

AN INTRINSIC CASE STUDY EXAMINING THE SKYHAWKS SPORTS ACADEMY AND  
ITS IMPACT ON SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS OF YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

A Dissertation

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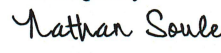


by

Jeremy Vincent

Major Professor: Michelle Van Beek, Ph.D

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This dissertation of Jeremy Vincent, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Educational Leadership and titled "An Intrinsic Case Study Examining the Skyhawks Sports Academy and its Impact on Social and Emotional Skills of Youth Participants," has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates given below, is now granted to submit final copies.

Major Professor	<div>DocuSigned by:  <small>28083B72CA8449C...</small></div> <hr/> Dr. Michelle VanBeek	Date <u>7/19/2024   06:58:10 MDT</u>
Committee Members	<div>DocuSigned by:  <small>B70AA6F6D4EE4FC...</small></div> <hr/> Dr. Matthew Lambert	Date <u>7/19/2024   08:47:48 PDT</u>
	<div>DocuSigned by:  <small>29466D88F12F412...</small></div> <hr/> Dr. Nathan Soule	Date <u>7/22/2024   11:57:18 PDT</u>
Doctoral Program Director	<div>DocuSigned by:  <small>18C587285A424D4...</small></div> <hr/> Dr. Heidi Curtis	Date <u>7/23/2024   12:53:06 MDT</u>
Discipline's College Dean	<div>DocuSigned by:  <small>1F6287564ACC4DC...</small></div> <hr/> Dr. LoriAnn Sanchez	Date <u>7/23/2024   13:51:29 MDT</u>



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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the impact of Skyhawks Sports Academy camps on youth participants' social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies using an intrinsic case study approach. The study utilizes both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data were gathered through SEL competency surveys administered on the first and fifth days of the camp. Qualitative data were collected via observations of coaches and semi-structured interviews with past and current Skyhawks coaches. A paired samples t-test analysis of the quantitative data revealed statistically significant changes in three SEL competencies: social awareness and self-management showed positive growth, while relationship skills declined. Observational data, scored using an observation instrument aligned with SEL competencies, were analyzed and themes were derived from semi-structured interviews to provide a deeper understanding of the quantitative results. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data highlighted the nuanced impact of the camp environment on SEL development. Observations and interview themes supported the survey findings, illustrating how interactions with peers and coaches influence SEL competencies. This study underscores the importance of SEL competencies for academic success and mental health, indicating that participation in Skyhawks Sports Academy camps can enhance these skills. Guided by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Development Theory, which emphasizes the proximal processes of youth interactions within their environment, this research offers valuable insights into SEL development in Positive Youth Development programs like the Skyhawks. The findings advocate for incorporating SEL-focused activities in extracurricular programs to promote holistic development in youth.

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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

A focus on social-emotional learning (SEL) is just starting to change the landscape of educational systems in today's schools and youth programs (Allbright et al., 2019; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Jackson, 2018; Kraft, 2019; West et al., 2016). SEL is a high priority as the United States has seen a deterioration in the mental health of youth as they suffer from hopelessness, depression, anxiety, and behavioral challenges, which have contributed to a severe increase in suicide rates (Perou et al., 2013; Whitney & Peterson, 2019; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020; Kalb et al., 2019; Curtin, 2020). Some causes for this deterioration in mental health are linked to increased digital and social media use, academic pressure from families, economic downturn within the household, and the global threat of climate change (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019; Eckersley & Dear, 2002; Golberstein et al., 2019; Hayes & Poland, 2018; Kasser & Ryan, 1996; Marks et al., 2021; Riehm et al., 2019; Rodway et al., 2016; Twenge et al., 2010). The mental health crisis of youth only worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic as they experienced even greater economic downturns within their families, the joblessness of one or more parents, and the death of loved ones, and spent large quantities of time in isolation (Hillis et al., 2021; Racine et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2021; Yard et al., 2021). As schools reopened in the 2021-2022 school year, educators still saw an increase in isolation as many students stayed in online/remote schooling. Of the students who attended in-person classes, educators saw a decrease in students' abilities to connect and build relationships with peers and adults (McGraw Hill, 2021).

As schools and districts begin to bring SEL-based practices to the forefront, these initiatives may help schools and districts focus on the mental health needs of students, teach

students how to recognize and manage challenging emotions, and discover ways to access affordable mental health care (Office of the Surgeon General, 2021). An increase in SEL skills, or competencies, such as self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills, and social awareness, will ultimately usher an emergence from the current crisis of deteriorating mental health in the nation's youth (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; McGraw Hill, 2021; Sande et al., 2019; Wallender et al., 2020; West et al., 2016). SEL competencies, when developed and nourished, can provide youth the ability to comprehend and manage emotions, develop and accomplish goals, convey empathy for others, maintain healthy relationships, and make positive life choices (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; West et al., 2016). SEL competencies are also strong predictors of adolescents' academic, economic, and physical development (Blackwell et al., 2007; Durlak et al., 2011; Moffitt et al., 2011; Sklad et al., 2012; West et al., 2016).

One avenue for students to obtain SEL skills within school settings is through extracurricular activities (Almlund et al., 2011; Cheng & Hitt, 2018; Darling et al., 2005; Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Kitchens & Gormley, 2018; Tyton Partners, 2021). Extracurricular activities are after-school sports or clubs in which students can participate in addition to the curricular offerings within a school. According to the 2021 U.S. Census Bureau, 44% of males and 34.6% of females ages 6 to 17 participated in sports and 37.3% of males and 27.3% of females participated in clubs. This data shows that many of the nation's youth are already participating in extracurricular activities, where they learn how to practice empathy, fairness, kindness, and social responsibility, and to demonstrate their strengths; all are key components of SEL competencies (Barcza-Renner et al., 2022; Henert et al., 2021; National Center for Chronic

Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2009).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The U.S. is experiencing the lowest workforce participation since 2001, when participation was at 67%. In August 2023, workforce participation stood at 62.8%, which is close to the pre-COVID-19 participation of 63.4% (Ferguson, 2023). In addition, there are 6.3 million unemployed workers in the U.S. but 8.8 million job openings (Ferguson, 2023). Workers are not returning to work for several reasons including concern over health and providing caretaking for others (Ayala & Lucy, 2022). As the K-12, college, and university education systems look to develop 21st-century skills, or soft skills, beyond academics to support the need for workforce development, the need for soft skills to prepare students for adult life and the workforce are at the forefront (Cheng & Hitt, 2018; LinkedIn, 2019; Finley, 2023; P21, n.d.). Employers are seeking employees equipped with skills such as creativity, persuasion, collaboration, adaptability, and time management to address issues or problems that arise that are not directly related to job duty requirements (Finley, 2023; LinkedIn, 2019). Ninety-two percent of experts found that soft skills are equal to or greater than hard skills for current and future employees, and 89% found that if a new hire loses employment it is due to a lack of soft skills (LinkedIn, 2019). As a result, to best prepare students to succeed in the workforce, education systems across the country are focusing on developing skills in critical thinking, communication, creativity, problem solving, perseverance, collaboration, information literacy, technology and digital literacy, media literacy, global awareness, self-direction, social competence, reading literacy, civic literacy, social responsibility, and innovation (Buckle, 2023; P21, n.d.).

