impact teacher learning. For example, McClain (2021) found that pre-service teachers felt more comfortable and confident implementing strategies to help children with trauma after engaging in practicum experiences. Swartz and McElwain (2008) and Appl and Spencier (2008) argued that training and classroom experience, when combined, may enhance a teacher's repertoire of developmentally appropriate social-emotional strategies and the most coursework pre-service teachers' had prior to engaging in practicum and student teaching experiences, the more developmentally appropriate social emotional strategies were used. Beers Dewhirst and Goldman (2020) and LaParo et al. (2020) found that pre-service teachers' positive perceptions of themselves and their relationships when engaged in student teaching influenced student social emotional development. While these studies did not establish a causal relationship, they discuss the need for future research in this area.

Developmentally Appropriate Practices

Across the dataset, a consistent theme emerged regarding the pivotal role of pre-service teachers in cultivating positive social environments and fostering acceptance among children through developmentally appropriate and evidence-based practices (Appl & Spenciner, 2008; Hedge & Hewett, 2021). For example, Appl and Spenciner (2008) concluded that with experiences such as student teaching and fieldwork experiences, pre-service teachers became more aware of and understood the importance of developing positive social environments for young children. Hedge and Hewett (2021) used online teaching modules that focused on developmentally appropriate practices in guiding pre-service teachers' behavior management and responding appropriately to young children's behavior. Pre-service teachers stated that the online teacher videos were helpful in learning how to guide behavior. Students expressed that they liked the hands-on learning and the application. Hedge and Hewett (2021) argued that these online

video components can provide preservice teachers an understanding of behavior and developmentally appropriate practices when they did not have any prior experience with coursework that addressed social emotional components.

Mindfulness and Well-Being

Preservice teachers often face high levels of stress due to demands of their coursework, practicum experiences, and the anticipation of entering the workforce (Beers Dewhirst & Goldman, 2020; Garner et al., 2018). Beers Dewhirst and Goldman (2020) discussed that teacher's emotions were essential for determining the quality of the classroom climate. A teacher's ability to control strong emotions and to use strategies to remain calm impacts children's social emotional development. Garner et al. (2018) examined how a mindfulness-based program can impact preservice early childhood teachers' emotional competence. Results from this study indicated that a mindfulness program infused with social emotional learning content can positively impact preservice teachers' ability to understand, use, and regulate their own emotions. Beers Dewhirst and Goldman (2020) examined how embedded mindfulness training in undergraduate social emotional learning courses can influence teachers' well-being and how they can use these practices with children. The researchers stated that students benefitted from mindfulness training and they were consistently using mindfulness training strategies such as body scans, sitting meditation and yoga exercises. Sixty-five percent of pre-service students embedded these practices into their early childhood practicum and student teaching experiences. Pre-service students described how the mindfulness training helped with their understanding of children's social emotional development, prosocial behavior, and conflict resolution skills. They also stated they were able to model these mindfulness strategies for their students in the early childhood classroom setting (Beers Dewhirst & Goldman, 2020). Both of

these studies indicated that the more experience pre-service teachers had in the classroom prior to completing the mindfulness training had a significant impact on their ability to engage in these strategies. Therefore, the greater exposure to challenging behaviors and opportunities to practice regulating their own emotions could have impacted these data (Beers Dewhirst & Goldman; 2020; Garner et al., 2018). One of the biggest differences between these two studies was that Beers Dewhirst and Goldman (2020) addressed how pre-service teachers used these mindfulness strategies to teach young children about their own mindfulness while Garner et al. (2008) only addressed how the pre-service teachers learned these mindfulness strategies.

Classroom Management and Positive Guidance

Two articles addressed how pre-service teachers learned about and implemented global classroom management strategies and positive guidance strategies (Lee & Choi, 2008; McFarland et al., 2008). The two studies found that by embedding social emotional content and explicitly teaching social emotional content through lectures, web-based modules, and discussion in the university classroom, pre-service teachers were better prepared to address challenging behavior in the classroom. Lee and Choi (2008) found that pre-service teachers started shifting their thoughts from a child's challenging behavior as a deficit to how they can proactively help the child with their challenging behavior. McFarland et al. (2008) found that pre-service teachers often had an inaccurate definition of positive guidance. Researchers found that positive guidance skills such as conflict resolution were difficult to master for preservice teachers while redirection and positive reinforcement were the easiest to implement for pre-service teachers. Most of the pre-service teachers stated that the hands-on aspects of the class were the most impactful to be able to implement positive guidance strategies (McFarland et al., 2008). For both studies, the hands-on application-based learning emerged as the most impactful way for pre-service teachers

to master positive guidance and classroom management strategies (Lee & Choi, 2008; McFarland et al., 2008).

Classroom Interactions and Relationships

Three of the articles discussed the importance of classroom interactions and relationships between different people such as relationships between student and pre-service teacher and between pre-service teacher and mentor teacher had significant impacts on young children's social emotional development (LaParo et al., 2012; LaParo et al., 2020; Swartz & McElwain, 2012). All three of these studies emphasized that all relationships that take place in the classroom were essential for improved student outcomes in their social emotional development. LaParo et al. (2020) and Swartz and McElwain (2012) both argued that there was an interconnectedness between pre-service teachers' emotional intelligence and emotional health and the ability to develop meaningful and supportive relationships with young children. In both studies, practicum students with more stressors reported feeling less positive and more negatively which could impact the early childhood students' learning in the early childhood classroom (La Paro et al. 2020; Swartz and McElwain, 2012).

Higher Education Curriculum and Perspectives

Two studies addressed higher education curricula and higher education perspectives (Buettner et al., 2016; Hemmeter et al., 2008). Buettner et al. (2016) examined what recommended quality standards in early childhood teacher education programs were addressed in higher education curriculum and they compared the differences between two and four-year degree programs. Buettner et al. (2016) discovered that although the majority of universities and colleges covered topics like child development, families and community, academic instruction, curricula, observation, and assessment across multiple courses, there was a lower emphasis on

addressing professionalism in the field and promoting children's social and emotional development in higher education institutions. Hemmeter et al. (2008) examined how university instructors in higher education institutions were prepared to address content related to social emotional development and challenging behaviors, how well they believed their graduates were prepared to address this content in their future careers, and what resources were useful to better prepare graduates to address social emotional content with young children. Faculty members reported that their graduates were prepared on many topics including working with families and preventive practices; however, they reported their graduate were less prepared to work with children with challenging behaviors (Hemmeter et al., 2008). Buettner et al. (2016) and Hemmeter et al. (2018) presented similar challenges and barriers to embedding social emotional content into courses including limited room in the curriculum, lack of content expertise, and limited opportunity to implement practice in the field. Both studies also addressed the need for courses specifically designed to address these social emotional concepts, modules to fit into existing courses, faculty training materials, and additional supplementary materials. Hemmeter et al. (2008) argued that because many of the faculty members stated their graduates had emerging skills related to social emotional development, that many of the graduates were not prepared to teach and address social emotional content in their future careers. In addition, faculty members reported that graduates were least likely to be prepared to address the needs of children with challenging behaviors that are unresponsive to universal classroom management techniques. (Hemmeter et al., 2008).

Discussion

Social emotional development is an important domain of early childhood development and pre-service teachers need to be prepared to address social emotional skills with young

children (Fox et al., 2011; Hemmeter et al., 2015). The articles reviewed all provided valuable insights into pre-service teacher education programs which offer a comprehensive understanding of the strengths, challenges, and insights of teaching pre-service teachers' social emotional content.

There were many diverse teaching strategies for teaching pre-service teachers employed in the studies. Studies using in-person instruction, online modules, and practical experiences in student teaching and fieldwork (Garner et al., 2008; Hedge & Hewett, 2021; McFarland et al. 2008; Lee & Choi, 2008). This suggests that pre-service teacher education programs should continue to recognize the importance of flexibility and adaptability of experiences and learning. This variety indicates a responsiveness to the changing needs of students and the recognition that different approaches may be effective in preparing future teachers for the unique complexities of the classroom (Early Childhood Workforce Index, 2020; Putnam & Walsh, 2021). In addition, higher education faculty described some challenges and barriers to embedding social emotional content into higher education curricula such as dedicated resources, faculty training, and specialized courses and content (Buettner et al., 2016; Hemmeter et al., 2008). By bridging this gap, pre-service teachers can be adequately prepared to address the complex social emotional needs of young children, especially those with challenging behavior.

Pre-service teachers need to understand how to tailor instructional methods to meet the unique needs and developmental stages of young children (Dellamattera, 2011). Several articles discuss the need for pre-service teachers to move beyond simply understanding the knowledge to the application of the knowledge (Appl & Spencier, 2008; Hedge & Hewett, 2021). Overwhelmingly, the articles discussed the pivotal role practicum experiences and student teaching experiences contribute to the understanding and application of social emotional content.

Practical, hands-on application was consistently recognized as a powerful method for mastering

positive guidance, and classroom management skills, and creating supportive and

developmentally appropriate environments for young children (Dellamattera, 2011; Hedge &

Hewett, 2021). This highlights the importance of bridging the gap between theory and practice to

ensure pre-service teachers are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed for when they

enter the workforce (Freeman et al., 2014).

       Teacher retention is an important consideration in the field of EC/ECSE. It has been

reported that 12% of teachers leave the teaching field within the first 2 years and 50% leave

within their first five years (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011; Ingerstoll, 2012). To mitigate this,

strategies to relieve teacher mental health has been at the forefront of conversations (Beers

Dewhirst & Goldman, 2020; Lee & Choi, 2008). The focus on mindfulness and well-being

acknowledges the high levels of stress that are facing pre-service teachers and in-service

teachers. There is a need to address teacher well-being to create positive classroom climates for

young children. Mindfulness training is one potential tool for enhancing pre-service teachers'

mental health and can also support the social-emotional development of young children (Beers

Dewhirst & Goldman, 2020; Lee & Choi, 2008). There was an established connection between

pre-service teachers' emotional intelligence and the satisfaction of relationships between mentor

teachers and young children and the positive outcomes for students (Dellmattera, 2011; La Paro

et al., 2020). Recognizing and addressing stressors that impact these relationships is crucial for

fostering a positive classroom environment which directly impacts children's social emotional

development.

       Surprisingly, only one article specifically mentioned the Pyramid Model (Acsetta et al.,

2023). One additional article used a multi-tiered system of supports and described the different

social emotional strategies within tiers of instruction; however, did not mention the Pyramid Model specifically. Even though DEC (2021) and NAEYC (2019) recommend the use of muti-tiered systems of support, only two out of the 14 articles use a multi-tiered system of support framework.

In addition, many of the strategies that were taught throughout the articles did not address more complex tier II or tier III strategies such as intentionally and explicitly teaching more complex social emotional strategies (i.e., maintaining peer relationships, problem solving, conflict resolution) and developing functional behavior assessments. Many tier I strategies were discussed in the articles reviewed such as creating warm and positive relationships, creating supportive classroom environments, and responding to children's emotions. However, none of the articles addressed more complex social emotional interventions or supports. This could be due to the disconnect between more intensive interventions such as functional behavior assessment and behavior intervention plans and the use of more universal supports for young children. When pre-service teach social emotional skills and provide universal supports, fewer children need intensive interventions.

Limitations and Gaps in Research

While the reviewed literature provides valuable insights into pre-service teacher education programs and their impact on social emotional development, there are some limitations and gaps in the existing research base. Addressing these limitations and gaps can guide future research and provide a more comprehensive understanding of this subject. First and foremost, there is limited research on EC/ECSE personnel preparation generally with few studies specifically examining social emotional development and behavior.

Many of the studies reported a lack of diversity among participants with a predominant focus on White, women pre-service teachers between the ages of 20-24. More research should be conducted with a more diverse population and expanding the age ranges to gather the experiences of those who are older and/or engaging in alternate and accelerated route to licensure pathways. Additionally, the majority of studies concentrated on EC general education programs which neglect the specific and unique needs of those in dual programs (EC and ECSE) and who are in only ECSE programs. There is a need to understand more about the ECSE perspective, especially because children with disabilities often display more intense and challenging behavior. In addition, many studies did not specifically measure student outcomes related to social emotional development. This makes it difficult to establish a correlation between pre-service teacher training and enhanced classroom practices to support young children's social emotional development.

There were significant gaps in research in several different areas including the impact of online teaching modules and the integration of technology, the need to understand perspectives from pre-service teachers on how they are prepared to teach social emotional content, and the impact of pre-service training on teacher retention rates. With the changing landscape of pre-service teacher preparation programs and the need for more accelerated and alternate routes to licensure, there is a need to understand how to diversify teaching practices such as integrating technology and expanding access to online learning through meaningful ways. Several studies focused on the program coordinators or faculty perspectives of what was included in higher education programs; however, the perspective of pre-service teachers was missing which can help provide a more holistic view of their experiences and needs. Finally, understanding the long-term impact of pre-service teacher training on teacher retention rates can help determine

what strategies and components are essential to addressing the high teacher turnover rates among EC/ECSE teachers.

Limitations of This Review

In this systematic literature review, only three databases were utilized. Expanding on the dataset for this review might have been possible with the inclusion of extra databases or search terms. The scope of this review was also restricted to studies in the United States and published in English. Incorporating international studies could offer more insights into pre-service teacher preparation to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors.

Implications for Future Research

Future research should continue looking at pre-service teacher preparation programs to see what content is embedded into higher education curricula and courses. Buettner et al. (2016) was the only study to address globally what was embedded into EC/ECSE pre-service teacher preparation programs. Additionally, limited research is available about the actual implementation of social emotional practices when pre-service teachers are in fieldwork experiences and when they first enter the field.

Conclusion

The reviewed articles addressed various aspects of pre-service teacher preparation programs, their methodologies, and their impact on fostering positive social environments, addressing challenging behaviors, and supporting social emotional development in EC/ECSE settings. The studies highlight the role that pre-service teachers play in fostering positive environments and relationships, addressing challenging behavior, and supporting social emotional development. The evidence suggests that embedding social emotional content into pre-service teacher preparation programs can have a positive impact on pre-service teachers'

knowledge of social emotional content. Whether through in-person instruction or online

modules, the incorporation of developmentally appropriate practice social emotional content can

enhance the overall preparedness of future educators to navigate the complex social emotional

needs of young children. Limited attention to ECSE pre-service teachers, lack of diversity with

participants in the studies, and the lack of longitudinal studies to determine if a correlation exists

between pre-service teacher preparation and the application of social emotional content is

needed. Future research should focus on prioritizing more diverse participant samples including

those in ECSE programs. In addition, more research should focus on how pre-service teachers

are prepared to teach and address more complex behavioral interventions and support for

children with challenging behavior. Nevertheless, this synthesis emphasizes the importance of

continued research and innovation in pre-service teacher education and how higher education

institutions can effectively address social emotional content in their personnel preparation

programs. By addressing some of the challenges and barriers presented, the field can progress

toward creating a more effective, confident, and competent workforce that can positively

influence future educators and the children they serve.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

The purpose of this study was to examine personnel preparation of EC and ECSE educators to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behavior in prekindergarten classrooms. Personnel preparation was evaluated by examining training, the implementation of evidence-based social emotional and behavioral strategies in their personnel preparation programs and to assess their level of preparedness on teaching social and emotional skills and addressing challenging behaviors in the early childhood classroom.

Research Questions:

1. What training, intervention strategies, and evidence-based practices were included in ECE/ECSE teachers' personnel preparation programs to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors for young children?

2. What were the perceived levels of preparedness for ECE/ECSE teachers to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors for young children?

3. What components and experiences were necessary in personnel preparation programs to adequately prepare ECE/ECSE teachers to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors?

4. What innovations were needed to better prepare ECE/ECSE teachers to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors upon initial entry into the workforce?

Research Design

A sequential explanatory mixed methods study was used for this study (Ivankova et al., 2006; Subedi, 2016). Quantitative phases of data collection and analysis (i.e., survey data) informed the qualitative phase (i.e., focus groups) primarily for participant recruitment and

protocol development. Table 3 aligns each research question, the purpose of the research

question, and the data collection method.

Table 3

Alignment of Research Questions and Methodological Approach

Research questions	Purpose	Data collection method	Data analysis
		Quantitative phase	
What training, intervention strategies, and evidence-based practices were included in ECE/ECSE teachers' personnel preparation programs to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors for young children?	Understand training in personnel preparation programs	Survey – Questions 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16	**Question 5:** Identify what Tier 1 practices are the most vs. least prevalent in personnel preparation programs **Question 6:** Identify what Tier 2 practices are the most vs. least prevalent in personnel preparation programs **Question 7:** Identify what Tier 3 practices are the most vs. least prevalent in personnel preparation programs **Question 8:** Identify what Tier 1 practices are the most vs. least implemented in personnel preparation programs **Question 9:** Identify what Tier 2 practices are the most vs. least implemented in personnel preparation programs **Question 10:** Identify what Tier 3 practices are the most vs. least implemented in personnel preparation programs **Question 14:** Identify percentage of teachers who were trained using the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children in personnel preparation programs. **Question 15:** Identify if specific social emotional curriculums were addressed in personnel preparation programs **Question 16:** Identify what curriculums, if any, teachers were trained to implement
What are the perceived levels of preparedness for ECE/ECSE teachers to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors for young children?	Understand how prepared ECE and ECSE teachers after competing personnel preparation program	Survey – Questions 12, 13	**Question 12:** Identify the average level of preparedness for each indicator and then within each tier of support (Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3). Identify which practice educators are most prepared for and the least prepared for and provide a rank order. **Question 13:** Identify the average level of preparedness to address common challenging behaviors in early childhood for each indicator and then within each tier of support (Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 practices). Identify which practice educators are most prepared for and the least prepared for and provide a rank order.

Research questions	Purpose	Data collection method	Data analysis
		Qualitative phase	
What components and experiences are necessary in personnel preparation programs to adequately prepare ECE/ECSE teachers to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors?	Understand what components and experiences are needed to improve personnel preparation programs	Focus group	Thematic analysis
What innovations are needed to better prepare ECE/ECSE teachers to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors upon initial entry into the workforce?	Understand what innovations are needed to improve personnel preparation programs	Focus group	Thematic analysis

After quantitative and qualitative data were collected, data were integrated to analyze the data holistically to answer the research questions. Figure 4 describes the research design process, procedures, and products for this research study.