In addition to extracurricular sports and club opportunities through schools, youth can participate in outside organizations that offer positive youth development (PYD) programs. PYD

programs such as 4-H, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and the YMCA provide youth opportunities to develop resilience, social skills with adults and peers, a stronger sense of self, and interest and involvement in school and community (Moore et al., 2021; Riciputi et al., 2020; Truskauskaitė-Kunevičienė et al., 2020; Youth.gov, n.d.; Yu & Deutsch, 2021). Moreover, athletic PYD programs are effective avenues in the development of SEL competencies that apply to school, home, and the community (Bean et al., 2018; Moore et al., 2021; Yu & Deutsch, 2021).

Participants in PYD programs learn SEL competence intentionally or unintentionally. One athletic PYD program that intentionally teaches SEL competencies—and the focus of this study—is Skyhawks Sports Academy. In 2022, Skyhawks Sports Academy worked with 10,672 youth ages 4 to 14 in Central and Eastern Washington, Northern Idaho, and Western Montana. Skyhawks Sports Academy works with students to develop skills for specific sports through drills and coaching. The high number of youth participating in Skyhawks Sports Academy offers a potential avenue to understand how youth develop SEL competencies within a PYD. This intrinsic case study will examine the SEL competency development and growth of youth through coaching practices during a Skyhawks Sports camp (Yin, 2009). This study will aim to solve two problems. The first problem is addressing how participation in a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp may help improve the mental health of youth in the U.S. The second problem is how Skyhawks Sports Academy can improve the development of SEL competencies through coaching practices. The Skyhawks organization may use this study to evaluate coaches' training and program curricula to address each of the five SEL competencies.

## **Purpose of the Study**

Developing SEL skills is essential to decreasing the high rates of depression and suicide among youth and improving the overall mental health of youth. However, a challenge for extracurricular and PYD programs working with youth is that these programs allow only a fraction of the time needed to fully implement their curriculum or structure (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Ross & Tolan, 2018; Shriver & Weissberg, 2020; Turan, 2021). The purpose of this intrinsic case study is to understand what social and emotional skills are developed as a result of extracurricular participation in a PYD program. With the amount of youth participating in extracurricular activities, a clear course of action for schools and districts to address the mental health crisis is to emphasize SEL competencies through extracurricular activities (Almlund et al., 2011; Cheng & Hitt, 2018; Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Kitchens & Gormley, 2018; Tyton Partners, 2021).

More specifically, this intrinsic case study will aim to understand what social and emotional skills are developed as a result of participation in Skyhawks Sports Academy camp. Athletic camps provide avenues for students to develop the necessary social and emotional skills required to achieve success in school and beyond (Durlak et al., 2011; Hahn et al., 2007; Mahoney et al., 2021). Currently, there are no studies centered on Skyhawks Sports Academy and its connection to SEL competency development. The data collected in this study will contribute to both the Skyhawks organization and to the overall field of PYD athletic programs and their impact on SEL competencies.

This intrinsic case study will address how SEL competencies are taught by Skyhawks coaches and if youth participants demonstrate growth in SEL competencies in a weeklong Skyhawks Sports Academy camp. A case study design will be used to collect both qualitative

and quantitative data to capture the phenomena of a specific PYD program: Skyhawks Sports Academy (Yin, 2009).

## **Background**

### ***History of SEL Education Initiatives***

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2001), the increased accountability within No Child Left Behind (NCLB) required states and districts to create annual high-stakes testing in grades 3-8 and students to meet proficiency of standards within 12 years, specifically in the standards of reading and mathematics. The focus of NCLB did not consider income status, race, ethnicity, disability, or English language proficiency of the students, who were to meet proficiency standards by their 12th year in public education (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). If schools did not meet the accountability benchmarks and make adequate yearly progress (AYP), they were subject to corrective action, including a restructuring of school leadership, initiatives, and programs to establish a pattern of students meeting state standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). High-stakes testing was a focal point for NCLB, with emphasis on students meeting the state standards and evidence produced in the form of a proficiency score on the state assessment (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). The other aspects of NCLB, choice, federal spending, and reading, directly correlate to the emphasis of high-stakes testing (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

Unfortunately for NCLB, in 2010 one-third of the nation's schools did not meet AYP and were deemed "failing" by the federal government according to the requirements (Center on Education Policy, 2010). One result of this focus on state and national testing standards was that underrepresented students struggled to demonstrate proficiency on the assessments, which were developed for higher-achieving students (Furuta et al., 2021; McNeil et al., 2008; Zhang &

Center on Education Policy, 2009).

Upon NCLB's expiration in 2007, districts had to apply for waivers for their failing schools until 2015, when senators Lamar Alexander and Patty Murray created a bipartisan agreement, the Every Child Achieves Act of 2015, to improve NCLB; the act was later named the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, 2015). This bill officially ended federal test-based accountability and gave states the authority to create their own assessments for accountability (U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, 2015). High-stakes testing did not end, but this bill did include some key requirements and permissions leading to a more balanced education system including academic achievement and social-emotional learning (U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, 2015). A key addition of this bill, not present in NCLB, was in the area of Title IV funding, specifically looking at the particular needs within a school community, and the implementation of high-quality programs and initiatives (U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, 2015). These two additions allowed districts to perform a needs assessment, including indicators of school climate and culture, of all stakeholders within a specific district or school, to gather information to inform district and school leaders on what programs would improve student safety, well-being, and academic achievement (U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, 2015). This addition also allowed districts and schools the ability to use stakeholder data to implement programs and initiatives fostering a positive school climate (U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, 2015). Furthermore, this new law allowed districts to shift from initiatives primarily focused on testing to non-tangible skills to meet personal and academic success (Galla et al., 2019).



The U.S. government also began a process of establishing SEL within public education. In 2015, federal legislation gave states financial control through the Every Student Succeeds Act to influence programs in support of social-emotional learning (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.; U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, 2015). States were required to measure elements of student and educator commitment, students' ability to access and complete advanced courses, post-secondary preparedness, safety, and school climate (Allbright et al., 2019).

In 2018, the House of Representatives put forth two bills specifically addressing SEL. H.R. 6120-SELF Act, directed the Department of Education to award grants to state or local educational agencies to mature, implement, and assess parent programs established to educate parents on social-emotional skills, and strategies to teach and reinforce these skills in their children (Strengthening and Enhancing Low-income and Poverty-stricken Families (SELF) Act of 2018, H.R. 6120, 115th Cong. (2018). The second bill in support of SEL is H.R. 6543. This bill included grants focused on SEL training in higher education teacher preparation programs (Aim Higher Act, 2018). In addition to these two bills, the House Appropriations Committee voted to support a \$260 million budget for SEL as part of the 2020 education funding bill (Aim Higher Act, 2018).

A key reason for the shift to SEL is the increase the U.S. has seen in deteriorating mental health in youth, with one in five children ages 3 to 17 reporting mental, emotional, behavioral, or developmental disorders, with only about half of the 7.7 million children with a treatable disorder receiving care (Perou et al., 2013; Whitney & Peterson, 2019). Those issues have only worsened in recent years, with a 40% increase from 2009 to 2019 of high school students reporting feelings of sadness or hopelessness (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,

2020). Youth psychiatric visits to emergency rooms for depression, anxiety, or behavioral challenges increased by 28% from 2011 to 2015 (Kalb et al., 2019), and suicide rates among youth and young adults ages 10 to 24 increased by 57% from 2007 to 2018 (Curtin, 2020). As a result, public school policy and initiatives shifted from focusing primarily on academic achievement to SEL (Aim Higher Act, 2018; Galla et al., 2019; SELF Act, 2018). An emphasis on SEL will help schools and districts better support the mental health needs of students, teach students and families how to recognize and manage challenging emotions, identify ways for families to access affordable mental health care, address systemic issues of inequity contributing to depreciating mental health, and collect relevant data to identify the mental health needs of students (Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, n.d.; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2021; Office of the Surgeon General, 2021).

Furthermore, with the passage of new legislation such as ESSA, schools have shifted to an intentional focus on what has been traditionally referred to as soft or non-cognitive skills; research shows that strong non-cognitive skills are imperative to not only success in academics but ultimately success in life (Duckworth & Gross, 2014; Dweck, 2017). Public schools are moving from teaching to the test first to initiatives focused on developing non-cognitive skills, which then have a positive ripple effect on academic achievement (West et al., 2016).

In recent years, the federal government has begun to stress the implementation of SEL-based programs and curricula in schools to equally balance the education of students in academics and in SEL competencies, focusing on teacher effect on non-cognitive skill development as well as on academic skill development (Jackson, 2018; Kraft, 2019).

### ***CASEL***

In the mid-1990s, schools were providing drug prevention, anti-violence, sex education, and ethical and civic education to address the non-academic needs of students (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). In 1995, SEL was introduced as a framework to assist with the alignment and synchronization of school programs and curricula in support of SEL competencies in adolescents (Allbright et al., 2019; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). This framework would help educators implement SEL competencies to support healthy social, academic, economic, and physical status in youth (Allbright et al., 2019).

A prominent resource in the SEL movement is the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), founded in 1994. According to CASEL, SEL is the means that allows individuals the ability to acquire and develop a healthy identity, manage emotions, set and achieve goals, show empathy, establish and maintain healthy relationships, and make appropriate decisions (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). The timeline in the Our History section on the CASEL website (n.d.) indicates that in the first 15 years of CASEL there were several key moments in establishing SEL within the education system:

- A council was formed to create and submit legislation in support of SEL.
- School-based SEL programs and curriculums were reviewed and published along with research on SEL's connection to achievement; implementation guides for SEL curriculum and programs were developed.
- Research was done linking academic success to a focus on SEL.
- CASEL published a guide for educators to better implement SEL strategies (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.).

CASEL chose to focus on five specific SEL competencies: the CASEL 5; these are self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.).

### **SEL Skepticism and Criticism**

Skepticism and criticism of the implementation of SEL curriculum and programs exist. One criticism states that SEL has been overemphasized and treated as a cure-all to remedy educational issues such as the achievement gap, the opportunity gap, low test scores, racism, and discipline practices, as well as behavior issues, depression, and anxiety in students (Shriver & Weissberg, 2020). A second criticism contends there is limited agreement on how to measure the impact and effectiveness of SEL programs and curricula (Hamilton & Schwartz, 2019; Shriver & Weissberg, 2020). A third key criticism of SEL is around equity. SEL advocates state that by implementing SEL programs and curriculum, all students, including underrepresented populations, will be positively impacted through SEL competencies (Atwell & Bridgeland, 2019). However, the majority of the research on SEL outcomes has been done by white researchers and directed at students of color, and thus does not represent equitable research (Starr, 2019).

Despite the criticism against SEL practices, as of 2022, 44 state governments have provided public school districts with specific guidance supporting SEL implementation and evidence-based SEL tools and programs, a 70% increase from 2020 (Yoder et al., 2020). In addition, 18 states explicitly reference social-emotional learning in their educational strategic plan (Dermody et al., 2018).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The purpose of a theoretical framework is to guide research from the development of research questions to the methods and analysis (Aubrey & Riley, 2019). To guide this study, the researcher used Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecology of human development as a theoretical framework. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory asserts that a child's development is shaped by multiple environmental systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In this intrinsic case study, the researcher used Bronfenbrenner's theory to examine how the environments of a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp and coach interaction affected a stage of a youth participant's development. The key systems in this study—the microsystem and mesosystem—examine how a coach's influence and interaction impacted a youth participant's SEL competencies.

According to Bronfenbrenner (2004), two propositions occur during development in which these systems influence the development of the individual. Proposition one is the development of the individual through interactions with people, objects, and symbols within the individual's immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). The result of these interactions is called a proximal process (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Bronfenbrenner, 2004). Proximal processes are activities under the tutelage of a person or persons with more knowledge of the activity than the developing individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 2004). In proposition two, the individual engages in opportunities or activities in which they have previously learned in proposition one without direct involvement from an individual with more knowledge of the activity (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Within both propositions, five systems are supporting the proximal process: microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). These systems interconnect with each other and surround and guide the individual through interactions with peers, family members, and situations in their immediate environment

(Bronfenbrenner, 2004).

Although all five layers are considered part of the proximal process and work together simultaneously, the mesosystem holds the key elements of the proximal process (Bronfenbrenner, 2004; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Merçon et al., 2020). The mesosystem considers two or more environments that an individual interacts with frequently (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Proximal processes within the mesosystem of a youth are enduring patterns within the immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Development in its early stages and throughout life, happens through increasingly complex interactions between an individual and the people, objects, and symbols around them. For these interactions to be effective, they need to happen regularly over long periods. These ongoing interactions are called proximal processes. Examples of proximal processes include playing with a young child, activities between children, learning new skills, sports, solving problems, caring for others in distress, doing complex tasks, and gaining new knowledge and skills. (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). This study uses Bronfenbrenner's framework and the concept of proximal processes to examine how young participants interact with their coaches during a sports camp. The focus is on how these interactions help the youth learn not only athletic skills but also social and emotional skills. These skills fall under the definition of proximal processes, as they are new skills developed through environmental interactions. The study explores how these interactions contribute to the development of social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies in the youth. (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Merçon et al., 2020).

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's proximal process of the ecological systems theory, research questions were created to both qualitatively and quantitatively identify the proximal

process between youth athletes and Skyhawks coaches. Research questions also aimed to identify the elements of a coach's training and knowledge of implementing SEL competencies within their coaching practices and the impact on youth participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2009). Accordingly, the following research questions shaped this study:

1. What SEL competencies are impacted in participants by day five of a Skyhawks camp?
2. How does the Skyhawks' program integrate SEL competencies into its coaching practices?
3. How does the Skyhawks coaches' training prepare coaches to teach SEL competencies to adolescents?