Figure 4

Research Method
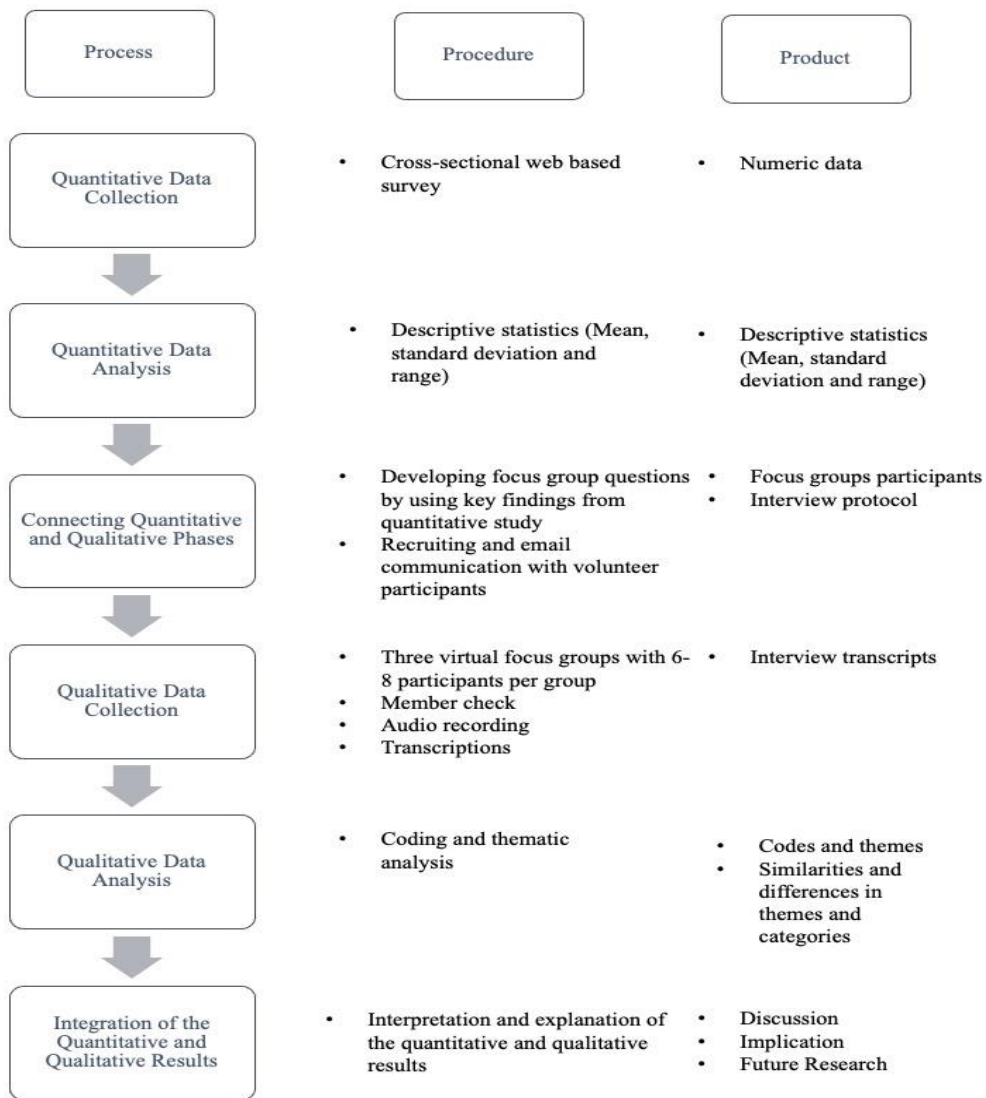
Note. Adapted from *Ivankova et al., 2006*

This research design was selected due to the limited research in this area, and therefore a need to explore the research problems and to understand the statistical results (Subedi, 2016). Survey data provided data from a broader sample and provided clarity to direct the focus group protocol. The qualitative data via focus groups allowed for more depth exploration to understand the views of EC/ECSE professionals (Ivankova et al., 2006; Subedi, 2016). Collectively, these data provided information from key stakeholders (e.g., professionals) to better understand this issue and the need for change.

A virtual format was chosen to be used for this study for several reasons. First, a virtual survey allowed participants to complete the survey at their convenience both in time and location. Second, a virtual focus group was inclusive of hard-to-reach populations as recommended by Forrestal et al., 2015. Nevada is a large state with urban and large rural areas. To be inclusive of all EC and ECSE teachers in this expansive state, virtual focus groups were used. According to Lewis and Muzzy (2020), virtual focus groups allow more people to speak and can allow for more diversity of voices within your sample. Lastly, there are many positive experiences of virtual focus groups among participants of focus groups including the ease of remaining in their home, the "anonymity" of the space, and the increased opportunity to speak without interruptions (Griffith et al., 2020; Pew Research Center, 2020).

Study Context

Nevada served 28,791 children 3-5 years old which equated to 40.6% of the population of three and four year olds in the state (Hunt Institute, 2017). Children participated in a variety of programs within the state. As of 2017, 35% of three and four year old children were enrolled in public or private preschool, 3.2% were enrolled in Head Start Programs, and 2.2% were enrolled in state-funded pre-kindergarten programs (Hunt Institute, 2017). According to the Nevada

Department of Education (2020), approximately 40,000 educators held a valid Nevada educator

license. Aggregating the exact number of professionals who hold ECE and ECSE licensure was

difficult because of the overlap between early childhood, elementary, and special education

license holders. In the state of Nevada, there were several educator licenses that teachers could

obtain through different pathways. A preservice teacher could obtain a license to teach EC which

allows professionals to teach birth - 2nd grade. To obtain a license, preservice EC teachers had to

complete a bachelor's degree from an accredited college/university, complete 35 credits in EC

(which includes education related to children with and without disabilities), and eight credits of

student teaching/fieldwork. For professionals who already held a bachelor's degree and an

elementary teaching license, 12 credits in EC are required along with eight credits of student

teaching or one year of verifiable professional experience (Nevada Department of Education,

2020, NAC 391.089). In a public school setting, when a professional holds this license, they

typically taught in a general education classrooms (prek - 2nd grade) where a majority of

students do not have disabilities. While general education teachers may have students with

disabilities in their classroom, they are not responsible for leading individualized education

programs (IEP) and developing specialized instruction. General education teachers can

implement specially designed instruction and implement accommodations and modifications to

the curriculum; however, special education teachers were responsible for creating and designing

these accommodations and modifications. Figure 5 describes the teacher licensure pathways for

EC professionals in Nevada.

Figure 5

Nevada Early Childhood Licensure Pathway
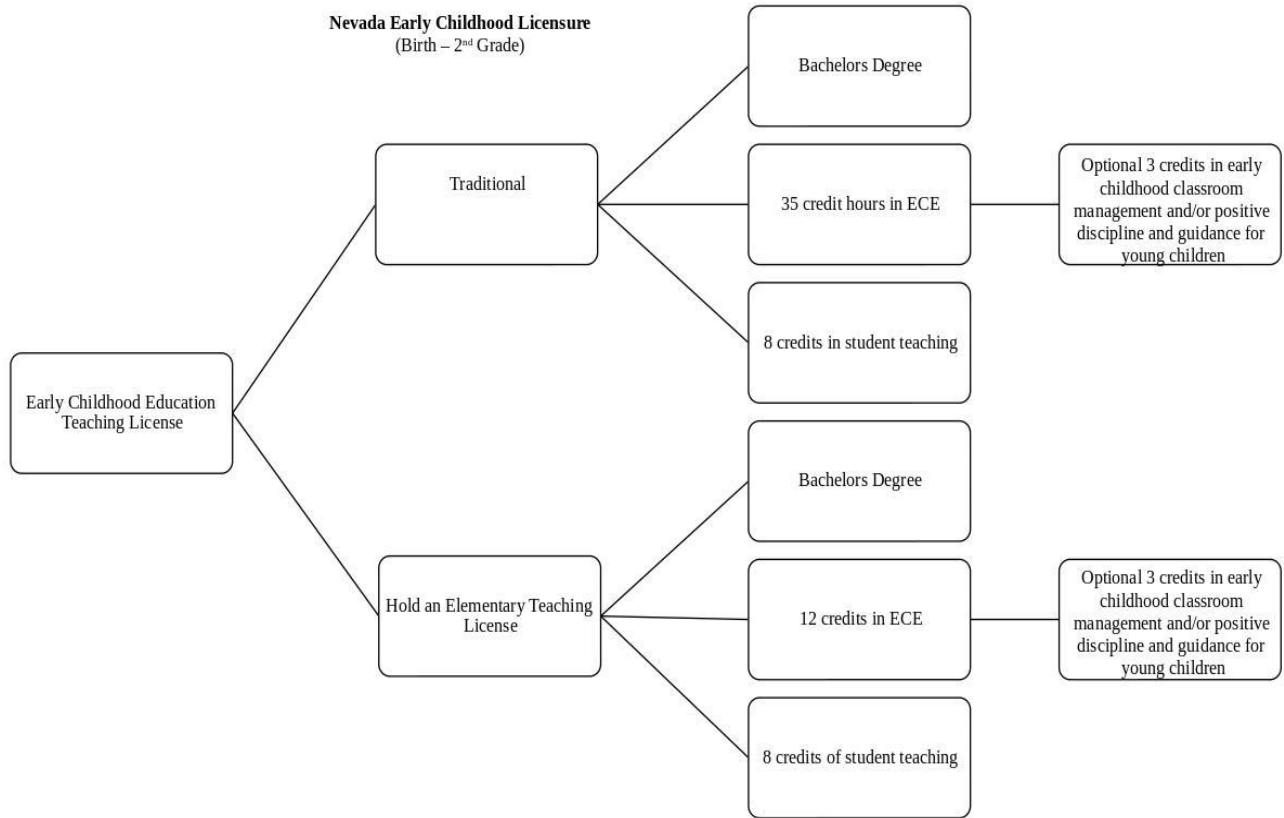
To obtain an ECSE license, professionals must hold a valid bachelor's degree in ECSE, EC, or a related field and/or a valid teaching license in another area (e.g., elementary, secondary education). Professionals must obtain eight credits of student teaching or have completed 1 year of verifiable teaching experience in a public or private setting with students with disabilities under the age of 8. Finally, professionals need to obtain 18 credits in ECSE (Nevada Department of Education, 2020a, NAC 391.363). In a public school setting, professionals who held this license typically served children with disabilities either in a self-contained classroom, special

education setting, or an inclusive setting; however, they were primarily responsible for

implementing and designing specially designed instruction for young children with disabilities

(ages prek – 2nd grade). Figure 6 describes the teacher licensure pathways for ECSE

professionals in Nevada.

Figure 6

Nevada Early Childhood Special Education Licensure Pathway

Nevada Early Childhood Special Education Licensure
(Ages 0 – 7)

Early Childhood Special Education Teaching License

Hold an elementary, middle school, secondary license OR bachelors degree in related rea (early childhood education, speech language pathology etc.)

8 credits of student teaching OR 1 year of professional experience in public or private setting with children with disabilities under age of 8

18 credits in early childhood special education

Optional 3 credits in social and emotional development and strategies for intervention for children with disabilities

To be eligible to participate in the survey and the focus group, participants had to be current ECE and ECSE teachers in the state of Nevada and hold a valid ECE or/and ECSE licensure in the state of Nevada. Participants also had to be able to read and respond in English. Finally, to be eligible participants had to have access to a device (e.g., computer, tablet, cell phone) and access to the internet.

Survey Participants

The survey portion of the study included 56 participants who completed the online survey. The majority of participants were women with one man also participating. Most participants from between the age of 40 – 55 years of age. A significant number of participants possessed a master's degree, while a few held either a bachelor's degree or doctorate degree. Most participants identified as white/Caucasian. Thirty participants reported completing their personnel preparation at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas while eight participants completing their programs at University of Nevada, Reno and one participant at Nevada State College. Seventeen participants reported they attended an institution out of state. Some of the schools listed were University of Oregon, Walden University, Cal-State Fullerton, Grand Canyon University, Lock Haven University, and the University of North Dakota. Additionally, the majority reported having three to five years of teaching experience. Most participants reported currently teaching in inclusive EC or self-contained ECSE classroom settings. The majority of participants completed traditional personnel preparation programs with a range of participants completing their programs within the past year to 25 years ago. Most of the participants completed their practicum and student teaching in person while 16 participants reported they did not participate in student teaching/practicum experiences. Notably, eight participants reported having a disability. Majority of participants reported they taught in the Clark County School

District which is the largest school district in the state. Carson City School District, Churchill School District, Douglas School District, Humboldt School District, Lyon School District, Nye School District and Washoe County School District were all represented which much smaller quantities (less than 6). There are 17 school districts in Nevada and eight were represented in this survey. Table 4 includes survey participants' demographic data.

Table 4

Survey Participants' Characteristics

Characteristics	Early childhood & Early childhood special education teachers $n = 56$	
	n	%
Gender		
Women	54	96.43
Men	1	1.79
Prefer not to say	1	1.79
Age		
18-25	2	3.57
25-30	3	5.36
30-35	3	5.36
35-40	6	10.71
40-45	10	17.86
45-50	8	14.29
50-55	16	28.57
55-60	5	8.93
60 or older	3	5.36
Highest level of education		
Bachelors	4	7.14
Masters	47	83.93
Other	3	5.36
Doctorate	2	3.57
Race/ethnicity		
American Indian	0	0
Asian/Pacific Islander	2	3.64
Black/African American	3	5.45
Hispanic	6	10.91
White/Caucasian	42	76.36
Multiple Ethnicity/other	2	3.64

Characteristics	Early childhood & Early childhood special education teachers $n = 56$	
	n	%
Years of experience		
Less than 1	0	0
1-2	3	5.36
3-5	17	30.36
6-9	8	14.29
10-15	11	19.64
16-20	5	8.93
21-25	9	16.07
26-30	0	0
30 or more	3	5.36
Current role		
EC General Education	6	10.71
EC Inclusion	32	57.14
ECSE Self-Contained	15	26.79
ECSE Autism	1	1.79
Other	2	3.57
Type of personnel preparation program		
Traditional Route to Licensure	32	58.18
Alternate Route to Licensure	15	27.27
Other	8	14.55
Years since completion of last EC/ECSE program		
Less than 1 year	5	8.93
1-2 years	8	14.29
3-5 years	12	21.43
6-9 years	8	14.29
10-15 years	15	26.79
16-20 years	6	10.71
21-25 years	2	3.57
26-30 years	0	0
30 or more years	0	0
Disability status		
Yes	8	14.29
No	48	85.71

Focus Group Participants

Focus group participants consisted of volunteers from the survey who indicated that they would like to participate in focus group sessions. Fifteen survey participants volunteered for the focus group sessions with nine participating in one of the three focus group sessions. Participants were asked via email to sign up for one of the three sessions. Focus groups consisted of two participants, three participants, and four participants respectively. All the participants were women. Most of the participants were currently teaching in early childhood inclusive classrooms except for one participant. A majority of the participants held a master's degree while one held a bachelor's degree and one held a doctorate degree. Table 5 lists the characteristics of the focus group participants.

Table 5

Focus Group Participant Characteristics

Pseudonym *n* = 9	Age	Gender	Last personnel preparation program attended	Years of experience	Type of program	Highest degree	Current employment	Mode of last personnel program
Ruth	50-55	Woman	Early childhood	6-9 years	Traditional	Masters	Early childhood inclusion	All in person
Naomi	50-55	Woman	Dual program	6-9 years	Traditional	Masters	Early childhood inclusion	All in person
Pearl	45-50	Woman	Early childhood special education	6-9 years	Traditional	Doctorate	Early childhood inclusion	All in person
Alexis	30-35	Woman	Early childhood	1-2 years	Alternate route to licensure	Bachelors	Early childhood inclusion	Hybrid
Tia	30-35	Woman	Early childhood special education	3-5 years	Alternate route to licensure	Masters	Early childhood inclusion	All in person
Bailey	35-40	Woman	Early childhood special education	16-20 years	Traditional	Masters	Early childhood inclusion	Hybrid
Karina	25-30	Woman	Early childhood special education	6-9 years	Alternate route to licensure	Masters	Early childhood autism	All in person
Daniela	45-50	Woman	Early childhood special education	10-15 years	Alternate route to licensure	Masters	Early childhood inclusion	All in person
Alani	35-40	Woman	Early childhood special education	10-15 years	Traditional	Masters	Early childhood inclusion	Hybrid

Survey Measures

The web-based survey consisted of 31 questions (see Appendix A). Qualtrics was used to collect the responses from participants. Participants were allowed to complete surveys using personal electronic devices (e.g., computers, phones). The survey took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

To ensure participants met the criteria for participation in the survey, the survey began with three criteria questions. The questions asked were: (a) Have you completed an initial early childhood or early childhood special education licensure program within the last 5 years?, (b) Are you currently teaching in an early childhood or an early childhood special education setting in a public school district in Nevada? (3 to 5 year olds), and (c) Do you hold teacher licensure in the state of Nevada? If participants answered "no" to any of these questions, they were redirected to a screen that said "Thank you for participating; however, you do not meet eligibility requirements for this survey" and the survey immediately ended.

There were seven sections of the survey. The first section was an introduction of the survey which included the purpose of the survey and definitions of common terms used in the survey. The second section included a PDF of the informed consent. The participants indicated whether they consented to the survey by answering the question. The third section was eligibility questions. Prior to each section (the fourth through seventh sections), there was an introduction to the section which outlined what was going to be addressed in each section. The fourth section was about personnel preparation. Then there were three questions about personnel preparation. The fifth section was about the implementation of strategies during personnel preparation programs. There were three questions that addressed what strategies have been implemented

during personnel preparation programs. The sixth section was how prepared teachers felt to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors. The seventh section referred to what kinds of challenging behaviors teachers felt prepared to address in an early childhood setting. The next section addressed which kinds of social emotional curriculums were addressed and implemented in preservice preparation programs. The last section included 10 demographic data questions.

The survey was developed using measures from the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) which has been used to assess quality in implementing Pyramid Model Practices in early childhood classrooms (Hemmeter et al., 2017). The Pyramid Model is a multi-tiered systems of support with evidence-based practices that help children acquire and learn social-emotional skills and for teachers to address challenging behaviors. Tier I supports provide universal interventions such as providing a consistent daily routine, explicitly teaching transitions, classroom environment/arrangement and using positive praise for desired behaviors. The second tier includes practices that explicitly teach social skills such as teaching problem solving skills, teaching friendship skills and conflict/resolution skills. Tier III practices include conducting a functional behavioral assessment and implementing a behavior intervention plan. To measure the specific training, implementation and evidence-based practices that were used in personnel preparation programs, practices from each tier were included in the survey. To measure the perceived preparedness, the survey consisted of questions such as, "How prepared were you to explicitly teach children friendship making skills?" The same practices that will be used to determine what training and implementation occurred in personnel preparation were also included in the perceived preparation questions.