### **Description of Terms**

Understanding the connection between Bronfenbrenner's theoretical framework and the key elements of SEL and how they interact with each other, as well as knowledge of key research terms used within this study provide essential background information (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The following terms will guide the reader on the connection of development with the theoretical framework and provide clarity on the elements within the study.

**Chronosystem.** Layer five of development; looks at change over time within the individual and the individual's environment (Bronfenbrenner, 2004).

**Ecological.** The study of the growth of an active, living individual and their interactions with their direct and indirect environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

**Exosystem.** Layer three of development; contains one or more environments excluding developing individuals. However, environments within this layer do impact the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

**Macrosystem.** Layer four of development; is the cultural or subcultural content and consistencies existing within the first three layers of Bronfenbrenner's theoretical framework.

**Mesosystem.** Layer two of development; is the interrelation of two or more settings in which the developing individual dwells and participates (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

**Microsystem.** Layer one of development; is the physically present relationships and activities the developing individual experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

**Positive youth development (PYD).** PYD programs are club or athletic programs that seek to engage youth with school, community, peers, and family to reach a positive outcome for the youth (Moore et al., 2021; Riciputi et al., 2020; Yu & Deutsch, 2021). PYD programs provide individuals with opportunities to demonstrate and refine strengths, interact with peers, and grow leadership skills (Riciputi et al., 2020; Youth.gov, n.d.).

**Proximal process.** The core of the individual's development process as they interact bi-directionally with other individuals (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000).

**Relationship skills.** Relationship skills encompass the aptitude to cultivate and sustain healthy, supportive connections while adeptly maneuvering through diverse social environments and groups (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). This involves clear communication, active listening, cooperation, collaborative problem-solving, and constructive conflict resolution (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). Additionally, it includes navigating settings with varying social and cultural dynamics, demonstrating cultural competence, and providing leadership within groups (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). Relationship skills also entail resisting negative social influences, advocating for the rights of others, and seeking or offering support as required (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). Moreover, they



involve fostering positive relationships, practicing teamwork, and recognizing the importance of seeking help when needed (Sprenger, 2020).

**Responsible decision-making.** Responsible decision-making involves making thoughtful and compassionate choices regarding personal conduct and social interactions across diverse settings (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). This entails considering ethical standards, safety concerns, and the potential impacts of actions on personal, social, and collective welfare (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). It includes fostering curiosity and open-mindedness, analyzing information to make reasoned judgments, and identifying solutions to personal and social challenges (Sprenger, 2020). Additionally, responsible decision-making requires anticipating and evaluating the consequences of one's actions, recognizing the applicability of critical thinking skills beyond academic contexts, and reflecting on one's role in promoting well-being within personal, familial, and community spheres (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). Moreover, it involves assessing the personal, interpersonal, community, and institutional ramifications of decisions (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.).

**Self-awareness.** An individual's self-awareness involves recognizing emotions and beliefs across different situations and understanding how they influence behavior (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). This includes acknowledging strengths and limitations while maintaining confidence and direction. Self-awareness is demonstrated by pausing to reflect on one's emotions, whether positive or negative (Elias et al., 1997). Examples of self-awareness include integrating personal and social identities, identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets, and recognizing a full range of emotions (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). It also involves actions such as demonstrating honesty and

integrity, linking feelings with values and thoughts, and examining prejudices and biases (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). Additionally, self-awareness encompasses experiencing self-efficacy, embracing a growth mindset, and developing interests and a sense of purpose in life (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.).

**Self-management.** Self-management encompasses the skill set required to effectively regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors across various contexts while striving to attain both personal and collective objectives (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.; (Elias et al., 1997). This involves the ability to control emotions, employ stress management techniques, and maintain discipline and motivation (Elias et al., 1997). Additionally, self-management entails setting and working towards personal and shared goals, utilizing planning and organizational abilities, and demonstrating the courage to take initiative (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). Moreover, it involves exercising personal and collective agency, empowering individuals to make informed decisions and contribute meaningfully to their environments (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.).

**Skyhawks Sports Academy.** A positive youth development program providing skill-based sports camps for children ages 4 to 14 (Skyhawks Sports Academy, n.d.).

**Social awareness.** Social awareness involves the capacity to comprehend and empathize with the perspectives of individuals from diverse backgrounds and cultures (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). This includes feeling compassion, understanding historical and social norms, and recognizing available community resources and support systems (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). Socially

aware individuals take into account the viewpoints of others, acknowledge their strengths, and demonstrate empathy and compassion towards them (Sprenger, 2020). They also exhibit concern for others' feelings, express gratitude, and identify various social norms, including unjust ones (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). Moreover, they recognize the situational demands and opportunities present in different contexts and understand the influence of organizations and systems on behavior (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.).

**Social emotional learning.** Social emotional learning (SEL) are the non-cognitive, or soft skills, an individual comprehends and manages emotions, develops and accomplishes goals, feels and expresses empathy for others, begins and preserves healthy relationships, and makes good life choices (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). SEL plays a crucial role in both education and human development (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). It involves the acquisition and application of knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for developing healthy identities, managing emotions, and achieving personal and collective goals (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). SEL fosters empathy, supportive relationships, and responsible decision-making among individuals of all ages (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). By promoting authentic partnerships between schools, families, and communities, SEL enhances educational equity and excellence (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). This is achieved through nurturing trusting and collaborative relationships, implementing rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and continually evaluating outcomes (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). SEL has the potential to address various forms of inequity and empower individuals to contribute to the creation of

thriving schools and just communities, thereby promoting safety, health, and overall well-being (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.).

### **Significance of the Study**

According to data, approximately 20% of children aged 3 to 17 are experiencing mental, emotional, behavioral, or developmental disorders. Regrettably, half of the 7.7 million children diagnosed with a manageable disorder are receiving the necessary care. (Whitney & Peterson, 2019). Given the current issues of mental instability of youth and gaps in workforce needs, SEL curriculum and programs are necessary to help students develop SEL competencies to increase their mental health stability and prepare for the workforce (Almlund et al., 2011; Cheng & Hitt, 2018; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Finley, 2023; Jackson et al., 2020). Youth who are taught SEL through programs and curriculum show positive outcomes in soft skills in post-high school education and adulthood (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Mendez & Zamarro, 2018; Rodriguez & Lieber, 2020). Across the country, school districts increased funding allocated to SEL programs and curriculum by 45% from 2019 to 2021 (Tyton Partners, 2021). Fully implemented SEL practices will engage students in school, build academic resilience, and decrease behavioral challenges and depression (Ross & Tolan, 2018; Turan, 2021).

This study will add to the literature on how PYD athletic programs address not just athletic skills but also SEL competencies in participants. A gap exists within the literature, however, as public educational systems are focusing on implementing the SEL curriculum within the classroom, taught by educators using classroom practices and specific SEL curriculum (Jackson, 2018; Kraft, 2019). This study will examine if the non-school-related PYD program,

Skyhawks Sports Academy, is an effective way to implement SEL competencies and if its practices should be considered for use by schools.

Many areas of educational and PYD programs could benefit from this study. The first is that Skyhawks Sports Academy as an organization will benefit from this study in how their program addresses implementing practices impacting SEL competencies within their youth participants. Educational organizations will also benefit from this study as schools seek ways to develop SEL competencies outside of the classroom; this study will show how effective PYD programs can be in developing those competencies. Parents and guardians of youth will also benefit from this study as they determine ways to involve their children in programs that focus on the development of self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness.

### **Overview of Research Methods**

An intrinsic case study research design was chosen for this study due to the phenomenon within the Skyhawks Sports Academy PYD program and its potential influence on the context of SEL competencies (Schoch, 2019; Yin, 2009). The intrinsic case study method relies on multiple data sources for evidence since the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not always well established or defined (Yin, 2009). An intrinsic case study collects both qualitative and quantitative data due to the complexities of phenomena in understanding how one specific program uniquely addresses working with youth participants (Yin, 2009).

Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews with Skyhawks coaches. This data was then coded using Guba and Lincoln's (1981) four guidelines for developing categories within qualitative data. Coaches were asked questions centered on their knowledge of SEL competencies and how to implement coaching practices that impact the

development of SEL competencies within youth participants. Five coaches were interviewed for this portion of the study. Further qualitative data was gathered through observations of coaches working with youth participants during five, separate weeklong Skyhawks camps. The researcher observed a total of 15 coaches, with observations compiled to 11 hours and 40 minutes. The researcher used the Social Emotional Learning Program Quality Assessment (Appendix F) to collect observations and then used the provided scoring procedure to measure the overall effectiveness of Skyhawks coaches in implementing SEL practices during a camp.

Quantitative data was collected using the Washoe County School District Social Emotional Competency Assessment (Appendix H) short-form survey. Youth participants completed the survey on day one and again on day five of a weeklong Skyhawks Sports Academy camp. The researcher used a paired samples *t*-test to measure the overall growth of each participant within each of the five SEL competencies. The intrinsic case study design allows for both quantitative and qualitative data collection, providing an in-depth examination of Skyhawks Sports Academy and the inner workings of promoting SEL competencies (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Schoch, 2019; Yin, 2009).

Using the intrinsic case study design as a guide, the researcher used Bronfenbrenner's theoretical framework to understand the environmental interactions between the youth participants and their interactions with peers, coaches, and the development of their physical skills within a specific sport (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 2004). Furthermore, the researcher looked at how those layers of development interconnected with the development of one or more of the five SEL competencies (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.).

## **Conclusion**

SEL initiatives are taking a prominent role within educational systems due to the deterioration of the mental health of youth (Allbright et al., 2019; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020; Curtin, 2020; Jackson, 2018; Kalb et al., 2019; Kraft, 2019; Perou et al., 2013; West et al., 2016; Whitney & Peterson, 2019). States, districts, and schools are developing SEL initiatives and placing these over initiatives supporting more traditional academic strategies (Duckworth & Gross, 2014; Dweck, 2017; U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, 2015; Tyton Partners, 2021). One of the key facets within these SEL-based initiatives is extracurricular activities and their positive influence on the development of soft skills, which increase the abilities of youth to self-manage, demonstrate self-awareness and social awareness, make sound decisions, and develop strong relationships (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.; McGraw Hill, 2021; Sande et al., 2019; Wallender et al., 2020; West et al., 2016). Through Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory of human development, specifically the interaction of the individual with their exterior environments and influences, this intrinsic case study allowed the researcher to provide a unique assessment of Skyhawks Sports Academy and its impact on SEL competencies within youth participants.

## Chapter II: Review of Literature

### Introduction

Current research shows the implementation of SEL programs and curriculums results in youth demonstrating growth in the abilities to self-manage, exhibit self-awareness, display social awareness, make responsible decisions, and build and maintain healthy relationships (Aghatabay et al., 2023; Cipriano et al., 2023; Dunn, 2019; Huck et al., 2023). Education systems that implement SEL curriculum will see an increase in student well-being, including mental health, and in overall academic success (Cipriano et al., 2023).

In 2019, pre-COVID-19, districts across the country prioritized the areas of academic achievement on state assessments to increase college and/or career-ready graduates (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Conversely, in 2021, the leading areas of focus for districts were to improve students' mental well-being, promote social-emotional competence, narrow COVID-19 learning gaps, and improve equity and inclusion practices (Cipriano et al., 2023; Tyton Partners, 2021). Research shows soft skills including self-control, the ability to build lasting relationships, responsible decision-making, self-awareness, and social awareness make a more lasting impact on individuals (Cheng & Hitt, 2018; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Jackson et al., 2020). Unfortunately, most standardized tests do not measure soft skills; typically, soft skills are measured through surveys and questionnaires (Cheng & Hitt, 2018). Nonetheless, research shows the development of soft skills, referred to as social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies in this research, has a positive impact on academics, and on psychological, emotional, and physical well-being (Almlund et al., 2011; Cipriano et al., 2023; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Jackson et al., 2020). Furthermore, youth who develop in environments emphasizing SEL competencies attain higher rates of post-high school education and other positive outcomes in adulthood (Mendez & Zamarro, 2018; Rodriguez & Lieber,



2020).

How SEL competencies are developed within students is an important concept to understand for those who work directly with youth (Bartko & Eccles, 2003; Eccles & Barber, 2001). One-way SEL competencies are being developed is through after-school extracurricular activities provided through public school or outside-of-school PYD programs (Albright et al., 2019; Mahmud, 2020; Mahoney et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2022). PYD programs are clubs or athletic programs offered to students outside of the school day or school year (Moore et al., 2021; Riciputi et al., 2020). PYD programs work with youth to engage students in an activity resulting in a positive outcome for the youth (Moore et al., 2021; Riciputi et al., 2020; Yu & Deutsch, 2021). One PYD program offered to students is Skyhawks Sports Academy, which helps youth develop athletic skills through sports (Skyhawks Sports Academy, n.d.) This intrinsic case study will focus on measuring the effectiveness of the Skyhawks Sports Academy program and its impact on participants' SEL competencies through coaches and program format.

The following review of literature will focus on elements of social and emotional learning. In addition to the theoretical framework, the review of literature will highlight SEL curriculum characteristics and SEL program characteristics.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory was the theoretical framework used to guide this study. The focus of this current study is on non-cognitive skills; it was important to have a theoretical framework focused on child development. A theoretical framework is a blueprint the researcher uses to understand the problem, design the purpose of the study, discuss the significance of the study, and guide the analysis of the data (C. Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Bronfenbrenner's theory comprises five external systems surrounding the individual and with

which the individual interacts, resulting in the development of the individual (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 2004).