Demographics

Participant demographics were collected with 10 different survey idioms focusing on age, gender, years of experience teaching early childhood/early childhood special education, current level of education, region/school district, licensure status and current credentials, current degree pursuing, type of program (EC vs. ECSE or dual), and type of program (alternative /accelerated route to licensure, traditional etc.). These data were collected to describe the sample.

Survey Reliability and Validity

The survey was developed by engaging in a literature review about the topic and using the TPOT. After reviewing the literature to draft initial survey questions an expert review was conducted by three experts in the field of early childhood education including EC/ECSE faculty and a state coordinator for Pyramid Model. These experts were chosen due to their extensive knowledge of social-emotional interventions, pre-service teacher education, and Pyramid Model practices. A draft of the survey was emailed to each expert reviewer and they were asked to review the survey and give feedback on the flow, design, and questions on the survey. Expert reviewers provided their feedback using the comment feature in Microsoft Word and emailed their feedback to the lead researcher. After feedback was gathered from the expert reviewers, I revised the survey including reordering of questions, changing some verbiage on the questions, and adding a few additional demographic questions.

Then I conducted cognitive interviews with three early childhood/early childhood special education teachers who met the eligibility criteria for the survey but were from a different state in the United States to prevent tampering potential study sample. The cognitive interviews were held virtually via Zoom during a mutually agreed upon time. Interviews took place individually and took 30-45 minutes per interview to complete. During the interviews, an item-by-item

analysis of each question was conducted including feedback on the survey questions and the overall feel and flow of survey.

Finally, the survey underwent pilot testing prior to dissemination. The survey was taken by five early childhood/early childhood special education teachers who met the requirements and criteria of participation but were located in different states. All of the participants who participated in the pilot test were currently teaching EC/ECSE and were located in New York, Washington D.C. and Virginia. The five teachers gave feedback to the researcher to determine items that are potentially confusing, items that should be removed and/or items that should potentially be added. The ease of taking the survey using Qualtrics and the overall survey experience was also assessed. These factors were assessed using an additional survey which included questions such as: (a) How difficult were the survey questions?, (b) Did you have any difficulty with navigating the survey platform? Pilot test participants were asked to complete an online survey via the Qualtrics platform that asked 10 questions about the survey (Appendix B). Once the pilot survey was complete, I analyzed the results and made appropriate changes.

Focus Group Measures

The focus group protocol included two main questions related to research questions three and four. The questions were designed from the analysis of the survey questionnaire. I drafted predicted questions prior to conducting the study. Then, after the completion of the survey, data was analyzed and data from the survey results were used to formulate and add additional questions to the focus group protocol. Additionally, questions asked about how they felt about being most trained to develop positive relationships with children, how they felt about conducting more intensive interventions with young children and how they could help prepare future educators to be training in the practices that were reported as least implemented in the

fieldwork experiences. The lead researcher also provided focus group participants with a brief demographic survey to describe the sample. Drafts of the focus group questions were sent via email to the two early childhood/early childhood special education professionals for feedback. They sent back feedback via email to the lead researcher.

Procedures

Participant Recruitment

To recruit participants, publicly available email addresses of EC/ECSE teachers within the state of Nevada were collected. A spreadsheet was created that listed all of the school districts and then all of the elementary schools in the state. Each elementary school was searched for teachers who were listed as teaching early childhood education, early childhood autism, early childhood inclusion, and early childhood special education. Their name and email (when available) were placed on the spreadsheet. If the school's website did not list a teacher's position, the teacher was eliminated from participation because there was no way to determine which teacher taught EC/ECSE. After collecting the email addresses, an email containing the survey link and recruitment materials was sent via email to invite teachers' participation (Appendix C). Five hundred and seventy-five emails were sent to EC/ECSE teachers. A total of 56 surveys were completed for a response rate 10.26%. After the initial email, a subsequent email containing the survey link and recruitment materials was sent two weeks later. At the conclusion of the survey, participants were entered into a raffle for a $5 gift card to Amazon. For every 25 participants, there was one chance to win the gift card raffle. Therefore, I emailed three gift cards to three different participants with instructions for accepting the Amazon gift card.

To recruit participants for the focus groups, survey participants were invited to volunteer for one of the three focus groups via an additional link at the conclusion of the survey. Interested

participants completed a volunteer form and were contacted with additional information about

participation. They were given a list of dates and times and were asked to choose all the dates

and times that worked for them. Once that was received, focus group members were assigned to

corresponding focus groups based on their preference. An email was sent out indicating the date

and time for their focus group along with the demographic survey and informed consent

documents. All participants completed the demographic survey and the informed consent prior to

the commencement of the focus groups. At the conclusion of the focus group, participants were

entered for a $25 gift card to Amazon. I emailed a gift card to one participant with instructions

for accepting the Amazon gift card.

Survey Procedure

Participants completed this portion of the study using their own devices in a location and

time of their choosing. When potential participants engaged with the recruitment material,

participants were presented with an informed consent form outlining the purpose of the study,

eligibility requirements for participation, the potential impacts of the study, and relevant contact

information (see Appendix D and Appendix E). A printable PDF copy of the consent form was

provided to participants. When participants answered the informed consent question on the

electronic survey, they were provided with the option to click on the PDF link located in the

question that included a printable copy of the informed consent. Participants read the consent and

electronically provided consent to the survey by clicking on the link in the electronic survey

question. If participants chose not to consent or continue in the survey, the option to close the

survey window was provided.

After consenting, participants answered three questions to determine their eligibility for

the study. If, at any time, participants answered no to any of those questions, the survey window

closed, and they received a thank-you message for their participation. If participants answered yes to all three eligibility questions, they proceeded to the main body of the survey and continued their participation. Once a participant opened the survey, they were required to complete it in one sitting. At the end of the survey, participants had the option to click additional links to enter the raffle and volunteer for the focus group. Participants could choose to end the survey at any time; completion was not mandatory. Upon completing the survey, a thank you window appeared, indicating the conclusion of the survey.

Focus Group Procedure

Consent and demographic data were acquired before the onset of the focus group using a Qualtrics survey. The initial step in obtaining consent involved sending an email with details about the focus group's purpose, session date/time, Zoom link, and a Qualtrics completion link. Participants received the consent form as a downloadable and printable PDF. Upon accessing the Qualtrics link, participants read the consent form and selected their response (yes or no) on the Qualtrics survey. Additionally, 12 demographic questions, matching those in the Qualtrics survey, were included. Participants were also asked if they preferred using a pseudonym during the focus group session and, if so, to specify the name. Instructions and a reminder on how to change the Zoom name were provided. The Qualtrics consent survey is available in Appendix F.

I conducted training for a research assistant prior to the first focus group. The research assistant, an advanced doctoral student specializing in special education and EC at a large university in the southwestern United States, participated in a 30-minute Zoom meeting with the lead researcher. During this meeting, the focus group protocol was reviewed and practiced. In addition, the lead researcher and the assistant researcher tested the Zoom platform along with its transcription and recording features. As recommended by Lewis and Muzzy (2020), I conducted

additional training before starting focus groups, especially to ensure all technology functions properly. Appendix G includes a technology implementation checklist, which was utilized before each focus group session for practice. The research assistant also completed this checklist during every focus group session.

After the survey had been open for four weeks, a Qualtrics survey was emailed to survey participants who indicated interest in volunteering for the virtual focus group. They used this survey to indicate their available date and time. Once the information was obtained, the lead researcher organized volunteers into groups based on their availability. Then, participants received a confirmation email containing the date and time of their scheduled focus group, along with a link to a Qualtrics survey for consent and demographic data, as well as a Zoom link. As recommended by Griffith et al. (2020), several reminder emails were sent to focus group participants. The template for this email is located in Appendix H. One week before the focus group and one day before, additional reminder emails were sent out. According to Pew Research Center (2020), it is advisable to send out focus group questions before the start of the focus group to allow members time to consider the discussion questions beforehand; therefore, the topics for the focus group questions were sent out to the participants. The template for this email is located in Appendix I.

Focus groups were held virtually via Zoom in the late afternoon. The lead researcher and an advanced doctoral student were in attendance to all of the focus groups. Each focus group lasted about 60-70 minutes. Upon entering the Zoom room, participants were placed into a virtual waiting room until all participants were present. Then participants were moved into the main Zoom room for the focus group session.

The lead researcher began the focus group by reviewing the focus group protocol (see Appendix J) which included an introduction to the focus group, ground rules, introductions of facilitators and participants, and discussion prompts. The research assistant took notes to capture any participant interaction, and non-verbal behaviors (e.g., nodding with agreement, signs of disagreement). After the completion of the focus group, I ended the Zoom call. The focus group protocol and sample questions are located in Appendix J. The Zoom sessions were audio and video recorded along with the live captions to transcribe each session. Transcriptions were then checked for accuracy and identifying information (e.g., university names, EC/ECSE programs, school districts) were removed and participant names were replaced with selected pseudonyms.

<h2 style="text-align:center">Data Analysis</h2>

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, standard deviations and ranges. To assess the perceived preparedness for teaching social emotional skills and addressing challenging behavior, mean and standard deviation were used. This approach was also used to evaluate training completed, the implementation of strategies, and the use of evidence-based methods for teaching social emotional skills and address challenging behavior. Frequencies of the number of tier one strategies, tier two strategies and tier three strategies that were learning about during the personnel preparation programs was calculated as well as the frequencies of the tier one, tier two, tier three strategies that were implemented during their personnel preparation programs. The mean and standard deviation were calculated to determine how well-prepared EC and ECSE were to implement strategies after their personnel preparation programs, and how well-prepared EC and ECSE were prepared

to address challenging behavior. Frequencies were also calculated for the different social emotional curriculums implemented.

Specifically, data from questions five through 10 on the survey were used to indicate the most and least prevalent training, intervention strategies, and evidence-based practices that were learned in personnel preparation programs and which practices were implemented in personnel preparation programs. Data from questions 10, 14, 15 and 16 were used to calculate the percentage of participants who were trained in specific social emotional curriculums and calculate which social emotional curriculums were least address and most addressed in personnel programs. Data from questions 12 and 13 were used to calculate the average of how participants perceived their preparedness of each practice and then averaged throughout the tiers of support as well.

Hypotheses

I anticipated that the number of tier I, tier II and tier III practices would be limited, with a majority of educators lacking training and implementation in most of these practices. Furthermore, I expected a low number of teachers to have received training in the Pyramid Model. Similarly, I hypothesized that the level of preparedness to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behavior would be low. I thought that tier one strategies, like giving transition warnings and establishing clear rules and expectations, would be more commonly addressed in personnel preparation programs compared to tier three strategies such as conducting a functional behavior assessment and developing a behavior intervention plan.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data from focus groups was analyzed to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and innovations needed in personnel preparation programs (Creswell, 2015). Open-

ended questions focused on the training experiences in personnel preparation programs and how they were specifically trained to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors. Additional open-ended discussion questions asked participants about what innovations and/or improvements are needed in personnel preparation programs. Inductive coding was used to code the data because I wanted to investigate new ideas and concepts as well as use qualitative data to describe focus group participants' collective perspectives on this topic. The research assistant and I separately read the data and found recurring and relevant themes. Then the assistant researcher and I met to discuss potential themes. Themes were decided upon and discussed to come to a consensus. Each theme was divided into specific descriptive codes (nouns and/or single word) that encapsulated the main idea of the data (Marshall et al., 2022).

After developing the initial codes, the lead researcher created a codebook containing the relevant code, its definition, an example, and non-examples to ensure accuracy. Table 6 illustrates the sample section used for codebook development. Subsequently, the research assistant and I each independently coded one of the focus groups. Following this, we convened to evaluate the accuracy of the codebook, address any coding discrepancies, and make necessary corrections. Afterward, we independently conducted a line-by-line coding of all three focus group transcripts. Once the data had been coded in this manner, we virtually met to discuss and compare the codes. Any discrepancies were deliberated, leading to a consensus on the correct code.

Table 6

Sample Codebook Section

Needed components in pre-service experiences to support social emotional learning and addressing challenging behaviors			
Code	Definition	Example	Non-example
Practical experiences	Keywords: practice, real world, fieldwork, practicum, student teaching	I would have really benefitted from practicing the content they [instructors] presented in class – like how do I do an FBA with a real student?	Watching videos of teachers using preventive strategies would be good.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

To ensure the trustworthiness of data, multiple strategies were used. First, a second coder was used for qualitative analysis. The second coder was a doctoral level student studying EC/ECSE who took several courses on qualitative research methods. Walther et al. (2013) suggest using inter-rate reliability as a means to avoid potential biases and to continue a dialogue between researchers to maintain consistency in coding. The lead researcher and the assistant researcher read the data separately and then came together to create relevant codes based on the data. Then the data was coded line by line separately using the codes from the initial meeting. After each researcher coded the data individually, any discrepancies were discussed and a consensus was developed through discussion.

Secondly, member checking was used to make sure that participants reviewed and confirmed the accuracy or inaccuracy of information discussed in the focus group conversation. During the focus group, member checks were conducted by summarizing the conversation at the conclusion of each question asked. It consisted of stating the overarching theme and some examples from their discussion. Participants had the opportunity to identify whether the themes and some examples were an accurate representation of the conversation. After the conclusion of the focus group, we asked participants to volunteer to read the researchers' conclusions to identify if those conclusions accurately reflected the conversations that occurred. Three focus group participants (one from each focus group) were emailed a one-page summary of the qualitative data including the themes that emerged. Participants confirmed via email that they read the summary and all three agreed that the conclusions matched the discussions from their focus group. All participants received information about the results after the conclusion of the study.

Additionally, this study employed multiple researchers. According to Brantlinger et al. (2005), working collaboratively helps to ensure that the analysis and the interpretation are not biased. Also, working collaboratively ensured that the interrater reliability would be checked and any discrepancies would be discussed in detail to come up with a consensus. Examples of this collaboration included regular review by my dissertation advisor and committee, use of experts and practitioners during measure development, and use of research assistants for data collection and analysis.

Finally, a reflective statement of how the researcher attempted to understand the data as well as their assumptions, values, beliefs and biases was discussed (Bratlinger et al., 2005). I am currently dually licensed educator in EC/ECSE and therefore completed personnel preparation

programs. Additionally, I teach courses in a university's EC/ECSE program. Therefore, to prevent bias during the study by acknowledging and addressing potential biases that might influence this research process. I regularly reassessed my own perspectives and maintained an open-mind to various interpretations of the data. Additionally, I implemented research methodologies that were grounded in evidence-based research, adhered to ethnical guidelines and sought input from colleagues to enhance the study's credibility and minimize any potential biases that might have arisen during this study.

Data Integration

Data were integrated in many different ways throughout this research study. One form of integration employed was linking the methods of data collection and analysis. For example, data was integrated by connecting the participants (Fetters et al., 2013). Focus group participants were selected from the population of participants who responded to the survey (Fetters et al., 2013). The quantitative data and analysis informed the qualitative measures for this study by providing information about what kinds of questions and themes to investigate deeper through focus groups. After the quantitative data were gathered, these data were analyzed by looking at what specific practices were learned about the most frequently and the least frequently as well as which practice were implemented the most and least frequently. For example, participants stated they were most prepared to address building relationships with young children. This was used in the focus group questions to have participants elaborate on this strategy and to discuss preparation in this area. Another example would be when survey participants reported they were the least prepared to develop behavior intervention plans. This was addressed in focus groups by asking focus group participants to elaborate and discussion this strategy. Therefore, these findings informed the questions that were asked in the focus group by providing guidance the

key issues to include in focus group protocols. The quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed separately and then combined to discuss the research questions and to connect the data holistically (Fetters et al., 2013). Finally, data was integrated was using an integration through narrative approach. I described the findings in a single report through the contiguous approach where I initially report the quantitative and qualitative results in different sections of the narrative and then eventually combined these findings to allow comparisons (McCrudden & Tigue, 2018).

Protection of Sensitive and Confidential Information

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained prior to the start of the research. To protect participant information, survey data was collected via password-protected, 2-factor authenticated survey platform (i.e., Qualtrics). Participant's identities such as email addresses, IP addresses, and names were not connected to the survey data. Participation in the survey raffle was completed on a separate website that was not associated with their unique responses on the survey. Survey data was presented in aggregate for focus group discussions and in dissemination. During qualitative data collection, participants had the option to use a pseudonym and leave the camera off during the discussion. Focus group data was de-identified for analysis and dissemination by removing or replacing with pseudonyms for all participants' names, and any mention of specific universities, faculty, schools, or children. Participants were asked to not discuss any content of focus groups with non-participants after the group.

During all data collection activities, participants were explained their right to terminate participation in the research study at any point during the study and informed how to reach IRB office or the researchers for questions or concerns regarding the study. All data is maintained in two-factor authentication, password-secured accounts and password-protected computers. Any

printed materials with identifying information were stored in the faculty advisor's office in

locked cabinets and will be destroyed appropriately when scheduled on IRB application.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

An explanatory sequential mixed method approach was used to answer the research questions. To align with this data collection, the quantitative results from the state-wide survey are presented first followed by the qualitative results from the three focus groups. Finally, the integration of these data will be presented across the four research questions.

Quantitative Findings

Knowledge and Implementation of Pyramid Model Practices

Participants responded to questions asking them to indicate whether they learned about different social-emotional strategies and evidence-based practices in early childhood/early childhood special education and if they implemented these practices during their practicum/student teaching experiences. These results are broken down into subcategories: tier one practices, tier two practices, and tier three practices according to the Pyramid Model (National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations, n.d.). The number of participants who indicated they did or did not implement practices in their fieldwork experiences included less participants because participants were asked a qualifying question prior to the implementation practices. If participants stated they did not complete fieldwork or practicum experiences, they did not receive questions about the implementation of the practices. Table 7 provides information about the practices that participants learned about and implemented in personnel preparation programs, categorized into those three tiers.

Overall, participants reported learning and implementing more tier one strategies compared to tier two and tier three strategies. All participants, with the exception of two, reported that they learned about tier one practices in their personnel preparation program.

Significantly more participants expressed they never learned or implemented tier two and tier three practices. There was also a notable difference between the number of practices that were taught in their personnel preparation programs and those that participants implemented. Fifty percent of participants indicated that they did not learn about the Pyramid Model in their personnel preparation programs.

Tier I Practices. In relation to the 10 tier one strategies, building positive relationships with children and using positive praise were the most frequently selected strategies in personnel preparation programs. In contrast, understanding how implicit bias and how it impacts our perceptions of behavior and responding to children's conversations were reported the least across participants. Additionally, 2.94% of participants indicated they did not learn about any of these practices while 2.50% of participants reported not implementing any of these participants in their fieldwork/practicum experiences. Aligned with what participants reported they learned the most about, building positive relationships with children and using positive praise were most frequently reported as learned about in personnel preparation programs. Planning transitions was reported least to be implemented in fieldwork and practicum experiences.

Tier II Practices. In relation to the 10 tier two strategies, using visual aids (e.g., visual schedules, first/then boards, solution cards) and teaching children calming strategies were the most frequently selected strategy learned in personnel preparation programs. In contrast, teaching children friendship making skills and teaching children to initiate and maintain peer relationships were reported the least across participants. Additionally, 13.24% of participants indicated they did not learn about any of these practices. Aligned with what participants reported the learn the most about, using visual aids was most frequently reported as implemented in fieldwork and practicum experiences. Teaching children to initiate and maintain peer

relationships was reported least to be implemented in fieldwork and practicum experiences. Additional 12.50% of participants reported they did not implement any tier two practices during fieldwork and practicum experiences.

   Tier III Practices. In relation to the nine tier three strategies, collecting behavior data and identifying prevention strategies were the most frequently selected strategies learned in personnel preparation programs. In contrast, conducting a functional behavior assessment and a behavior intervention plan were reported the least across participants. Additionally, 15.15% of participants indicated they did not learn about any of these practices while 17.95% of participants indicated they did not implement any of these practices in fieldwork and practicum experiences. Aligned with what participants reported they learned the most about, collecting behavior data and identifying prevention strategies were most frequently reported as implemented in fieldwork and practicum experiences. Conducting a functional behavior assessment and creating a behavior intervention plan were reported least to be implemented in fieldwork and practicum experiences.

Table 7

Practices Participants Learned About and Implemented in Personnel Preparation Programs

Practices	Learned during coursework		Implemented during fieldwork	
	n	%	*n*	%
Tier 1 practices	*n* = 68		*n* = 40	
Building positive relationships with children	58	85.29	34	85.00
Using positive praise	55	80.88	33	82.50
Using choice to reduce challenging behavior	54	79.41	30	75.00
Intentionally teaching children expectations and procedures	53	77.94	29	72.50
Designing physical environment	51	75.00	30	75.00
Designing daily schedule that balances teacher led and student led instruction	46	67.65	29	72.50
Planning transitions	44	64.71	24	60.00
Implicit bias and how it impacts our perceptions of behavior	42	61.76	21	52.50
Responding to children's conversations	39	57.35	31	77.50
I did not learn about any of these practices	2	2.94	1	2.50
Tier II practices	*n* = 68		*n* = 40	
Using visual aids	54	79.41	32	80.00
Teaching children calming techniques	51	75.00	27	67.50
Teaching children to recognize emotions	44	64.71	26	65.00
Teaching children to identify a problem and find solution	43	63.24	27	67.50
Teaching children to solve a problem	41	60.29		
Labeling children's emotions	39	57.35	24	60.00
Teaching self-regulation skills	39	57.35	24	60.00
Teaching strategies for managing frustration and strong emotions	37	54.41	25	62.50
Teaching children to initiate and main peer relationships	35	51.47	22	55.00
Teaching friendship making skills	33	48.53	25	62.50
I did not learn about any of these practices	9	13.24	5	12.50

Practices	Learned during coursework		Implemented during fieldwork	
	n	%	*n*	%
Tier III practices	*n* = 66		*n*= 40	
Collecting behavior data	49	74.24	28	71.79
Identifying prevention strategies	45	68.18	28	71.79
Collecting antecedent, behavior and consequence data	44	66.67	27	69.23
Analyzing functions of behavior	43	65.15	25	64.10
Identifying replacement skills and/or strategies	42	63.64	28	71.79
Analyzing behavior data	38	57.58	26	66.67
Creating a behavior intervention plan	36	54.55	20	51.28
Conducting a functional behavior assessment	34	51.52	23	58.97
I did not learn/implement any of these practices	10	15.15	7	17.95

Perceptions of Preparedness

Participants indicated on a continuous ratio scale, where one indicated they were not prepared and 10 indicated they were well prepared, how prepared they felt to implement tier I, tier II, and tier III practices within the first 6 months after completing their personnel preparation program. The same practices that participants were asked if they learned and implemented in their personnel preparation program were also used for participants to indicate how prepared they felt to implement these practices within the first 6 months of completing their personnel preparation programs. Overall, across the tiers, participants felt more prepared in tier I practices compared to tier II and tier III practices. Table 8 presents the means, standard deviations and ranges of all of the practices in tiers one, two, and three.

Table 8

How Prepared Teachers Felt to Implement Practices After Completing Personnel Preparation Program

Practices	*M* (*SD*)	Range
Tier 1		
Building positive relationships with children	8.00 *(2.14)*	(2-10)
Using positive praise	7.71 *(1.99)*	(2-10)
Intentionally teaching children expectations and procedures	7.59 *(2.49)*	(2-10)
Designing physical environment	7.36 *(2.24)*	(1-10)
Responding to children's conversations	7.32 *(2.39)*	(0-10)
Designing daily schedule that balances instruction	7.32 *(2.68)*	(0-10)
Using choice to reduce challenging behavior	7.25 *(2.43)*	(0-10)
Planning transitions	7.02 *(2.86)*	(0-10)
Implicit bias and how it impacts our perceptions of behavior	6.64 *(2.94)*	(0-10)
Tier II Practices		
Using visual aids	7.37 *(2.56)*	(0-10)
Labeling children's emotions	7.19 *(2.78)*	(0-10)
	7.02 *(2.98)*	(0-10)
Teaching children to recognize emotions		
Teaching friendship making skills	6.73 *(2.71)*	(0-10)
Teaching children calming techniques	6.71 *(2.83)*	(0-10)
Teaching children to identify a problem and find solution	6.71 *(2.83)*	(2-10)
Teaching children to solve a problem	6.54 *(2.86)*	(0-10)
Teaching children to initiate and maintain peer relationships	6.54 *(3.03)*	(0-10)
Teaching self-regulation skills	6.49 *(2.84)*	(0-10)
Teaching strategies for managing frustration and strong emotions	6.37 *(2.90)*	(0-10)
Tier III Practices		
Collecting behavior data	6.47 *(3.02)*	(0-10)
Collecting antecedent, behavior and consequence data	6.44 *(3.10)*	(0-10)
Analyzing functions of behavior	6.22 *(3.10)*	(0-10)
Analyzing behavior data	6.18 *(3.02)*	(0-10)
Identifying prevention strategies	6.14 *(2.88)*	(0-10)
Identifying replacement skills and/or strategies	6.02 *(2.90)*	(0-10)
Conducting a functional behavior assessment	5.96 *(3.24)*	(0-10)
Creating a behavior intervention plan	5.70 (*3.33*)	(0-10)

Participants felt most prepared in building relationships with children (M=8.00, SD = 2.14) and using positive praise (M = 7.71, SD=1.9). Participants reported feeling least prepared in areas such planning transitions (M=7.02, SD=2.86) and using choice to reduce challenging behavior (M=7.25, SD=2.43). Participants reported feeling the most prepared in using visual aids (M=7.37, SD=2.56) and labeling children's emotions (M=7.19, SD=2.78). They reported feeling less prepared in teaching children's strategies for managing frustration and strong emotions (M=6.37, SD=2.90) and teaching self-regulation skills (M=6.49, SD=2.84). Participants reported feeling most prepared to analyze behavior data (M=6.18, SD=3.02) and identifying prevention strategies (M=6.14, SD=2.88). Participants felt less prepared in practices such as conducting a functional behavior assessment (M=5.96, SD=3.24) and creating a behavior intervention plan (M=5.70, SD=3.33).

Preparedness to Address Common Behavioral Scenarios. In the next section, participants were required to indicate on a continuous ratio scale how prepared they felt to address these common early childhood challenging behaviors. Table 9 presents teachers' self-assessed level of preparedness to address common early childhood challenging behavior scenarios. On average, teachers reported feeling moderately prepared to handle situations involving a child having a difficult time staying on task (M=6.20, SD=2.38) and helping a child who has a difficult time interacting appropriately with peers (M=5.82, SD=2.68). Participants also indicated a moderate level of readiness in addressing a child who shuts down when frustrated (M=5.93, SD=2.51). However, participants expressed lower levels of preparedness when faced with more intense behaviors such as physical (M= 5.31, SD=2.71) or verbal aggressive (M=5.78, SD=2.47), elopement (M=5.37, SD=2.58), and tantrum behaviors (M=5.89, SD=2.55).

Table 9

How Prepared Teachers Felt to Address Common Early Childhood Challenging Behavior Scenarios

Scenarios	*M (SD)*	Range
A child who is physically aggressive (ex: hits, punches, bites, kicks)	5.31 *(2.70)*	(0-10)
A child who elopes/runs away from the activity or from the classroom	5.37 *(2.58)*	(0-10)
A child who has a difficult time managing strong emotions	5.77 *(2.60)*	(0-10)
A child who is verbally aggressive (ex: scream, yells, curses)	5.78 *(2.47)*	(0-10)
A child who has a difficult time engaging and interacting with peers appropriately	5.82 *(2.68)*	(0-10)
A child who consistently engages in tantrum behavior while transitioning	5.89 *(2.55)*	(0-10)
A child who shuts down when frustrated	5.93 *(2.51)*	(0-10)
A child who has a difficult time remaining on task and often leaves the activity	6.20 *(2.38)*	(0-10)

Social Emotional Curriculum

In the final section, participants were asked to report if they learning about social emotional curriculums, if they implemented any social emotional curriculums in fieldwork./practicum experiences and if they used any specific social emotional curriculums during their personnel preparation programs. Nineteen participants reported that they did receive specific training to implement social emotional curriculums while 26 participants reported no and three participants were unsure. Participants reported being trained in Creative Curriculum (13 participants), Sanford Harmony (nine participants), Pyramid Model (nine participants), Tools of the Mind (two participants), Second Step (1 participant). Thirty six participants reported not observing and/or using social emotional curriculums in their fieldwork/practicum experiences during their personnel preparation programs while 18 participants reported they did observe and/or use social emotional curriculums.

Qualitative Results

Using the results from the quantitative data, the focus group protocol was developed to investigate specific survey findings and address research questions that were more efficiently answered in a narrative format rather than an online quantitative instrument. This included topics such as innovations in personnel preparation and an elaboration on their own specific personnel preparation. Four major themes emerged from the data including: (a) learning through experience; (b) educational preparedness; (c) student support, well-being, and growth; and (d) building meaningful connections. The following sections describe the themes and their corresponding codes with examples from the data. Within each theme and codes, data are organized to describe participants' experiences, common challenges and needs of the field, and recommendations for future improvements. The themes are presented from most prevalent to least prevalent. (Figure 7).

Figure 7

Focus Group Themes and Corresponding Codes

Learning Through Experience	Educational Preparedness	Building Meaningful Connections	Student Support, Well-Being, and Growth
• Practical Experiences • Recommendations to embed real-world experiences into programs	• University Experiences • Different experiences in EC/ECSE • Bridging Theory and Practice in University Settings	• Relationships • Collaborations	• Strategies, Resources, and Tools • Support • Advice

Learning Through Experience

Throughout the focus group conversations, this theme emerged more frequently than all of the other themes combined. This theme consisted of two codes: (a) practical experiences and, (b) recommendations to embed real-world experiences into programs. Practical experiences referred to participants talking about specific hands-on learning experiences such as student teaching, working with small groups of children, and working individually with young children during their personnel preparation program. Recommendations to embed real-world experiences into programs referred to when participants suggested that more hands-on experiences are needed for future personnel preparation programs.

"I think it's more hands on practice of what is being preached in books": Practical Experiences. Participants discussed that the majority of the strategies for instructing children on social emotional skills and addressing challenging behaviors were acquired on the job. Numerous individuals expressed that they did not receive guidance on addressing challenging behavior or teaching social emotional skills until they became in-service teachers. A significant portion of the instruction they received during their initial preparation (if they received any at all) pertained to paperwork completion and was focused on standardized policies and procedures rather than proactive and personalized strategies. Karina, an early childhood autism teacher articulated this by stating, "While we may have covered some behavior plans and paperwork, our understanding was superficial. In my master's program... we never delved deeply into behavior. It wasn't a prominent topic in any of my coursework."

Several participants across focus groups discussed that the strategies they learned in their personnel preparation programs were not relevant until they actually had to do it in their teaching positions. They expressed that because every child was different, it was hard to prepare for

personnel preparation. Naomi, an early childhood inclusion teacher said, "You don't know what you need until you are in the trenches actually experiencing it." Several participants were simultaneously teaching and completing a personnel preparation program and those participants agreed that even though they had previous training in their undergraduate programs, they were underprepared because they did not know what to expect and had never been in a classroom before. Now that they were in classrooms, they had important background knowledge to be able to apply skills and strategies immediately. Participants concurred on their lack of knowledge regarding reflective teaching practices during their undergraduate programs because the strategies were not applied in authentic classroom settings. Participants noted that they used social emotional strategies in their personnel preparation programs that often occurred in artificial environments and not reflective of where they were or going to teach which did not align with the realities of classroom dynamics. Participants discussed that their practicum experiences were often with teachers who were proficient in classroom management and behaviors; therefore, did not get to practice a lot of the social emotional strategies they learned about in their personnel preparation programs. Participants across focus groups also mentioned that their student teaching was done in a higher performing elementary school with more experienced teachers and staff than were they eventually got jobs. Often schools that they did their student teaching in did not have the same kinds of needs and challenges as the schools they were eventually employed in.

When participants were asked to reflect on their own personnel preparation programs, participants overwhelmingly discussed their student teaching experiences. While quality of fieldwork experiences varied across participants, all participants agreed how it was a necessary

and integral part of learning social emotional strategies and addressing challenging behaviors.

Alexis, an early childhood inclusion teacher stated:

> Student teaching for me as well because it was a real life scenario and now I'm in the moment I could sit and write what I would do realistically in this scenario, but you put me in and I might not be act the same way or you know, it's not as easy written as it might not be act the same way or you know it's not as easy written as it is like in case study or how the book might tell you it is.

All of the participants commented needing more hands-on applications of materials than are learned in the books. Many discussed that while textbooks described content, reading textbooks did not prepare them to implement social emotional strategies, for example, Daniela, an early childhood inclusion teacher commented "It is not enough to read about in a textbook." Participants indicated that they needed practical applications along with their coursework and the textbook. Daniela later said:

> I think I would agree with you [another participant] that it should be more hands on because once you're in a [early childhood] classroom, you get that experience versus just reading it in a textbook or watching a video that they present about behavior versus being in the classroom. I think the hands-on experience is more rewarding.

"We could require more practicum experiences and student teaching":

Recommendations to Embed Real-World Experiences into Programs. When participants were asked about innovations in personnel preparation programs and what kinds of things should be present in personnel preparation programs to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors, overwhelmingly participants stated that they would like to see more fieldwork, practicum, observations, and student teaching. Bailey, an early childhood inclusion teacher stated, "I think a program that requires classroom observation for a certain portion of the course should be part of everything for any kind of early childhood or early childhood special education program." Participants agreed that more practical experiences while applying these skills could help teachers feel more prepared. They also discussed how observations and

practicum should occur in more diverse settings (e.g., with children with disabilities, with children with challenging behaviors, children who are living in poverty, children of color) and should be required in different early childhood and early childhood special education settings. Participants also agreed that observations in high quality classrooms would help them see what an ideal early childhood classroom could look and feel like. Participants agreed that coursework should be directly applicable to fieldwork and student teaching experiences. More specifically, several participants stated that writing lesson plans or behavior intervention plans in coursework and then also applying those lesson plans and behavior intervention plans in the field would be beneficial. Participants concluded that giving teachers these experiences and seeing teaching in action offers a significant advantage for teachers entering the field.

Participants discussed that while student teaching, in-person observations and fieldwork are the most helpful and should be included in a personnel preparation program, they recognized the need for other innovative ways for teachers to gain hands-on experiences and applications. Naomi, an early childhood inclusion teacher suggested, "Videos for us to watch where other teachers model how to do a lesson and things like that. That would be something that would prepare new teachers." Participants described that videos would allow an insight into the classroom and to see what is really going on in the classroom. It would help give a true perspective of what other teachers are doing in their classrooms. They also discussed that videos could give an insight into diverse classrooms across districts and states.

Educational Preparedness

This theme consisted of one code that described how their personnel preparation programs contributed to their preparation to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors. Several subcodes were developed as well such different experiences between

EC/ECSE teachers and bridging theory and practice in university settings. First, the most prevalent code of university experiences is discussed. Then the subcodes related to how their university experiences differed between EC/ECSE teachers are discussed as well as the need to bridge theory and practice in university settings.

"It was maybe one lecture in one class really, that covered it": University experiences. Participants discussed their university experiences including their university coursework, course design, and university courses and curriculum. Participants across all focus groups discussed how university coursework did not prepare them to teach social emotional skills or address challenging behaviors. Participants also discussed that their university coursework did not include social emotional development of young children, social emotional strategies, and how to address challenging behaviors. Ruth, an early childhood inclusion teacher said, "There was no formal training on behavior or social emotional learning in my bachelor's program." Some participants mentioned that their university coursework experience was disjointed. They learned social emotional strategies in isolated fragments and struggled to grasp the connection between these strategies and child outcomes. Additionally, participants expressed uncertainty about the rationale behind using these strategies and how to effectively apply them in classroom settings. Pearl, an early childhood inclusion teacher said, "Everything I learned would have been in the textbook and using that information to learn how to work with your students and their social emotional needs."

Participants recalled many different projects and specific social emotional strategies that occurred in their personnel preparation programs that helped them learn about social emotional development and how to address challenging behaviors. Several participants stated that they learned about behavior intervention plans, functional behavioral assessments, behavior change

projects, data collection for specific behaviors, and how to deliver positive reinforcement to children.

Notably, only one participant recalled taking a specific class on behavior management or social emotional learning/development; however, participants discussed that even though some of these courses did not specifically focus on social emotional strategies or addressing challenging behaviors, other courses included some aspects of social emotional strategies and behavior. More specifically, participants noted social emotional content in the introduction to early childhood courses, multicultural courses, assessment courses, and family engagement courses. In the multicultural courses, participants discussed how they learned about different aspects of diversity and how this impacts behavior. In the assessment courses, they focused on how to administer behavioral assessments. Naomi, an early childhood inclusion teacher said, "The assessment class taught by [professor name] was phenomenal and went over functional behavior assessments (FBA) and behavior intervention plans (BIP) and everything else and all those based on assessment." Participants also learned about behavior strategies in family engagement courses. Bailey, an early childhood inclusion teacher said:

> And the other one [course] that really kind of hit home for me in that area that maybe wasn't supposed to but was the family engagement class we had to take. Because just bringing in those different cultures and lifestyles that the kids are coming from. They made a big difference on the experiences that was coming in and how they acted socially and emotionally.