Bronfenbrenner's (2004) ecological systems theory centers on two propositions. In proposition one, the individual develops, early and throughout life, the complexities of regular reciprocal interactions with the biopsychological elements of people, objects, and symbols within the individual's immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). These interactions with the adjacent environment over time are called proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Bronfenbrenner, 2004). Instances of proximal processes are parent-child and child-child activities, group or individual play, reading, studying, learning new skills, formal involvement in athletics, and undertaking tasks that introduce a level of complexity in the guise of a person or persons with a higher level of knowledge of the activity than the individual participating (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 2004). According to Bronfenbrenner and Evans (2000), the proximal process is the engine of the individual's development process as they interact bidirectionally with other individuals. Furthermore, through the proximal process, results of the interactions are either competent or dysfunctional (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). An outcome of competence shows the individual with the ability to control and maintain behavior in one or more areas of development: intellectual, physical, motivational, socioemotional, or artistic (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). In dysfunction, the individual demonstrates difficulties in behavior over the horizon of interactions with peers, family members, and situations (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The outcome of competence versus dysfunction depends on several factors. Specifically, duration of the exposure within the interaction; frequency of the specific interaction; interruption of the interaction (is the interaction consistent or is it frequently interrupted); and timing of the responsiveness of the interaction (for example, when a baby cries,

how quickly the caregiver responds to the need). Lastly, the outcome of competence versus dysfunction can be influenced by the intensity or strength of the interaction between the developing individual and the peer, family member, or situation (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000).

Proposition two, secondary to proposition one, addresses the course of the proximal process affecting the development of the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 2004). The direction is impacted systematically as a mutual function between the developing individual and the immediate and distant environmental contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 2004; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). In proposition two, the individual is given opportunities and resources to engage in activities in which they have previously learned in proposition one, but they participate in the activity without direct involvement from a mentor, coach, or teacher (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). During proposition two, the developing individual begins to put into practice the learned responses developed in the early parts of the proximal process and the interactions with peers, family, and situations (Aubrey & Riley, 2019). However, it is important to note that there is never a graduation from one proposition to the next; these propositions continue to be influenced throughout the individual's lifespan (Aubrey & Riley, 2019).

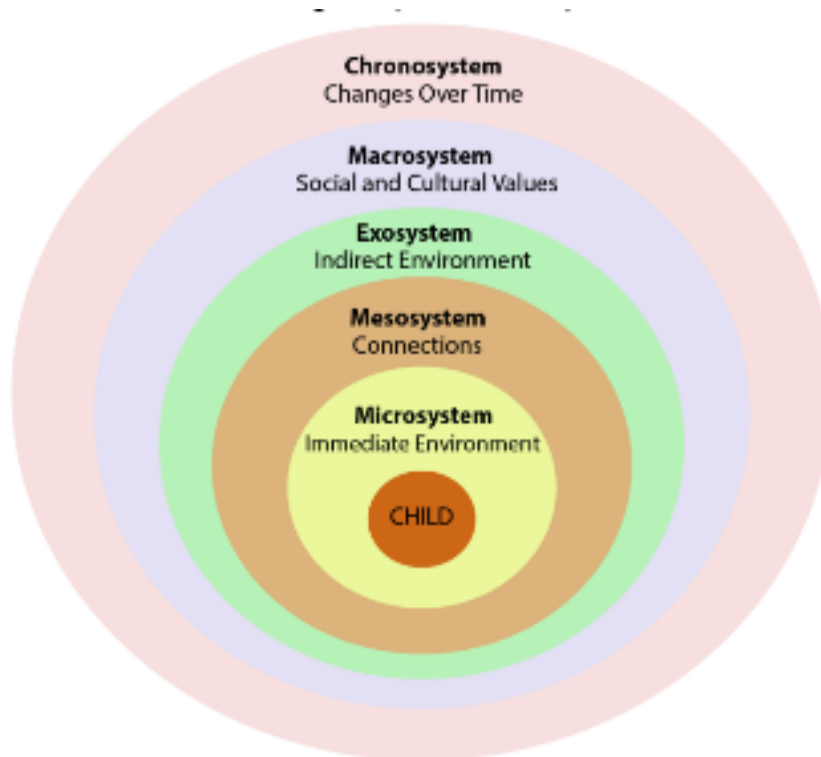
When the outcome of the proximal processes has a positive impact on the individual's academic abilities and social skills, there is a level of stability in the individual's environment, regardless of race or class (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). In these cases, proximal processes have a positive impact, not necessarily the environment alone (Bronfenbrenner, 2004).

Within Bronfenbrenner's (2004) ecological theory are five systems through which the proximal process is explained. These systems, Figure 1, surround and interact with the individual and with each other; they are the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and

chronosystem. These systems around the individual guide the individual through interactions with peers, family members, and situations the individual's complete environment. There is no endpoint and transition from one system to the next; the developmental process is fluid (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). These elements are represented in Figure 1 (The Psychology Notes Headquarters, 2019).

**Figure 1**

*Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory*



*Note.* This figure shows the child is at the center of the five systems of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems, with the microsystem being closest to the child and the chronosystem being the furthest (The Psychology Notes Headquarters, 2019). Reprinted from The Psychology Notes Headquarters, 2019, Retrieved January 24, 2021, from <https://www.psychologynoteshq.com/bronfenbrenner-ecological-theory/>. Copyright 2019. Used with permission, Appendix K.

The first system, the microsystem, encircles the developing child. The microsystem is the activities, social roles in various settings, and interpersonal connections the developing individual experiences face-to-face in their immediate environments (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). Examples of the microsystem are school, peer groups, family, and the workplace (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). Within the microsystem, proximal processes function to produce and sustain development within the individual. How the individual develops is based on the microsystem and its content and structure, whether positive or negative (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). Through the microsystem an individual begins to understand the rules around social behavior and interactions with peers and family; this two-way interaction between the individual and peers and family influences the individual, and the individual influences their peers and family as they all interact (Aubrey & Riley, 2019). The microsystem is the hub for learning social norms and the unwritten rules of relationships with those immediately around the developing individual (Aubrey & Riley, 2019).

The mesosystem is the part of development connecting two or more settings the individual inhabits (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). Examples are home and school, home and work, and work and school. (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). The mesosystem is essentially a system of microsystems, specifically, the quality and frequency of the interactions happening within the microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). In the mesosystem, the individual demonstrates a learned response and reaction to people or situations (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For example, if a parent has a negative attitude toward work, then there is a chance the developing individual will acquire a similar reaction to the work environment (Aubrey & Riley, 2019).

The third system encircling the developing individual is the exosystem. The exosystem is an extension of the mesosystem and involves the connection between two or more environments,

one of which does not contain the evolving individual but indirectly impacts the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). Examples of this are the parent/guardian's workplace, the school and the community, school and peer groups, family social networks, and neighborhood and greater community (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). The exosystem involves the indirect environments detailed in the mesosystem, such as the parent's work; however, the exosystem influences the development of the individual not by the parent's attitude toward their work but, for example, if a parent works long hours, then their work schedule might have a positive or negative influence on the developing child (Aubrey & Riley, 2019).

Continuing to move outward, the next system of development is the macrosystem. The macrosystem is the encompassing configuration of the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem of a specific culture or subculture; specifically, belief systems, customs, traditions, worldviews, lifestyles, opportunities, and resources embedded in each of the ecological development systems (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). The macrosystem delves into the deeper social and psychological factors of culture and subculture that influence the developing individual (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). Bronfenbrenner (1977) explained the macrosystem as the system functioning as the blueprint for how the individual responds or reacts similarly to a variety of people and situations based on the culture or subculture in which the individual was raised. Bronfenbrenner (1979) explained these responses and reactions were either concrete across multiple platforms or a new, non-learned response or reaction may occur or develop.