"I feel there needs to be more teachers [university instructors] who are currently in situations that we're in as well": Bridging Theory and Practice in University Settings. When participants were asked about what is needed in university settings to improve personnel preparation programs several ideas emerged. Several participants mentioned how university instructors should be relatable to university students and have substantial experience in the field.

They stated that when university instructors can relate things learning in the university classroom to practical and real-life experiences, they were able to understand how they can immediately apply the strategies into their teaching. Participants also stated that the assignments in personnel preparation programs should be practical, applicable, and relatable. Several participants discussed that written assignments such as papers and essays were not helpful and created extra work for the students. Participants preferred assignments that allowed them to apply the assignment directly to their classroom. Also, participants discussed that they needed more time in class. They expressed that some courses occurred in short time frames (e.g., accelerated courses, reduced number of weeks) and they needed more time to delve into strategies and practices for social emotional learning and behavior. Lastly, participants wanted to learn about resources and how to use those resources from their personnel preparation programs. Tia, an early childhood inclusion teacher said, "But I think just front-loading more resources earlier. Like every program should front load resources to teachers." Participants across focus groups overwhelmingly mentioned that there was a need to have a multitude of resources available so when a situation or challenge comes up, they have toolbox available that they can pull from. Some participants mentioned that resources for general education teachers, administrators, and parents would be helpful too. Participants also discussed that while resources are great, they needed time to practice using these resources and learning when and where to use them.

"There's a difference between someone going toward getting dual certification than certified in EC or ECSE." Different Experiences Between EC/ECSE Teachers. Participants discussed that there is a discrepancy between the preparedness of special education teachers and the preparedness of general education teachers in their ability to social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors in classroom settings. Overwhelmingly, participants discussed that

it appeared that school administrators and general education teachers were not prepared to teach social emotional skills or address challenging behaviors because of the lack of support from administrators and general education teachers. Daniela, an early childhood inclusion teacher stated, "General education needs it [this training]. Essentially, every teacher, whether you're working with special education or general education, and every teacher and every administrator as well." Participants discussed the possibility of general education teachers taking courses in behavior and social emotional development in their personnel preparation programs. Participants agreed that general education teacher received more content specific preparation such as how to teach reading and how to teach math; however, special education teachers often miss that content part. Most special education teachers take courses in disabilities and individualized education programs and how to collect data. Participants suggested that the university coursework could be integrated to form a more comprehensive approach to teaching children.

Building Meaningful Connections

This theme included relationships and collaborations. Relationships referred to specific relationships that took place in the personnel preparation program or being specifically trained in how to build relationships in personnel preparation programs (e.g., professors, universities, mentor teachers, colleagues). Relationships also includes when participants referred to specific relationships that they wanted or needed while in-service (i.e., with families, with children), and building relationships with children in pre-service or in-service. Collaborations refer to sharing ideas, collaborating, and having discussions with other professionals such as other teachers, colleagues, and mentors.

"I don't remember getting training on how to build a relationship:" Relationships. Participants discussed relationship building and learning how to build a relationship was

important for children and family outcomes. However, while many of the participants stated building relationships with children and families was important to classroom management, however, they were not specifically trained in how to do this effectively. Alani, an early childhood inclusion teacher said, "I don't remember getting training on how to build a relationship. I just remember it being, 'build relationships'…It was only this is what's important." Participants commented how having relationships with children where they establish trust is the most important factor with addressing challenging behaviors in the classroom. Participants also discussed and debated about how they were not sure they could "train" how to build these relationships and instead was an innate characteristic of a teacher. They expressed that without learning how to build relationships and creating meaningful relationships with children, children would exhibit challenging behaviors and they would in turn not learn social emotional skills.

Participants discussed how building relationships and partnerships with families was also imperative to creating a safe and supportive learning environment for children. Participants discussed having communication with families regularly and getting to know the child and the family can help with challenging behaviors. Alexis, an early childhood inclusion teacher stated:

> First thing I want is how the parents make sure that their child will be safe in my classroom and I'm here for the child and their well-being. But also, we have to work together to help the student achieve. As much as possible for each individual student.

Participants also agreed that having relationships with children and families can help create consistency in expectations and learning.

"Maybe more training is needed to how to work with your classroom assistant:" Collaborations. Participants discussed how learning how to build and sustain relationships with colleagues such as co-teachers, classroom assistants, paraprofessionals, and related service

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personnel was paramount in addressing challenging behaviors in the classroom. Participants stated that little to no training was given on how to work with other professionals. Participants explained that they did not feel prepared to work with other professionals, especially related to engaging in conflict resolution with other adults. Participants specifically described their experiences working in co-taught inclusive classrooms where one teacher was a general education teacher and one was a special education teacher. They discussed how getting the general education teacher to make accommodations and to take behavioral data was difficult and caused some tension in the classroom. Participants discussed throughout about the importance of having a supportive and collaborative teaching partner. Two participants discussed in depth about having a difficult relationship with their co-teacher which led to difficulties throughout their year.

Student Support, Well-being, and Growth

This theme included strategies, resources and tools, support, and advice for professionals. Strategies, resources, and tools included specific strategies, resources, and tools that would be helpful in in-service programs and also should be included in personnel preparation programs (e.g., specific curriculums, Pyramid model resources, scripted stories). Support included specific things teachers needed to be more supported in personnel preparation programs and in-service programs (e.g., mentors, professional development, coaching). Finally, advice referred to when participants gave advice to new early childhood/early childhood special education teachers.

"I think having physical resources that the teachers can take on the first day would be like really important:" Strategies, resources, and tools. Participants discussed the need for specific resources to give to teachers in personnel preparation programs so that they have an arsenal of resources. Participants also discussed that it is not enough for faculty to simply give

resources, but university students need to be trained on how to use those resources. Many participants reflected back on their first experiences in the classroom setting and they stated they were overwhelmed and did not have any resources to help them with addressing challenging behaviors. Participants recommended that equipping teachers with specific resources such as scripted stories, the Backpack Series [Pyramid Model Resources] websites, and visuals could help future teachers feel more confident within the first year of teaching.

In addition, participants gave several examples of strategies, resources and tools that were included in their personnel preparation programs. Participants have examples of learning about how to use token boards, making modifications for children, the Pyramid Model website, building a cozy center for children, ways to effectively transition children from one activity to the next, adapted seating, how to use fidget toys, and how to use preference assessments.

"But once you're in the classroom, really, that's where we need more support:" Support. Participants discussed that there were several integral people that gave them support throughout their teaching career while also expressing that they need more people to support them. Participants mentioned behavior interventionists, administrators, and coaches would be potential sources of support for new teachers; however, they discussed that many of these people did not come frequently enough or did not have the training to support them effectively. Participants described experiences when administrators would come and help children and they often did not understand how to help the child with the challenging behavior. "Getting our administration more involved I believe [would help] and seeing the classroom and the challenging behaviors that happen." They discussed the need for mentors and extra intentional support especially within the first few years of their career. Naomi, an early childhood inclusion teacher stated:

It's good to have training but it almost is coaching and mentoring I think would be so much better. Having people come into classrooms while you're in the trenches and coach you through things and mentor you more would be helpful too.

Participants discussed wanting coaching with regular feedback and guidance. They specifically want experts to come into their classroom and show them how to do it and then coach them through the process.

"I guess for my biggest thing for new teachers is to really look at taking care of yourself:" Advice. When participants were asked about specific advice they had for new early childhood/early childhood special education teachers, they stated that they need to focus on their mental health and take care of themselves. Participants also stated that they should not take children's behavior personally. They also stated that while new teachers should be reflective, they also need to give themselves some grace. Naomi, an early childhood inclusion teacher stated, "I think one of the biggest ones is—don't take it [child's behavior] personally. That's a hard one for teachers to not think it is their fault that this child's having such a hard time in my classroom." Participants stated that new teachers should take time for themselves and focus on things to take care of themselves in order to prevent burnout. While most of the conversation was around mental health, other pieces of advice were given as well such as gathering resources, finding people on your school campus to support you and to be flexible.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This study examined EC/ECSE personnel preparation for teaching social emotional skills and address challenging behavior from the perspective of EC/ECSE teachers including what was including in their programs, how this prepared them for the workforce, and recommendations for changes to support new teacher in learning social emotional practices. Aligned with Hemmeter et al. (2016)'s findings, EC/ECSE teachers in the current study consistently report that addressing challenging behaviors is one of the most pressing training need and greatest source of stress and anxiety, especially for new teachers.

Overall, results suggested that most personnel preparation programs did not include specific courses on social emotional learning and EC/ECSE education; but when content was included it was focused on tier I (i.e., universal supports). Due to the inclusion of more tier I practices in personnel preparation programs, it is understandable that participants reported implementing more tier I practices over those practices included in more intensive tiers such as intentionally planning social-emotional skills and developing behavior intervention plans. Interestingly, this also explains why participants reported struggling with addressing more intensive needs of their classroom after completing their personnel preparation programs. Additionally, overall, more practices were reported as learned about in personnel preparation programs than the number of practices that participants reported as implemented in fieldwork experiences. Finally, participants recommended that personnel preparation programs should include more opportunities to practice implementing social emotional strategies and practices into their personnel preparation programs such as requiring more fieldwork, practicum and observations.

Misalignment of Coursework and Practical Experiences

Overall, across quantitative and qualitative data, results provide evidence of the need to embed social emotional content into coursework and fieldwork experiences. Buettner et al. (2016) and Denham et al. (2014) found that most EC/ECSE personnel preparation programs did not include social emotional content. More specifically from the focus group discussions, participants overwhelmingly discussed that there were no specific courses in classroom management or behavior and/or social emotional development for young children in their personnel preparation programs. Similar to findings from Mashburn et al. (2008), the results indicate that pre-service teachers are more likely to gain knowledge about practices when they have opportunities to apply or practice strategies which suggests that faculty in personnel preparation programs continue to struggle to effectively integrate social emotional practices into coursework and field experiences. Trivette et al. (2009) describe that the most effective method of adult learning, including learning in personnel preparation programs, is to be actively engaged and participatory in their learning, and pre-service teachers need to have opportunities to apply and practice skills and strategies in order achieve mastery.

Participants across data sources noted that when social emotional content was present in coursework, most coursework focused on tier I practices (e.g., building positive relationships with children) than tier II and tier III practices. This is important because children who are not responsive to tier I practices might need more intensive supports and interventions that are located in tier II and tier III practices. Without this intervention and support, children are at risk for detrimental and lifelong consequences. If teachers are not prepared to deliver interventions and to provide more supports located in tier II and III, young children will most likely not receive instruction they need to learn valuable social emotional skills such as friendship making

skills and conflict resolution skills. In alignment with the results from this study, Buettner et al. (2016) and Denham et al. (2014) discussed how personnel preparation programs need more targeted training in advanced social emotional practices to ensure that future educators are prepared to address a wide range of social emotional content in early childhood/early childhood special education teacher preparation. This may mean that one course does not provide enough opportunity to teach the robustness of social emotional content. Additionally, particularly with tier III strategies to develop individualized intervention plans, it may be helpful to pair content with practical applications to address the concern that our participants discussed of not knowing what they needed until they are actively in classrooms.

Active, practical and hands on experiences are crucial for effectively implementing social-emotional strategies and practices. Surprisingly, one third of survey participants reported they did not participate in practicum experiences and/or student teaching experiences in their personnel preparation programs. It should be noted that this aligns with the amount of participants that completed their programs through accelerated or alternative approaches. University students in these programs often begin their initial teaching while completing their programs meaning they may not complete traditional fieldwork activities but more 'on the job' experiences. This is significant considering the overwhelming discussion from all participants in focus group sessions stating that hands-on experiences such as student teaching and practicum experiences are imperative to teacher preparedness in social emotional content. Participants noted that when they did have fieldwork experiences, they needed more guided coaching on translating knowledge learned in coursework to their practices in early childhood classroom. These findings and past researchers challenge us to bridge the gaps between course and practical experiences and application and reinforce a critical absence of hands-on experiences in pre-

service learning (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). To enhance teacher preparedness, it is imperative for teacher personnel preparation programs to reassess their curriculum and prioritize the integration of practicum and student teaching experiences.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. Collectively multi-tiered systems of support are seen as valuable and recommended (DEC, 2021; IDEA, 2004). Notably, 35 U.S. states currently implement the Pyramid Model framework (Pyramid Model Consortium, 2021) including Nevada via the Nevada Pyramid Model Partnership. Despite efforts to adopt this evidence-based framework, more than half of the participants surveyed for this study reported they did not learn or implement this framework or they have never heard of this framework. This might indicate that the knowledge of the Pyramid Model might be still developing in the field, that programs are using other multi-tiered systems (e.g., response to intervention, school-wide positive behaviors interventions systems), or that professionals may be using strategies without using them intentionally which may make these strategies less effective for young children. However, this finding could also be reflective of the strong research base of implementation research with in-service EC/ECSE teachers meaning that previously there has been a focus on supporting professionals after they have already started teaching. According to Ascetta et al. (2023), no empirical studies have been published about how to embed Pyramid Model practices into coursework, while multiple studies have been published on the effectiveness of implementation of Pyramid Model practices with in-service teachers. By examining how teachers learn about supporting social emotional development and address challenging behaviors before they begin in their classrooms, we could reduce the need to intensive training, technical assistance, and coaching in-service. Regardless, this indicates that there is a need to look at coursework and

licensure requirements to determine how the Pyramid Model and other multi-tiered systems of support are embedded into personnel preparation programs (Ascetta et al., 2023).

Benefits and Consequences of Educator Preparedness

One of the objectives of EC/ECSE personnel preparation programs is to guarantee that educators are well-prepared to confront classroom difficulties upon entering the field (Wechsler et al., 2016). Importantly, one of the significant factors leading to practitioners leaving the field is addressing children engaging in challenging behaviors (Gebbie et al., 2012; Hasting & Bham, 2003; Hemmeter et al., 2016); therefore, it is crucial to ensure that teachers leave their personnel preparation programs with a sense of readiness and preparedness to address social, emotional, and behavioral concerns. Results from the survey indicated that teachers reported a high level of preparedness in building positive relationships with children and using positive practices and lower levels of preparedness to address more complex behavior management and intervention strategies. EC/ECSE teachers reported the lowest perceived preparedness in addressing a child who is physically aggressive and a child who elopes from the classroom or activity. These findings align with previous research emphasizing the complexity of addressing children who are physically aggressive and/or who are displaying eloping behavior in early childhood (Fox & Lentini, 2006; Hemmeter et al., 2006). However, although participants reported being prepared in universal strategies, it is unknown how effective they are at implementing them after their preparation program. This is important information to examine as strong tier I and tier II strategies act to prevent the need for extensive tier III interventions. These challenges associated with these specific behaviors emphasize the need for targeted training and support within EC/ECSE personnel preparation programs to enhance competence in managing these behaviors effectively.

To keep teachers in the field, they need to feel competent and confident in implementing strategies for all young children, including children who engage in persistent challenging behavior (Freeman et at., 2014). Therefore, pre-service teachers need to be prepared in all social emotional strategies. Overall, these data suggest that while teachers felt prepared in foundational practices, there is a need to learn about and implement more advanced strategies in intervention and support.

Needed Supports and Resources

In focus group discussions, participants highlighted while training in their preparation programs is important, the need for approaches after the completion of their personnel preparation programs to support in-service teachers with these necessary social emotional practices and strategies is essential. Participants suggested mentoring, coaching, collaboration, and induction programs would significantly enhance teacher preparedness. This aligns with existing research emphasizing the positive impact of supportive administration, strong teaming, mentoring, coaching, and communities of practice for new teachers (Hunt et al., 2003). However, a critical gap arises. The absence of instruction in social emotional content in personnel preparation programs, forces schools and districts to shoulder the responsibility of providing these necessary supports such as coaching, professional development, induction program and mentoring for novice teachers (Ingersoll et al., 2011). This shift places a burden on school districts and state training systems. Demonstrating the link between teacher retention and the availability of these supports, DeAngelis and Presley (2011) stated that children behavior was the leading cause for teaching leaving the profession, with approximately 50% leaving within the first 5 years. Therefore, to retain educators, novice teachers must be offered these supports especially because when they are lacking in personnel preparation programs especially for

teachers enrolled in accelerated or alternative route programs that allow them to teach in districts while competing their pre-service programs. To relieve this pressure, institutions of higher education and school districts could partner to ensure continuity and transitions between personnel preparation programs, teacher induction, and ongoing professional learning with a continued focus on social emotional content.

Limitations of This Study

This study is not without limitations, specifically in relation to sample size. The sample size of participants involved in this study may restrict the generalizability of the findings and may not fully represent the broader population; however, the study provides a solid foundation for future research and offers a valuable starting point for further exploration. Further research with larger and more diverse samples is needed to expand upon these preliminary findings. In addition, data were collected from professionals working in a single state within the United States. Different states may have different approaches and priorities in personnel preparation programs. However, it should be noted that many of the participants completed their personnel preparation from other states (i.e., California, Michigan, Maryland, Florida etc.) suggesting common experiences across programs. This study offers valuable insights that serves as a starting point for similar studies in different regions or states that could lead to a more comprehensive body of knowledge in the field and help create confidence in licensure reciprocity across states. Additionally, this study was designed to be an exploratory study to examine initial insights into personnel preparation programs and how these programs prepare teachers to address challenging behavior and teach social emotional skills. Data collected was self-reported from the perspectives on teachers. Different methods to understand the actual inclusion of content (e.g., syllabi analysis, preparation program case studies, fieldwork studies)

and teacher implementation (e.g., observation) would provide deeper understanding of this topic. Lastly, participants were on average nine years away from their personnel preparation programs when asked to reflect on what they learned, implemented and their perceptions of preparedness. The more time away from their personnel preparation programs, they might not remember their personnel preparation programs as accurately as a participant who completed their programs within the last year. However, these results provide a foundation to explore how personnel preparation programs are teaching social emotional content.

Implications for Practice

Data from this study indicate that there is a great need to support early childhood and early childhood special education teachers with addressing challenging behavior and teaching social emotional skills. In order to engage in effective change, experiences and perspectives of key stakeholders such as novice and experienced teachers, must be included (Halle et al., 2013; NAEYC, 2019). There is a considerable need for EC/ECSE teachers to be trained in these areas. Providing teachers with training in social-emotional content is crucial for fostering a positive learning environment where all children can thrive. Equipping teachers with the necessary skills to teach social-emotional skills not only influences the future academic success of young children but also contributes to reducing teacher burnout and turnover. This training enables teachers to feel competent and confident in addressing challenging behavior effectively.

Institutions of Higher Education

According to Ascetta et al. (2023), there is a considerable amount of research addressing the professional development and implementation of Pyramid Model practices with in-service EC/ECSE teachers; however, after over 20 years of Pyramid Model implementation, no research has been completed to address how EC/ECSE teachers learn and implement Pyramid Model

practices in higher education personnel preparation programs. Therefore, institutions of higher education should examine course syllabi and requirements to ensure social emotional content from all tiers are embedded throughout their courses and/or a course is dedicated to this subject. Because of the vast amount of research conducted with in-service teachers while using the Pyramid Model, some of these studies could inform the implementation of these practices in higher education. For example, several studies have explored how performance feedback on specific Pyramid Model practices in-service teachers' use of specific Pyramid Model practices (Artman-Meeker & Hemmeter, 2012; Hemmeter et al., 2011; Hemmeter et al. 2015). As studies consistently demonstrate the benefits of coaching teachers in Pyramid Model practices on young children's social emotional competence (Fox et al., 2011; Snyder et al., 2018), the use of performance feedback and practice-based coaching strategies could be embedded into higher education coursework and fieldwork practices. Therefore, one consideration for higher education institutions is to embed a coaching framework into observations in fieldwork experiences. Additionally, programs could use available tools such as the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT), which evaluates the implementation of practices, to guide fieldwork experiences.

　　EC/ECSE teachers surveyed reported that high-quality fieldwork and practicum experiences are an integral part of the personnel preparation program. Institutions of higher education should examine their current fieldwork experiences to make sure university students are engaging in high-quality fieldwork placements and expectations (Macy et al., 2009). Institutions of higher education should be aware of this essential component of personnel preparation programs and continue to make these experiences a mandatory requirement of teacher licensure programs. Because of the unique university student populations (e.g., non-traditional, alternate route to licensure programs), considerations should be made to innovatively

include supported application activities similar to fieldwork and practicum experiences in traditional programs. These could include residency programs, practice-based coaching, communities of practice or professional learning communities, or mentorship programs.

Across ECE/ECSE guidance, social emotional development is essential for successful child and family outcomes. To ensure the alignment between higher education programs and the NAEYC personnel preparation standards (2019), DEC personnel preparation standards (2020), NAEYC developmentally appropriate practice (2020), DEC recommended practices (2014), as well as their own state early learning standards, it is essential to actively seek guidance from both state and national technical assistance centers. By doing so, institutions can stay informed about the latest best practices and standards within the field of EC/ECSE. A key aspect of program development should be the intentional integration of both theoretical knowledge and practical applications in courses. This approach ensures that university students not only understand the concepts but also gain hands-on experience that can be directly applied to their future roles.

School Districts

Novice teachers need additional support and guidance, especially with implementing social emotional practices and addressing challenging behaviors (Ascetta et al., 2023). EC/ECSE teachers reported that induction programs, mentoring programs, and coaching would help them become more successful in the field. Teachers reported that they need consistent and ongoing feedback to develop skills necessary to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors. Potentially, implementing a coaching framework where teachers could receive feedback about their teaching practices could be beneficial (Hemmeter et al., 2015; Fox et at., 2011). Additionally, teachers emphasized the importance of professional development opportunities and expressed a need for resources and materials. As Trivette et al. (2009) shared,

the most beneficial adult learning strategy is when adults are actively involved in learning by implementing strategies and practices; therefore, school districts should consider creating professional development opportunities that provide ways for teachers to practice skills and strategies that are learned. Without these experiences in early career stages, professionals cannot achieve mastery of their practice and may continue to struggle. Providing these elements would contribute significantly to their effectiveness to address challenging behavior and teach social emotional skills which would also directly impact children and family outcomes.

EC/ECSE teachers reported that there was a disconnect between administrators and the teachers indicating a need for training and professional development about how to support young children with challenging behaviors and social emotional needs. Participants stated that their administrators did not understand the needs of the program and their teachers and therefore were unable to help support early childhood and early childhood special education teachers. Hemmeter et al. (2007) argued that in order to support children with challenging behavior in early childhood programs, a program-wide model of positive behavior support is needed. This includes developing a leadership team who can support a program wide behavior support implementation plan. Often, administrators or other school personnel are responsible for setting up these supports that are crucial to the implementation of early childhood multi-tiered systems of support (Hemmeter et al., 2007). As study participants highlighted the need for collaborative and supportive work environments with colleagues, implementing a program-wide model of positive behavior would provide teachers with a collaborative and supportive work environment. This would also help to retain teachers and prevent burnout (Schaack et al., 2022).

Implications for Policy

There is a critical need for pre-service teachers to practice and apply strategies in the classroom prior to entering the workforce (Freeman et al., 2014; Schaack et al., 2022). However, many states, such as Nevada, waive traditional fieldwork or student teaching experiences for verified work experience. State licensure should consider adding fieldwork requirements to licensure requirements, specify what competencies should be demonstrated during work experiences, and/or offering on-going mentoring and evaluations. By doing so, policy makers can ensure future teachers are gaining practical experience in applying instructional strategies and managing real classroom dynamics. In addition to considering adding fieldwork components to initial licensure or recertification requirements, state licensure entities can ensure that there are specific courses in social emotional content and addressing challenging behaviors that are required for EC/ECSE licensure.

Recognizing the diverse pathways that individuals take to become educators, policy makers should focus on innovation in fieldwork and student teaching opportunities particularly those in alternate and accelerated routes to licensure. These non-traditional routes attract a diverse workforce who have varied professional backgrounds and experiences. This is essential to recruit and retain teachers and create a workforce that resembles our communities and families (NAEYC, 2019). This requires flexible and adaptive approaches pre-service teacher preparation. Developing tailored experiences that align with these programs ensures all pre-service teachers receive relevant and impactful training and practice applying strategies (Power to the Profession Task Force, 2020).

Implications for Research

There are vast opportunities for research to examine how EC/ECSE teachers are prepared to foster social emotional development and address challenging behaviors in young children.

One area for future research is to examine best higher education pedagogical practices that lead to improved outcomes for pre-service teachers. Subsequent studies could identify what aspects of courses impact the knowledge, understanding, and application of social emotional teaching strategies. By understanding the key factors within coursework that contribute significantly to pre-service teachers' proficiency in social emotional content, valuable guidance and insight would be available to refine and customize teacher preparation programs. In addition, a comprehensive examination of the long-term impact of these practices on the actual classroom implementation of social emotional strategies could contribute to the development of more comprehensive personnel preparation programs (Freeman et al., 2014; Stipp, 2019).

While there are studies about how to embed social emotional content into courses through online modules and lectures (Appl & Spenciner, 2008; Beers Dewhirst & Goldman, 2020; Garner et al., 2018; McFarland et al., 2008;), there is no research on how to include multi-tiered systems of support, specifically Pyramid Model practices, into existing EC/ECSE courses. While the studies that have been completed can give a good starting point on how to embed social emotional content into courses, a need to embed Pyramid Model practices, which is an evidence-based and effective framework, into existing coursework is missing from the literature base.

While current research exists analyzing how in-service teachers implement Pyramid Model practices (Fox et al., 2011; Hemmeter et al., 2017; Hemmeter et al., 2006), no research is currently available that measures how pre-service teachers are implementing Pyramid Model or other social emotional practices while in fieldwork or student teaching experiences. While participants in the survey self-selected that they did implement tier I practices and are more

confident in implementing tier I practices, future research should examine whether they are actually using tier I practices in their fieldwork experiences.

Future research could also examine the similarities and differences in personnel preparation programs between EC, ECSE and EC/ECSE programs. Limited research has been conducted on the preparation of ECSE programs in particular with only one article addressing specifically ECSE teachers. In addition, similarities and differences could be explored between urban vs. rural programs, and between traditional teacher preparation programs versus alternative route to licensure/certification programs.

Finally, future research should consider examining course syllabi related to social emotional coursework and investigating licensure requirements in relation to NAEYC and DEC professional standards related to social emotional learning, development, and intervention. Ensuring course content aligns with professional standards promoting consistency across higher education institutions. Since licensure requirements often inform courses and course syllabi, it is important to understand from the policy perspective to understand how to align licensure requirements, personnel preparation standards from professional organizations such as NAEYC and DEC, and institutions of higher education.

Conclusion

This study brought to the forefront some of the existing challenges within EC/ECSE personnel preparation programs related to the instruction of social emotional skills and addressing challenging behavior. The research highlights a critical need to strengthen both coursework and fieldwork experiences by ensuring the integration of social-emotional content across all levels of support. Notably, the identified gaps in perceived preparedness identify the need for targeted training in advanced social emotional strategies. Recognizing the importance

and critical need for practical and hands on experiences such as practicum and student teaching, is imperative for personnel preparation programs to reevaluate and prioritize social emotional content. This study also prompts a shift toward a more comprehensive and engaging approach to teacher preparation by emphasizing the application of strategies and skills instead of imparting knowledge. To support children and family outcomes, teachers need to be prepared to foster a safe and inclusive learning environment where all children can thrive. Therefore, this study lays a foundation for insights that can guide future research, inform best practices and shape policy decisions in EC/ECSE personnel preparation programs. Ultimately, its implications extend toward better supporting teachers in effectively addressing the social emotional needs of all young children.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Survey Protocol

Appendix B: Pilot Test for Survey

Appendix C: Recruitment Materials

Appendix D: Consent for Survey

Appendix E: Focus Group Consent

Appendix F: Focus Group Consent and Demographic survey

Appendix G: Focus Group Technology Implementation Protocol

Appendix H: Initial Focus Group Email

Appendix I: Focus Group Reminder Emails

Appendix J: Focus Group Protocol

Appendix A: Survey Protocol

Survey

Introduction The purpose of this study is to understand training, interventions and evidence based practices that were learned and implemented in pre-service early childhood and early childhood special education personnel preparation programs for teaching young children social emotional skills and to address challenging behaviors. In addition, how well EC/ECSE teachers feel prepared to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors in the early childhood/early childhood special education classroom will also be examined.

Below are some terms that will be discussed in this survey:

Personnel preparation refers to a bachelors, masters or certificate program that prepares professionals to teach early childhood and/or early childhood special education. When completing the survey, please ONLY refer to the last personnel preparation program attended. For example: If you have a bachelors in early childhood and then obtained a masters in early childhood special education, ONLY refer to your masters degree personnel preparation program.

Early childhood refers to children 3-5 years old who do NOT have a documented disability

Early childhood special education refers to children 3-5 years old who DO have a documented disability

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Q1 After reading the consent form above, do you give consent to your participation in this web based survey.

◯ Yes (1)

◯ No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If After reading the consent form above, do you give consent to your participation in this web based... = No

Q2 Have you completed a personnel preparation program (bachelors degree in early childhood (EC)/early childhood special education (ECSE), masters degree in EC/ECSE or certificate in EC/ECSE) within the last five years?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Q3 Are you currently teaching in an early childhood or an early childhood special education setting in a public school district in Nevada? (3 to 5 year olds)

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Q4 Do you hold teacher licensure in the state of Nevada?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Intro to Per Prep Personnel Preparation

This section asks questions about what you were specifically trained on in your personnel preparation program through your coursework. Please answer questions based on the LAST

personnel preparation you attended.

Q5 Which of the following practices have you learned about in your personnel preparation program (Mark all that apply)

☐ Using positive feedback (descriptive positive praise) and encouragement (1)

☐ Designing physical environment (2)

☐ Building positive relationships with adults and children (3)

☐ Specifically and intentionally teaching classroom expectations and procedures (4)

☐ Designing a daily schedule that balances teacher led instruction and student led instruction (5)

☐ Responding to children's conversations (6)

☐ Using choice to help reduce challenging behaviors (7)

☐ I have not learned about any of these practices (8)

Q6 Which of the following practices have you learned about in your personnel preparation program (Mark all that apply)

☐ Teaching children emotions (1)

☐ Labeling children's emotions (2)

☐ Teaching children to solve a problem (3)

☐ Teaching children to identify a problem and find a solution (4)

☐ Teaching children calming techniques (ex: Turtle Technique, calming visuals, deep breaths etc.) (5)

☐ Using visual aids (ex: visual schedules, first/then boards, solution cards etc.) (6)

☐ Teaching self-regulation skills (7)

☐ Teaching friendship making skills (8)

☐ Teaching strategies for managing frustration and strong emotions (9)

☐ Teaching children to initiate and maintain peer relationships (10)

☐ I have not learned about any of these practices (11)

Q7 Which of the following practices have you learned about in your personnel preparation program (Mark all that apply)

○ Conducting a functional behavior assessment (FBA) (1)

○ Creating a behavior intervention plan (BIP) (2)

○ Analyzing functions of behavior (3)

○ Identifying prevention strategies (4)

○ Identifying replacement skills and/or strategies (5)

○ Collecting antecedent, behavior and consequence data (6)

○ Collecting behavior data (7)

○ Analyzing behavior data (8)

○ I have not learned about any of these practices (9)

End of Block: Personnel Preparation

Start of Block: Implementation During Personnel Preparation Program

Q8 Implementation During Personnel Preparation

This section asks questions about what you implemented during your fieldwork, practicum and/or student teaching experiences in your personnel preparation program in your coursework. Please answer questions based on the LAST personnel preparation you attended.

Q9 Which of the following practices have you IMPLEMENTED during your personnel preparation program in your fieldwork, practicum and/or student teaching (Mark all that apply)

☐ Using positive feedback (descriptive positive praise) and encouragement (1)

☐ Designing physical environment (2)

☐ Building positive relationships with adults and children (3)

☐ Specifically and intentionally teaching classroom expectations and procedures (4)

☐ Designing a daily schedule that balances teacher led instruction and student led instruction (5)

☐ Responding to children's conversations (6)

☐ Using choice to help reduce challenging behaviors (7)

☐ I have not learned about any of these practices (8)

Q10 Which of the following practices have you IMPLEMENTED during your personnel preparation program in your fieldwork, practicum and/or student teaching (Mark all that apply)

☐ Teaching children emotions (1)

☐ Labeling children's emotions (2)

☐ Teaching children to identify a problem and find a solution (3)

☐ Teaching children calming techniques (ex: Turtle Technique, calming visuals, deep breaths etc.) (4)

☐ Using visual aids (ex: visual schedules, first/then boards, solution cards etc.) (5)

☐ Teaching self-regulation skills (6)

☐ Teaching friendship making skills (7)

☐ Teaching strategies for managing frustration and strong emotions (8)

☐ Teaching children to initiate and maintain peer relationships (9)

☐ I have not learned about any of these practices (10)

Q11 Which of the following practices have you IMPLEMENTED during your personnel preparation program in your fieldwork, practicum and/or student teaching (Mark all that apply)

○ Conducting a functional behavior assessment (1)

○ Creating a behavior intervention plan (2)

○ Analyzing functions of behavior (3)

○ Identifying prevention strategies (4)

○ Identifying replacement skills and/or strategies (5)

○ Collecting antecedent, behavior and consequence data (6)

○ Collecting behavior data (7)

○ Analyzing behavior data (8)

○ I have not learned about any of these practices (9)

End of Block: Implementation During Personnel Preparation Program

Start of Block: Perceived Preparedness

Q12 Prepardeness to Teach Social Emotional Skills and Address Challenging Behaviors

This section asks questions about how prepared you felt after you completed your personnel preparation program and entered the early childhood/early childhood special education field. Please refer to the first 6 months - 1 year AFTER completing your program.

Q13 Please indicate how well-prepared you felt to carry out the following practices after completing your personnel preparation program (0 = not prepared at all, 100 = extremely prepared).

Not well at all	Slightly well	Moderately well	Very well	Extremely well

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100

Using positive feedback (descriptive positive praise) and encouragement ()	
Designing physical environment ()	
Building positive relationships with adults and children ()	
Specifically and intentionally teaching classroom expectations and procedures ()	
Designing a daily schedule that balances teacher led instruction and student led instruction ()	
Responding to children's conversations ()	
Using choice to help reduce challenging behaviors ()	
Teaching children emotions ()	
Labeling children's emotions ()	
Teaching children to identify a problem and find a solution ()	
Teaching children calming techniques (ex: Turtle Technique, calming visuals, deep breaths etc.) ()	
Using visual aids (ex: visual schedules, first/then boards, solution cards etc.) ()	
Teaching self-regulation skills ()	
Teaching friendship making skills ()	
Teaching strategies for managing frustration and strong emotions ()	
Teaching children to initiate and maintain peer relationships ()	
Conducting a functional behavior assessment ()	
Creating a behavior intervention plan ()	
Analyzing functions of behavior ()	
Identifying prevention strategies ()	
Identifying replacement skills and/or strategies ()	
Collecting antecedent, behavior and consequence data ()	

Collecting behavior data ()	
Analyzing behavior data ()	

Q14 Challenging Behaviors

This section gives scenerios of common challenging behavior that occurs in early childhood/early childhood special education programs. Please indicate how prepared you felt after you completed your personnel preparation program and entered the early childhood/early childhood special education field. Please refer to the first 6 months - 1 year AFTER completing your program.

Q15 Please indicate how prepared you felt to handle the following scenerios in practice after completing your personnel preparation program (0 = not prepared at all; 100 = extremely prepared).

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100

A child who consistency engages in tantrum behavior while transitioning from one activity to the next. ()	
A child who has a difficult time remaining on task and often leaves the activity ()	
A child who is physically aggressive (ex: hits, punches, bites, kicks) ()	
A child who is verbally aggressive (ex: yells, screams, curses) ()	
A child who shuts down when frustrated ()	
A child who has a difficult time managing strong emotions ()	

SE Curriculum Social Emotional Curriculum

This section asks questions about what social emotional curriculums you were trained/learned about in your personnel preparation program.

Q16 In your personnel preparation program, were you trained in the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ I am unsure (4)

○ I am unfamiliar with what this is (3)

Q17 In your personnel preparation program, were you trained to implement a specific social emotional curriculum?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ I am unsure (3)

Q18 If yes, what curriculum were you trained to use?

○ Sanford Harmony (1)

○ Second Step (2)

○ Al's Pals (3)

○ PATHS (4)

○ Other (5) _____

Q19 The next section of the survey includes demographic questions.

_____

Q20 What type of personnel preparation were in enrolled in? If attended more than one personnel preparation program, please refer to the LAST personnel preparation program attended.

○ Early Childhood (1)

○ Early Childhood Special Education (2)

○ Dual program (Early childhood/early childhood special education) (3)

Q21 What type of degree did you receive once you completed the licensure program?

○ Bachelors (2)

○ Masters (3)

○ Certificate/Licensure ONLY (4)

○ Other (5) _____

Q22 What institution did you attend?