The outermost system is the chronosystem. This system comprises the role of time in human development (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). Time is not just an attribute but an element of the surrounding environment, both immediate and historical (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). The chronosystem encompasses change over time within the individual and within the individual's

environment (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). Change is inevitable and must factor into the development of the individual as relationships—direct or indirect, change; thus, relationships’ influence on the developing individual changes as well (Aubrey & Riley, 2019).

As each of these systems interacts with each other, the proximal process influences the development of the individual and ultimately how the individual reacts to their immediate and distant environment (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). Bronfenbrenner (2004) explains the interaction of the five systems within the proximal process as the occurrence of the genetic inheritance where genotypes transform into phenotypes. This is the manifestation of the learned responses and interactions developed within the individual’s DNA, or genotype, and how the response or reaction presents itself, or phenotype (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). The more a specific interaction occurs, the more each layer is activated and becomes scaffolded and complex, and the more the genotype is developed in the individual (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 1998). As an individual grows older and phenotypes are more developed, the proximal processes become more complex and develop within the individual (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 1998).

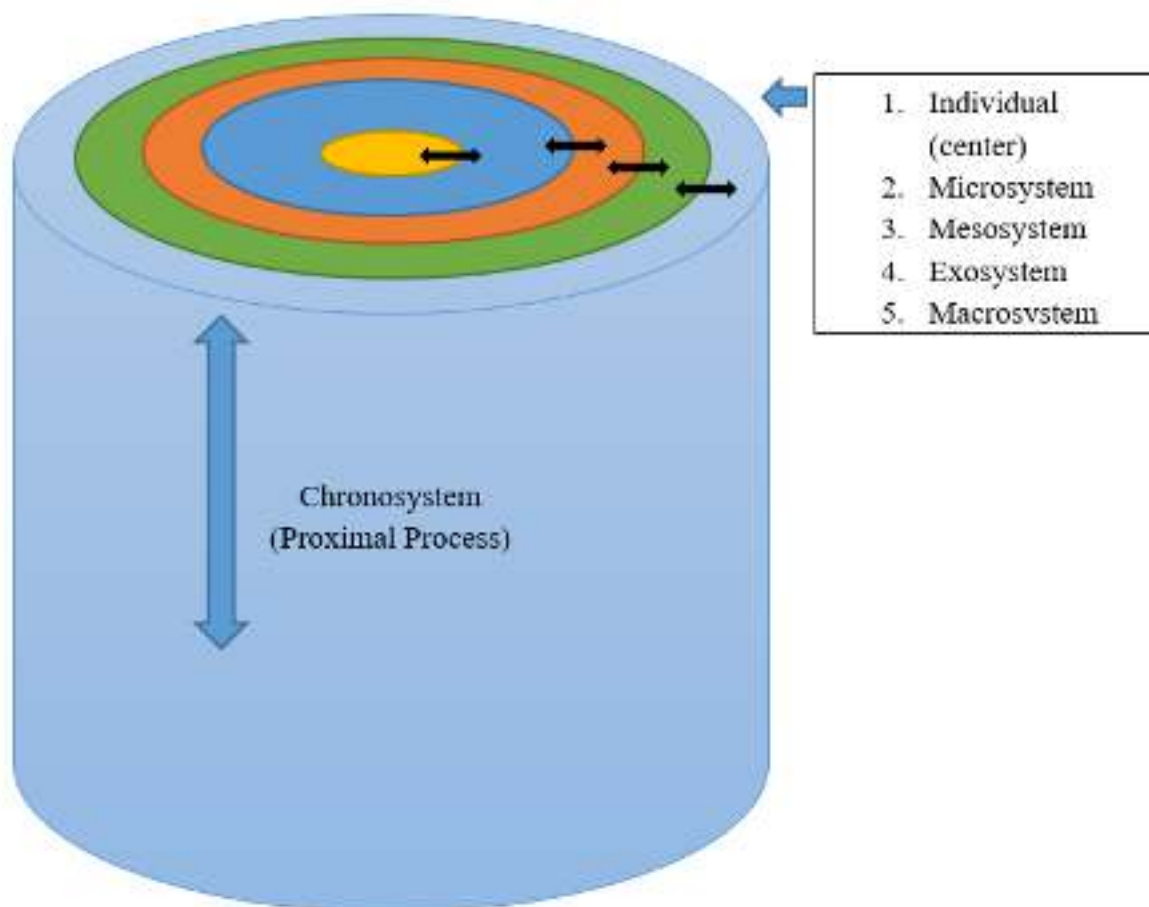
Bronfenbrenner’s theoretical framework is significant to this study as SEL competencies directly correlate with the systems of a youth’s development, specifically the microsystem. As a youth participates in a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp, their peers and coaches influence their microsystem. The result of SEL development immediately applies within the microsystem and also establishes a foundation for the other systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The SEL competencies a youth develops through the work of a Skyhawks coach teaching sports skills have the potential to transfer to the youth’s present or future relationships and life situations as the youth develops and ages (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). Bronfenbrenner’s framework will be used in this study to understand the mesosystem. Data will show how a coach’s interactions with a

youth participant during camp impact the potential growth of the youth's SEL competencies.

Figure 2 shows each of the five systems in development and illustrates the proximal process interaction with each system over time.

**Figure 2**

*Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Proximal Process*



*Note.* Similar to Figure 1, Figure 2 includes arrows to show the interaction between each layer and depth to convey how time influences the proximal process of the interaction of each layer.

Figure 2 created by the researcher.



## **Social-Emotional Learning**

The term social-emotional learning (SEL) first appeared in 1994 when several researchers, educators, and child advocates came together to address concerns about unsuccessful school systems and programs (Collaborative for Social Emotional Learning, n.d.). Social- emotional learning competencies are the noncognitive skills, or soft skills, and are how an individual comprehends and manages emotions, develops and accomplishes goals, feels and expresses empathy for others, begins and preserves healthy relationships, and makes positive life choices (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.; Jones et al., 2021). In addition, within the educational setting, improved SEL skills have a beneficial effect on school engagement and academic achievement and reduce unfavorable social behaviors (Almlund et al., 2011; Ross & Tolan, 2018). Districts across the country have rapidly increased SEL funding, from approximately \$530 million in 2019 to \$765 million in 2021, a 45% increase (Tyton Partners, 2021). This increase is directly connected to the challenges of COVID-19, racial injustice, and the negative impacts of social media (Rivas-Drake et al., 2021; Tyton Partners, 2021).

In the mid-1990s, schools were already providing multiple youth-improvement programs such as drug prevention, anti-violence, sex education, and ethical and civic education (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). SEL was introduced as a framework to assist with the alignment and synchronization of school programs and curricula in support of social-emotional learning competencies in adolescents (Allbright et al., 2019; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). This framework would guide educators to implement SEL competencies supporting healthy social, academic, economic, and physical status in youth (Allbright et al., 2019).