○ University of Nevada, Las Vegas (1)

○ University of Nevada, Reno (2)

○ College of Southern Nevada (3)

○ Great Basin College (4)

○ Nevada State College (5)

○ Truckee Meadows Community College (6)

○ Western Nevada College (7)

○ Out of state/Other (please enter which college you attended) (8)
_____

Q23 How many years have you worked in early childhood or early childhood special education (outside of experience in your student teaching training)?

○ 0 years (1)

○ 1-2 years (2)

○ 3-5 years (3)

○ 6-9 years (4)

○ 10 years or more (5)

Q24 What is your age?

○ 18-25 (1)

○ 25-30 (2)

○ 30-35 (3)

○ 35-40 (4)

○ 40-45 (5)

○ 45-50 (6)

○ 50-55 (7)

○ 55-60 (8)

○ 60 or older (9)

Q25 What type of program were you enrolled in?

○ Traditional Route to Licensure Program (1)

○ Alternative Route to Licensure (ex: Fast track, paraprofessional program, Teach for America etc.) (2)

○ Other (4) _____

Q26 What is your gender?

○ Man (2)

○ Woman (5)

○ Non-binary / third gender (3)

○ Other (6) _____

○ Prefer not to say (4)

Q27 What degree do you currently hold?

○ Bachelors (3)

○ Masters (4)

○ Other (5) _____

Q28 Have you received any additional training in social emotional strategies/behavioral strategies outside of your current or past personnel preparation program?

○ Yes. If yes, please specify what type of training (ex: workshops, coaching, webinars etc.) (1)
_____

○ No (2)

Q29 What school district do you currently teach in?

○ Carson City School District (1)

○ Churchill School District (2)

○ Clark County School District (3)

○ Douglas School District (4)

○ Elko School District (5)

○ Esmeralda School District (6)

○ Eureka School District (7)

○ Humboldt School District (8)

○ Lander School District (9)

○ Lincoln School District (10)

○ Lyon School District (11)

○ Mineral School District (12)

○ Nye School District (13)

○ Pershing School District (14)

○ Storey County School District (15)

○ Washoe County School District (16)

○ White Pine County School District (17)

Q30 What program are you currently working in?

◯ Early childhood general education (does not include children with disabilities) (1)

◯ Early childhood inclusion (does include children with disabilities) (2)

◯ Early childhood special education (Self contained - ALL/majority of children have disabilities) (3)

◯ Early childhood autism program (4)

◯ Other (5) _____

Q31 How did you complete your LAST personnel preparation program?

◯ Online only (1)

◯ Hybrid (some online and some in person) (2)

◯ All in person (3)

End of Block: Demographics

Focus Group

Q1 Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey.

If you would like to participate in a virtual focus group, please provide your email below.

The purpose of the focus group is to identify components and experiences that are necessary in personnel preparation programs for teaching social emotional skills to young children. The virtual focus group will take place virtually and will take appropriately 60-90 minutes. You will have an additional opportunity to enter into a separate raffle for a $25 gift card.

Q2 Email Address

_____

Raffle

Q1 Thank you for completing the survey.

To enter the raffle for a $5 Amazon gift card, please provide your email address.

Q2 Email Address

_____

Appendix B: Pilot Test for Survey

Pilot Test

Q1 Please answer the following questions after taking the survey.

Q2 How difficult were the survey questions?

○ Extremely difficult (1)

○ Somewhat difficult (2)

○ Just right (3)

○ Easy (4)

○ Too easy (5)

Q3 Were there any specific questions that were confusing or that you were unable to answer? Please explain.

_____

Q4 Did you have any difficulties navigating the survey platform? If yes, please explain.

○ Yes (1) _____

○ No (2)

Q5 Do you think that all the questions listed are relevant to the research topic? If answering probably not or definitely not, please explain.

○ Definitely not (1) _____

○ Probably not (2) _____

○ Probably yes (3)

○ Definitely yes (4)

Q6 How long did it take you to complete the survey?

○ less than 5 minutes (1)

○ 5-10 minutes (2)

○ 10-15 minutes (3)

○ 15-20 minutes (4)

○ longer than 20 minutes (5)

Q7 Did you complete the survey?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Display This Question:

If Did you complete the survey? = No

Q8 If you didn't complete the survey, tell us why.

○ It was too long (1)

○ Survey was poorly designed (2)

○ I lost interest (3)

○ Other (please explain) (4) _____

Q9 Please state any recommendations or suggestions that can help us make this survey better.

_____

End of Block: Pilot Test

Appendix C: Recruitment Materials

Dear Early Childhood/Early Childhood Special Educator,

We are completing a research study to better understand how educators are trained to teach young children social and emotional skills and address challenging behaviors. You are invited to complete a survey on the training, intervention strategies and evidence-based practices that were included in your personnel preparation program to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors.

The survey should take you approximately 10 - 15 minutes to complete. You are being invited to participate in this UNLV research study because you are a public early childhood or early childhood special educator in the state of Nevada. At the end of the survey, you will have the opportunity to enter a raffle for an Amazon gift card.

We ask you to complete the survey within 2 weeks of receiving this email. Please click on the link below to access the survey.

Thank you in advance for participating in this UNLV research study!

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to Melissa Yarczower at beckm@unlv.nevada.edu or Dr. Jenna Weglarz-Ward at jenna.weglarz-ward@unlv.edu .

Thank you,

Melissa Yarczower, M.Ed
Doctoral Student
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Jenna Weglarz-Ward, Ph.D., Principal Investigator
Associate Professor of Special Education
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Follow this link to the Survey:
Survey Link

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
https://unlv.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cHIWu0he75joWbk

Appendix D: Consent for Survey

UNLV

INFORMED CONSENT
Department of Early Childhood, Multilingual, and Special Education

TITLE OF STUDY: Exploring Early Childhood/Early Childhood Special Education Personnel Preparation for Teaching Social Emotional Skills and Addressing Challenging Behaviors

INVESTIGATOR(S): Jenna M. Weglarz-Ward, PhD; Melissa Yarczower, M.Ed
For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Jenna Weglarz-Ward at (702)895-1112 or jenna.weglarz-ward@unlv.edu.

For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact **the UNLV Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects at 702-895-0020 or via email at IRB@unlv.edu.**

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this study is to explore pre-service early childhood and early childhood special education teachers' preparedness to teach young children social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors, and their perceptions of their teacher preparation program's effectiveness in adequately preparing them to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behavior.

Participants
You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit this criterion: Current early childhood/early childhood special education teacher in the state of Nevada who holds a current Nevada educator licensure and who has completed a personnel preparation program (bachelors, masters, licensure/certificate program) in early childhood and/or early childhood special education.

Procedures
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: complete an online survey with questions about what intervention strategies and evidence-based strategies that you were specifically trained on in your personnel preparation program as well as implemented in your personnel preparation program. You will also be asked questions about how prepared you felt after completing your personnel preparation program to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors. Finally, you will be asked about specific social emotional curricula you were trained on and/or implemented in your personnel preparation programs. There will be a series of questions on demographic information at the conclusion of the survey. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes of your time.

Benefits of Participation
There may not be direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, findings from this study will help understand personnel preparation early childhood/early childhood special education programs and what training is provided and how prepared EC/ECSE educators are to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors.

Risks of Participation
There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks such as discomfort in answering some questions. All responses are voluntary, and you may choose to skip questions or terminate the survey at any point.

Cost /Compensation
There will not be financial cost to you to participate in this study. Upon completion of the survey, all participants will have the option to enter a raffle for a $5 Amazon gift card. Participants will be entered into a raffle and have a chance of 1:25 to win a $5 dollar Amazon gift card.

Confidentiality
All information gathered in this study will be kept as confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be secured using a two-step verification process on the computer as well as a password protected computer. All information will be de-identified. After the storage time the information gathered will be deleted and destroyed. Any personal information (e.g., name, email) will be removed from data prior to analysis.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Participant Consent:
I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I have been able to ask questions about the research study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form is available by contacting Dr. Jenna Weglarz-Ward at jenna.weglarz-ward@unlv.edu. You can print or save a copy for your records.

By continuing with this survey, you are providing your consent.

Please answer the question on the survey indicating whether you give consent for participation in this web-based survey or if you do not.

If you do not wish to participate in this survey, simply close your browser window.

Appendix E: Focus Group Consent

UNLV

INFORMED CONSENT
Department of Early Childhood, Multilingual, and Special Education

TITLE OF STUDY: Exploring Early Childhood/Early Childhood Special Education Personnel Preparation for Teaching Social Emotional Skills and Addressing Challenging Behaviors

INVESTIGATOR(S): Jenna M. Weglarz-Ward, PhD; Melissa Beck Yarczower, M.Ed
For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Jenna Weglarz-Ward at (702)895-1112 or jenna.weglarz-ward@unlv.edu.

For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact **the UNLV Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects at 702-895-0020 or via email at IRB@unlv.edu.**

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this project is to explore pre-service early childhood and early childhood special education teachers' preparedness to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors and to understand what components and experiences are necessary in personnel preparation programs. Additionally, innovations and recommendations for personnel preparation programs will also be addressed.

Participants
You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit this criterion: Current early childhood/early childhood special education teacher in the state of Nevada who holds a current Nevada teaching licensure and who has completed a personnel preparation program (bachelors, masters, licensure/certificate program) in early childhood and/or early childhood special education.

Procedures
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: participate in a virtual focus group with 4-6 other early childhood/early childhood special education teachers located within the state of Nevada. In the focus group, components and experiences that are necessary in personnel preparation programs to adequately prepare educators to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors in early childhood/early childhood special education programs will be discussed. In addition, recommendations and innovations for personnel preparation programs will also be discussed. The facilitator will guide a discussion following a semi-structured protocol and encourage all participants to participate. You are not

required to answer any of the questions and you may leave the group therefore ending your participation. This activity will take approximately 60-90 minutes of your time. Focus groups will be recorded for transcription and analysis.

Benefits of Participation
There may not be direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, findings from this study will help understand personnel preparation early childhood/early childhood special education programs and what components, experienced and innovations are necessary for EC/ECSE educators to be prepared to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors.

Risks of Participation
There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks such as discomfort in answering some questions. All responses are voluntary, and you may choose to not respond to questions or terminate at any point.

Cost /Compensation
There will not be financial cost to you to participate in this study. Upon completion of the focus group, all participants will have the option to enter a raffle for a $10 gift card. Participants will be entered into a raffle and have a chance of 1:6 to win a $10 dollar Amazon gift card. To be eligible for this incentive, you must participate in at least 50% or 30 minutes of the focus group.

Confidentiality
All information gathered in this study will be kept as confidential as possible. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. You have the option of using a pseudonym during the virtual focus group if you chose to further protect your identify from other participants. Participants will be asked to respect the privacy of other focus group members by not disclosing any content discussed in the study; however, there is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality. All records will be secured in a two-step verification process on the computer as well as a password protected computer. All information will be de-identified. After the storage time, the information gathered will be deleted and destroyed.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Participant Consent:
I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I have been able to ask questions about the research study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form is available by contacting Dr. Jenna Weglarz-Ward at jenna.weglarz-ward@unlv.edu. You can print or save a copy for your records.

Please answer the question on the online form indicating whether you give consent for participation in this focus group or if you do not.
If you do not wish to participate in this survey, simply close your browser window.

Focus Group Consent and Demographic Survey

Q1 Thank you for volunteering for the virtual focus group. The purpose of this focus group is to understand what training, and experiences are necessary in personnel preparation programs and to explore the innovations needed to better prepare EC/ECSE teachers.

_____

Q2 Please read the consent form attached. Do you provide consent to be part of this focus group?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Q3 Please provide your name

_____

Q4 During the virtual focus group, would you like to use a pseudonym?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Q5 If yes, what name would you like to use? Please remember to change your Zoom name when entering the focus group session (click here for directions).

_____

Q6 What type of personnel preparation were in enrolled in? If attended more than one personnel preparation program, please refer to the LAST personnel preparation program attended.

○ Early Childhood (1)

○ Early Childhood Special Education (2)

○ Dual program (Early childhood/early childhood special education) (3)

Q7 What type of degree did you receive once you completed the licensure program?

○ Bachelors (1)

○ Masters (2)

○ Certificate/Licensure ONLY (3)

○ Other (4)

Q8 What institution did you attend?

○ University of Nevada, Las Vegas (1)

○ University of Nevada, Reno (2)

○ College of Southern Nevada (3)

○ Great Basin College (4)

○ Nevada State College (5)

○ Truckee Meadows Community College (6)

○ Western Nevada College (7)

○ Out of state/Other (8) _____

Q9 How many years have you worked in early childhood or early childhood special education (outside of experience in your student teaching training)?

○ 0 years (1)

○ 1-2 years (2)

○ 3-5 years (3)

○ 6-9 years (4)

○ 10 years or more (5)

Q10 What is your age?

○ 18-25 (1)

○ 25-30 (2)

○ 30-35 (3)

○ 35-40 (4)

○ 40-45 (5)

○ 45-50 (6)

○ 50-55 (7)

○ 55-60 (8)

○ 60 or older (9)

Q11 What type of program were you enrolled in?

○ Traditional Route to Licensure Program (1)

○ Alternative Route to Licensure (ex: fast track, paraprofessional program, Teach for America etc. (2)

○ Other (3) _____

Q12 What is your gender?

○ Man (1)

○ Woman (2)

○ Non-binary / third gender (3)

○ Other (4)

○ Prefer not to say (5)

Q13 What degree do you currently hold?

○ Bachelors (1)

○ Masters (2)

○ Other (3) _____

Q14 Have you received any additional training in social emotional strategies/behavioral strategies outside of your current or past personnel preparation program?

○ Yes. If yes, please specify what type of training (ex: workshops, coaching, webinars etc.) (1)

○ No (2)

Q15 What school district do you currently teach in?

○ Carson City School District (1)

○ Churchill School District (2)

○ Clark County School District (3)

○ Douglas School District (4)

○ Elko School District (5)

○ Esmeralda School District (6)

○ Humboldt School District (7)

○ Lander School District (8)

○ Lincoln School District (9)

○ Lyon School District (10)

○ Mineral School District (11)

○ Nye School District (12)

○ Pershing School District (13)

○ Storey County School District (14)

○ Washoe County School District (15)

○ White Pine County School District (16)

Q16 What program are you currently working in?

○ Early childhood general education (does not include children with disabilities) (1)

○ Early childhood inclusion (does include children with disabilities) (2)

○ Early childhood special education (self-contained - ALL/majority of children have disabilities) (3)

○ Early childhood autism program (4)

○ Other (5) _____

Q17 How did you complete your LAST personnel preparation program?

○ Online only (1)

○ Hybrid (some online and some in person) (2)

○ All in person (3)

End of Block: Default Question Block

Appendix G: Focus Group Technology Implementation Protocol

Procedures	Checklist
Log onto Zoom platform 15 minutes prior to focus group session	
Test video and audio of facilitator	
Test video and audio of moderator	
Move participants from waiting room to session	
Welcome Participants	
Start recording	
Start transcription	
Conduct focus group	
Conclude focus group	
Stop recording	
End Zoom session	

Appendix H: Initial Focus Group Email

Subject: Virtual Focus Group
Dear (Participant Name),

Thank you so much for volunteering for our virtual focus group to discuss ways to improve social emotional learning and address challenging behaviors in personnel preparation programs.

We will be emailing you 4 weeks prior to the start of the focus group to provide you with the date, time, zoom link and consent information for participation.

If you have any questions, please contact Melissa Yarczower at beckm@unlv.nevada.edu.

Thank you for your time and we look forward to your participation in the virtual focus groups.

Sincerely,
Lead Researcher and Assistant Researcher Name

Appendix I: Focus Group Reminder Emails

Subject: Virtual Focus Group Reminder: Insert Date/Time
Dear (Participant Name),

Thank you so much for volunteering for our virtual focus group to discuss ways to improve social emotional learning and address challenging behaviors in personnel preparation programs.

This is just a friendly reminder that your focus group is scheduled for (insert date and time). The zoom link is (insert zoom link). Please complete the following electronic consent form prior to coming to our virtual focus group (insert consent form via Qualtrics).

In preparation for the focus group discussion, the following questions will be discussed: (insert discussion questions)

If you have any questions, please contact Melissa Yarczower at beckm@unlv.nevada.edu.

Thank you for your time and we look forward to your participation in the virtual focus groups.

Sincerely,
Lead Researcher and Assistant Researcher Name

Appendix J: Focus Group Protocol

Welcome
Thank you for volunteering to be part of the focus group. We know your time is very valuable and we appreciate your willingness to participate in this discussion.

Introductions:
> a. Moderator: I am Melissa Yarczower. I will be the moderator today. I will help guide our discussion. I am the lead researcher for this project and this is part of my dissertation.
> b. Note Taker: I am (state name) I will be taking notes on our discussion today and managing all the technology for this discussion. We will not be including your name during our analysis of the data.
> c. Participants: Let's take a moment and introduce ourselves. Tell us: (a) your name (or pseudonym), (b) What should district you currently work in, (c) What your role is in early childhood/early childhood special education, and (d) if you completed a traditional preparation program or an untraditional preparation program (ARL, TFA, PPP etc.).

Purpose
We have invited you here today to discuss ways to better support early childhood and early childhood special education teachers to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors with young children. We will discuss your specific personnel preparation programs, how prepared you were to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors in the field and what innovations are needed to better prepare teachers. We need your input and want you to share your open and honest thoughts with us.

To help with our discussion today, here are a few ground rules.
> 1. We want you to do the talking and we would like everyone to participate.
> 2. There are no right or wrong answers. Everyone's thoughts, opinions and experiences are valid. Please speak up if you disagree or agree.
> 3. What is discussed in this room stays here in this room. We want everyone to feel comfortable sharing. Once we leave today, we ask that you respect other's experiences and opinions and keep our discussion confidential.
> 4. We will be audio recording the group. We want to capture everything you have to say. You will remain anonymous and we won't identify anyone by name in our report and analysis.
> 5. Please mute yourself if you are not speaking so we are able to hear the speaker and we can obtain an accurate audio recording
> 6. You can choose to keep your camera on or off depending on your level of comfort.

Now we will start recording the focus group session. *(Start recording session).*

Discussion Questions

> 1. Describe how your personnel preparation program prepared you to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behavior.

a. What coursework did you take that helped with your preparation?
b. What strategies/evidence-based practices did you learn about?
c. What were the most relevant training experiences such as student teaching, observations, case studies, discussions etc.?
d. In the survey, you indicated that most were trained in establishing positive relationships with children and that you were least trained in conducting an FBA/BIP. Could you describe this?
e. For other group members: Is this similar or different from what you experienced? What was similar and what was different?

Member Check:
From this discussion, you said that:
Your personnel preparation programs were _____.
You learned about _____.
Relevant training experiences included _____.
Is this accurate?

2. What innovations and/or improvements are needed to better prepare early childhood/early childhood special education teachers prior to entering the workforce to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors?

a. What kinds of training, experiences and observations would have helped you be better or more prepared to teach social emotional skills and to address challenging behaviors?
b. In the survey, you indicated that you were least prepared to teach planning transitions, teaching self-regulation skills and implementing BIPs. How could we improve that? What would happen if we improved this?
c. If you could design an ideal personnel preparation program, what would you include and why?
d. What advice would you give a new teacher entering the field to help them be successful in teaching social emotional skills and addressing challenging behaviors?

Member Check:
From this discussion, you said that:
Some innovations/improvements are_____.
_____ training, experiences and observations would have helped you be better prepared.
Your ideal personnel preparation program would include _____.
Is this accurate?

Exit Questions/Wrap Up:
Throughout our discussion, the main themes are _____, _____, _____.
Is there anything else you would like to say about how personnel preparation programs prepare early childhood and early childhood special education teachers to teach social emotional skills and address challenging behaviors?

Thank you for your participation today. We appreciate your honesty and willingness to share your thoughts, opinions and experiences. We will now be ending the recording of the session *(turn off recording).*

To make sure that we have accurately captured your responses and discussion today, would anyone be willing to volunteer to review a summary for us?

Once our study is complete, we will provide you with information about the results.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us at any point.

(End session by clicking the red end call button)

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EDUCATION

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV   Expected Fall 2023
   Doctoral Candidate in Special Education
   Dissertation Title: Exploring Early Childhood/Early Childhood Special Education Personnel
   Preparation for Teaching Social Emotional Skills and Addressing Challenging Behaviors
   Specialization: Early Childhood Special Education
   Advisor: Dr. Jenna Weglarz-Ward

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV   May 2013
   Masters of Education in Special Education/Early Childhood

Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove, PA   May 2011
   Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies/Early and Elementary Education
   Bachelor of Arts in Music

LICENSES & CREDENTIALS

VA Certification in Early and Elementary Education (Birth – 6th grade)	January 2018
VA Certification in Special Education (Birth – 3rd grade)	January 2018
DC Certification in Early and Elementary Education (Birth – 6th grade)	January 2017
DC Certification in Special Education (Birth – 2nd grade)	January 2017
NC Certification in Early and Elementary Education (Birth – 6th grade)	November 2014
NC Certification in Special Education (Birth – 2nd grade)	November 2014
NV Certification in Early and Elementary Education (Birth – 8th grade)	March 2013
NV Certification in Special Education (Birth – 3rd grade)	March 2013
PA Certification in Early and Elementary Education (Birth – 6th grade)	May 2011

WORK EXPERIENCE

Visiting Lecturer, University of Nevada**, Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV   July 2023 – Present
Department of Early Childhood, Multilingual & Special Education
   • Teach undergraduate and graduate courses for accelerated and alternate route to licensure
   programs
   • Work on team to do a 360-degree review of undergraduate and graduate syllabi and
   coursework
   • Develop new course syllabi in early childhood/early childhood special education
   (curriculum, classroom management and STEM)
   • Provide mentorship and coaching support to undergraduate students in alternate route to
   licensure programs
   • Support students in field work/practicum; provide written and verbal feedback

Part-Time Instructor, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, NV January 2021 – June 2023
Department of Early Childhood, Multilingual & Special Education
- Taught 16 synchronous, asynchronous, hybrid and in person graduate and undergraduate courses in traditional and modular formats
- Developed new STEM asynchronous online course; developed PowerPoint, course materials, discussion questions and course assignments

Clark County School District, Student Services Division August 2018 – June 2023
<u>*Early Childhood Special Education Inclusion Teacher*</u>: Parson Elementary School
- Model classroom for early childhood inclusion teachers according to ECERS-3 rating scale
- Case manager for 16 students with IEPs in an inclusive classroom
- Use Teaching Strategies GOLD and Creative Curriculum
- Mentor new special education teachers in conducting FBAs, implementing and writing Behavior Intervention Plans and Classroom Management
<u>*Early Childhood Special Education Instructional Interventionist*</u>
- Led Early Childhood department trainings in Creative Curriculum, Teaching Strategies GOLD, TACSEI (Technical Assistance Center for Social Emotional Intelligence)
- Coached and provided teachers and administrators recommendations for students with disabilities regarding placement decisions, behavior plans, functional communication, writing IEPs and special education compliance
- Led Professional Learning Communities for early childhood special education teachers and early childhood autism teachers
- Attended IEP meetings/resolution meetings for high-profile special education cases
- Worked with a variety of stakeholders in CCSD such as the director of early childhood, coordinators, administrators, related service personnel, compliance and monitoring and special education instructional facilitators

Alexandria City Public Schools, Alexandria, VA August 2017 - August 2018
<u>Early Childhood Special Education Teacher</u>
- Case manager and teacher for 12 students in a self-contained special education classroom for children with multiple disabilities
- Led Creative Curriculum and Teaching Strategies GOLD trainings and sessions for teachers and administrators
- Participated in Child Find responsibilities such as screenings, evaluations and observations
- Led play groups for early childhood students in the community

Educational Connections, Tutoring Company, Fairfax, VA September 2017 – May 2018
- Tutor for three students with disabilities in the DC Metro area in students' homes
- Collaborated with parents and teachers to address the needs of the students

Private Homeschool Teacher, Lorton, VA   September 2017 – May 2018
  - Private lead teacher for a 4th grader with Autism
  - Coordinated schedules, sessions and monthly meetings with other tutors, speech therapists, occupational therapists and psychologists
  - Wrote weekly lesson plans and monthly unit plans in math, science and social studies

District of Columbia, Public Schools, L.E. Moten Elementary School, Washington, D.C.
              August 2014 - August 2017
Special Education Resource Teacher: Prek, Kindergarten, 1st Grade. August 2015 - August 2017
  - Case manager for fifteen students with various disabilities in 3 different grades
  - Lesson planned and collaborated with general education teachers; 50% inclusion 50% pull-out services
  - Collected and analyzed data using Common Core State Standards and Teaching Strategies GOLD
  - Attended RTI meetings; supported and collected data for students going through the RTI process
Early Childhood Special Education Teacher   August 2014 - August 2015
  - Teacher in a self-contained special education classroom for children with multiple disabilities
  - Collaborated and analyzed data using Teaching Strategies GOLD and implemented Creative Curriculum
  - Collaborated with related service personnel, staff members and parents
  - Implemented and wrote behavior intervention plans and Functional Behavioral Assessments

Clark County School District, Las Vegas, NV   August 2013 – August 2014
Early Childhood Special Education Teacher
  - Teacher in a self-contained special education classroom for children with multiple disabilities
  - Collaborated and analyzed data using Teaching Strategies GOLD and implemented Creative Curriculum
  - Implemented and wrote behavior intervention plans and Functional Behavioral Assessments

Acelero Learning Head Start, Las Vegas, NV   August 2011 – July 2013
Preschool Teacher
  - Teacher in an inclusion preschool classroom for 28 children; 30% had documented disabilities
  - Collaborated and analyzed data using Teaching Strategies GOLD and implemented Creative Curriculum
  - Led teacher collaborative meetings and data meetings

Midd-West School District, McClure, PA   August 2010 - May 2011
Grade 2: Practicum and Student Teaching
  - Differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students
  - Utilized classroom environment to promote small and large group instruction

Lewisburg Early Childhood Center, Lewisburg, PA
August 2010- May 2011
Preschool Head Start Program

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Council for Exceptional Children: Teacher Education Division   May 2023
Conference Proposal Reviewer
  • Review, critique and score conference proposals for the Annual TED Conference

Council for Exceptional Children: DEC   February 2019 – February 2021
Conference Proposal Reviewer
  • Review, critique and score conference proposals for the Annual DEC Conference

Teach for America Application Reviewer   September 2016 – September 2022
  • Review applications for Teach for America on a rolling basis
  • Contribute robust notes that will help the final interviewers
  • Ensure great leaders are admitted in order to support TFA's mission and vision

Attendance Team Lead: District of Columbia Public Schools, L.E. Moten Elementary School,
Washington D.C.   August 2014 - August 2017
  • Met weekly to discuss schoolwide attendance initiatives and data regarding attendance
  • Met with parents and other stakeholders to help support attendance initiatives
  • Led the attendance team for grades prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade

Response to Intervention Team Lead: District of Columbia Public Schools, Washington D.C.
          August 2014 – August 2017
  • Team lead for prekindergarten, kindergarten and first grade
  • Organized intervention groups, led intervention groups and collected and analyzed data
  • Met with multidisciplinary team to discuss data

Diversity and Multicultural Education Committee: H. P Fitzgerald Elementary School, Las
Vegas, NV   August 2013 – June 2014
  • Attended bi-monthly meetings to collaborate on multicultural projects in the school
  • Facilitated events at school such as the MLK Parade and Spanish Heritage Festival

Rising Stars Collaboration Project: Teach for America   June 2012 - August 2012
  • Collaborated with Caesars Entertainment Internal Consulting Group to analyze Teach for
    America data

Program and District Strategy Committee: Teach for America   October 2011 – August 2012
  • Analyzed and problem solved how TFA can strengthen bonds with community partners

Transition Team Leader: Teach for America, Las Vegas, NV   June 2012 and June 2013
  • Provided support and guidance to ten incoming TFA 2012 and 2013 corps members
  • Facilitated group meetings on diversity, leadership and teaching

HONORS

Rodman Doctoral Scholarship (UNLV)   September 2022

UNLV Scholarship Grant for Doctoral Students   August 2018

PUBLICATIONS

Yarczower, M., Anang, C., & Weglarz-Ward, J. (in preparation). Considerations for the
    Prekindergarten to Kindergarten Transition.

Weglarz-Ward, J., Mitsch, M., Branch, J., Anang, C., & **Beck Yarczower, M**. (2022) Family
    Practices in Educator Licensure: A Review of State Requirements. (under consideration)

Yarczower, M., Weglarz-Ward, J., & Treadwell, C. (2020). Eliminating Exclusionary Practices
    in Early Childhood in Nevada. *Policy Issues in Nevada Education, 4,* 57-67.

PRESENTATIONS

Yarczower, M. (2023, October**).** *How Professionals are Prepared in Social, Emotional, and
    Behavioral Content (Qualitative Results).* Poster accepted to the Annual Conference for
    the Council for Exceptional Children: Teacher Education Division.

Yarczower, M, Anang, C, & Weglarz-Ward, J. (2023, November). *How Professionals are
    Prepared in Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Content.(Quantitative Results)* Poster
    accepted to the Annual Conference for the Council for Exceptional Children: Division for
    Early Childhood.

Yarczower, M., & Weglarz-Ward, J. (2022, September). *Pre-Service Teaching Preparation: A
    Review of the Literature.* Poster session presented at the Annual Conference for the Council
    for Exceptional Children: Division for Early Childhood.

Yarczower, M., & Weglarz-Ward, J. (2022, September). *Supporting Family Practices through
    Virtual Professional Development.* Poster session presented at the Annual Conference for
    the Council for Exceptional Children: Division for Early Childhood.

Anang, C., **Yarczower, M**, & Weglarz-Ward, J. (2022, September). Activity Based Intervention
    for Mathematics. Poster session presented at theAnnual Conference for the Council for
    Exceptional Children: Division for Early Childhood.

Weglarz-Ward, J., Mitsch, M., Branch, J., Anang, C., & **Yarczower, M**. (2022, February) *Family
    Practices in Educator Licensure: A Review of State Requirements.* Poster session presented
    at the Conference on Research Innovations in Early Intervention (CRIEI).

Yarczower, M., & Weglarz-Ward, J. (Submitted to Conference on Research Innovations in Early Intervention (CRIEI)). *Family Centered Practices & Beyond: An Innovative Approach to Professional Development.*

Anang, C., **Yarczower, M**., & Weglarz-Ward, J. (2021, September). *Supporting Families with Children with Disabilities in Urban Communities.* Presentation delivered at the Annual Conference for the Council for Exceptional Children: Division for Early Childhood.

Weglarz-Ward, J., Mitsch, M., Branch, J., Anang, C., & **Yarczower, M**. (2021, September*). Family Practices in Educator Licensure: A Review of State Requirements*. Poster session presented at the Annual Conference for the Council for Exceptional Children: Division for Early Childhood.

Yarczower, M., & Weglarz-Ward. (2021, January). *The Pre-kindergarten to Kindergarten Transition: A Review of the Literature.* Poster session presented at the Annual Conference for the Council for Exceptional Children: Division for Early Childhood.

Yarczower, M., & Weglarz-Ward, J. (2019, October). *Professional Development for Managing Challenging Behaviors.* Poster session presented at the Annual Conference for the Council for Exceptional Children: Division for Early Childhood Dallas, TX.

Yarczower, M. (2018, August). *Technical Assistance on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children (Series of 4 Workshop).* Presentation presented at the meeting for teachers in the Clark County School District, Las Vegas NV.

Yarczower, M. (2018, August). *Professional Learning Communities: Early Childhood Special Education Teacher and Early Childhood Autism Teachers.* Presentation presented at a meeting for teachers in the Clark County School District, Las Vegas, NV.

Yarczower, M. (2018, August). *Teaching Strategies GOLD and Data Collection in Early Childhood Special Education Classrooms.* Presentation presented at the meeting for teachers in the Clark County School District, Las Vegas, NV.

Yarczower, M. (2017, September). *Creative Curriculum and Teaching Strategies GOLD: A Presentation to New Teachers. P*resentation presented at the meeting for new teachers in Alexandria City Public School District, Alexandria, VA.

Yarczower, M. (2016, September). *What is Play? A Presentation to New Early Childhood Teachers*. Presentation presented at the meeting for new early childhood teachers in the District of Columbia Public Schools, Washington D.C.

UNIVERSITY TEACHING

Fieldwork Supervision: **ECE 299: Fieldwork for Infants/ Toddler (**UNLV)

Hybrid Undergraduate Course: **ECE 441 Play Theory in ECE** (UNLV)

Hybrid Undergraduate Course: **ECE 431: Literacy in Early Childhood** (UNLV)

Asynchronous Undergraduate Course: **ECE 250: Orientation to ECE** (UNLV)

In-Person Undergraduate Course: **ECE 251 Curriculum in Early Childhood Education** (UNLV)

Hybrid Graduate Course: **ECE 709: Curriculum in Early Childhood Education** (UNLV)

In-Person Undergraduate Course: **EDSP 474 Curriculum Development in ECSE** (UNLV)

Asynchronous Undergraduate Course: **ECE 463: STEM in Early Childhood Education** (UNLV)

Asynchronous Undergraduate Course: **ECE 463: STEM in Early Childhood Education** (UNLV)

- Developed new asynchronous online course; developed PowerPoints, course materials, discussion questions, and course assignments

In-Person Undergraduate Course: **ECE 431 Literacy in Early Childhood (**UNLV)

In-Person Undergraduate Course: **EDSP 474 Curriculum Development in ECSE** (UNLV)

In-Person Undergraduate Course: **EDSP 475 Strategies for Teaching ECSE** (UNLV)

Hybrid Undergraduate Course**: ECE 451 Methods in ECE: Social Studies** (UNLV)

In-Person Undergraduate Course: **ECE 251 Curriculum in Early Childhood Education** (UNLV)

In-Person Undergraduate Course: **ECE 431 Literacy in Early Childhood (**UNLV)

Asynchronous Undergraduate Course: **ECE 457 Families in Early Childhood (**UNLV)

Asynchronous Graduate Course: **ESP 773 Assessment for ECSE** (UNLV)

Synchronous Graduate Course: **ESP 775 Strategies for ECSE** (UNLV)

SUPERVISIVORY EXPERIENCE

Alternate Route to Licensure (ARL) Graduate Student Supervisor: University of Nevada, Las Vegas   June 2021 – July 2021

- Supervised six graduate ARL students in online student teaching
- Provided weekly oral and written feedback on instruction, classroom management and evidence-based practices
- Completed weekly reviews using student teaching rubric

Alternate Route to Licensure (ARL) Graduate Student Supervisor: University of Nevada, Las Vegas   June 2020 – July 2020

- Supervised four graduate ARL students in online student teaching
- Provided weekly oral and written feedback on instruction, classroom management and evidence-based practices
- Completed weekly reviews using student teaching rubric

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

- Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)   August 2018 – Present
- Division for Early Childhood (DEC)   August 2018 – Present
- Teacher Education Division (TED)   August 2021 – Present
- Council for Learning Disabilities (CLD)   August 2021 – Present

SERVICE

Guest Presenter at Jewish Nevada: Inclusionary Practices for Summer Camp Experiences

Division for Early Childhood Conference Proposal Reviewer: February 2019 – Present
- Review conference proposals for upcoming conference
- Use quantitative and qualitative rubrics to score conference proposals in the Professional Development strand

Professional Development Developer, Las Vegas, NV   August 2020 – May 2021
- Member of the Student Services Division team to develop new professional development workshops
- Created three online asynchronous professional development modules for early childhood special education teachers
- Developed an early childhood/early childhood special education overview for new teachers

DEC Recommended Practices Reviewer: Division for Early Childhood   July 2020
- Synthesized the DEC Recommended Practices
- Sorted DEC Recommended Practices in order to disseminate to the organization

RESEARCH

Research Assistant with Dr. Jenna Weglarz-Ward (UNLV)   August 2021 -October 2022
Family-Centered Practices & Beyond: An Innovative Approach to Professional Development
- Compile data from multiple sources
- Contribute to articles and presentations on findings
- Lead online community of practice
- Engage with professionals to conduct professional development via an online platform about family-centered practices

Research Assistant with Dr. Jenna Weglarz-Ward (UNLV), Dr. Mitsch (San Francisco State), and Dr. Branch (Murray State)   December 2021 December 2021
Family Practices in Educator Licensure: A Review of the States
- Collected data on state licensure requirements
- Supported data analysis of content analysis; contributed to articles and presentations on findings

Dissertation Project with Cyndy Anang (doctoral student at UNLV).   April 2022-August 2022
- Conduct procedural fidelity checks
- Code data collection
- Conduct social validity with children after the study is complete

Dissertation Project with Pricella Morris (doctoral student at UNLV)   May 2021- August 2021
- Reviewed research on dissertation project
- Submitted inclusion and exclusion criteria on systemic literature review
- Submitted inclusion and exclusion criteria for book study

Dissertation Project with Paula Kerchenski (doctoral student at UNLV) March 2021 – May 2021
- Completed fidelity checks for single-subject intervention study
- Completed interobserver agreement for single-subject intervention study