The timeline of SEL within education began with the founding of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) in 1994 followed by the first usable definition of SEL in 1997. From 2000 to 2010, a council was formed to push for legislation supporting SEL; school-based SEL programs and curriculums were reviewed and published; research on SEL's connection to achievement was done; SEL implementation guides became available to schools and districts; and the first federal act including SEL was introduced (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). During the next 10 years, SEL research linking academic success to a focus on SEL was conducted; CASEL published a guide to help educators better implement SEL strategies; a state initiative supporting the implementation of SEL practices in schools was launched; and SEL and CASEL became part of the national conversation as SEL became a significant factor in educational initiatives. Today, SEL is accepted by the education system as a researched-based best practice that improves the overall achievement of students in schools (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.).

In addition to organizations gaining prominence within the education system, the U.S. government began establishing SEL within public education. In 2015, federal legislation gave states financial control through the Every Student Succeeds Act to influence programs in support of social-emotional learning (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). States were required to measure elements of student and educator commitment, students' ability to access and complete advanced courses, post-secondary preparedness, safety, and school climate (Allbright et al., 2019).

In 2019, Congress's House Appropriations Committee voted to support a \$260 million budget for SEL as part of the 2020 education funding bill (House Committee of Appropriations,

2019). The \$260 million budget was divided into four areas: \$170 million for the Education Innovation and Research program for evidence-based grants and innovations in the education field centered on student social, emotional, and cognitive needs; \$25 million for the Supporting Effective Educator Development grant program to provide professional development to teachers and pathways into the teaching profession with an underpinning in child development, including SEL strategies; \$25 million for the School Safety National Activities program to ensure safer schools by allowing local educational agencies to hire more child development and mental health experts; and \$40 million for the Full-Service Community Schools to provide comprehensive services to communities and to increase evidence-based models addressing the wide-ranging needs of communities, families, and students (House Committee on Appropriations, 2019).

A second bill in support of SEL is H.R. 6543. This bill includes grants focused on SEL training in higher education teacher preparation programs (Aim Higher Act, 2018). In May 2019, Congress's House Appropriations Committee voted to support a \$260 million budget for SEL as part of the 2020 education funding bill (Aim Higher Act, 2018). With the passing of legislation, education systems were funded to implement SEL curricula and programs (Aim Higher Act, 2018).

For the 2021 fiscal year, the House Committee on Appropriations proposed a \$172 million budget for SEL initiatives (House Committee on Appropriations, 2020): \$110 million for grants within the Education Innovation and Research program for researched and tested innovations addressing social, emotional, and cognitive needs and \$22 million to continue the funding of Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) grants. SEED grants provide, among other things, skills for implementing SEL strategies (House Committee on Appropriations, 2020). In addition, \$10 million dollars was proposed as part of the School Safety

National Activities program to maintain the funding for grants to proliferate the number of mental health and child development specialists in schools (House Committee on Appropriations, 2020). Finally, \$30 million was proposed for Full-Service Community Schools to provide and augment ways to meet the comprehensive needs of children, families, and communities (House Committee on Appropriations, 2020).

Through ESSA, school districts were allowed to use Title I monies for school-wide nonacademic programs such as SEL-based interventions promoting student academic achievement, instructional practices, students' school involvement, and interventions for students with a holistic education (U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, 2015). According to ESSA, section 1111, all states must set aside 7% of Title I monies for programs impacting student outcomes, including school activities. Districts could use discipline, attendance, or student engagement (course completion) data to identify school improvement goals, incorporating SEL into the strategies to achieve those goals (S. Grant et al., 2017). Districts could also use ESSA Title II Part A, staff preparation and training, and monies to train and develop school staff in teaching SEL competencies to students. Finally, districts can use Title IV funds through ESSA to improve student enrichment, which can include both academic and nonacademic programs outside of the school day. Districts can cast a wide net with these funds to support SEL skills for students (S. Grant et al., 2017). Again, while not explicitly named in ESSA, SEL programs and curricula are positively supported and encouraged through national legislation and funding, thus improving student engagement, student access and completion of academic courses, student post-secondary readiness, and a safe and healthy school climate (Allbright et al., 2019; West et al., 2016).

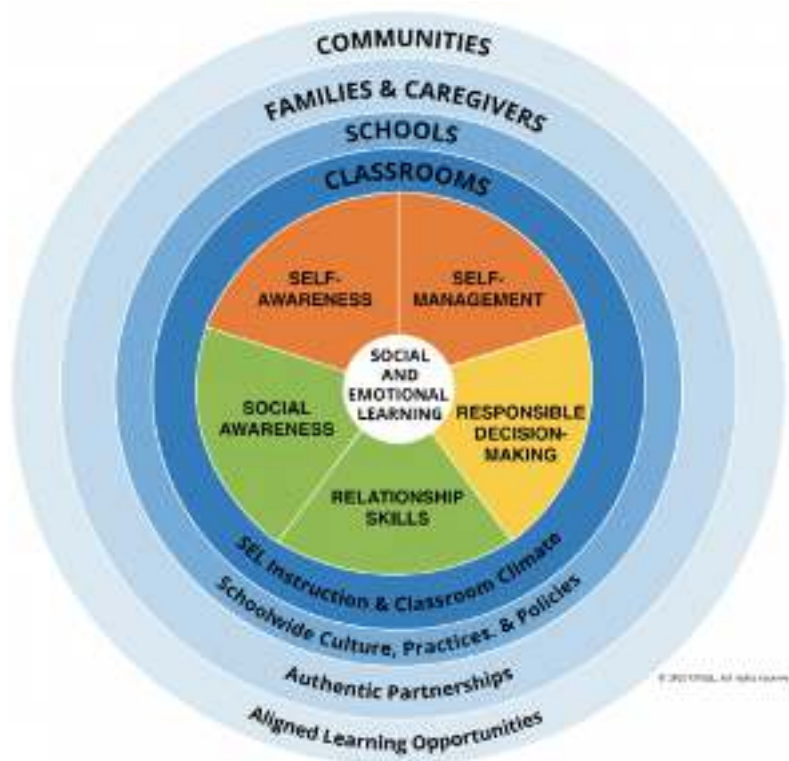
***Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning***

A prominent resource in the social-emotional learning movement has been the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). According to CASEL, social-emotional learning is how individuals acquire and put into practice the abilities to develop a healthy identity, manage emotions, set and achieve goals, show empathy, establish and maintain healthy relationships, and make appropriate decisions (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.).

CASEL (2022) has determined that the primary SEL competencies an individual needs to develop are self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These competencies are often referred to as the CASEL 5, Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

*CASEL Framework*



*Note.* This figure shows the CASEL 5 competencies that comprise SEL. The surrounding rings

identify the methods for teaching the five competencies. From *What Is Social and Emotional Learning?* by CASEL, 2023. (<https://schoolguide.casel.org/what-is-sel/what-is-sel/>). Used with permission, Appendix J.

The CASEL framework (2022) can be used to establish curriculum standards in Pre-K through 12th-grade schools to prepare students for academic and career success and civic and school engagement, and to improve their mental health (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). The CASEL framework is most effective when woven into classroom practices and curriculum, school culture, school practices and policies, and collaboration with families and the community (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.; Sande et al., 2019).

To implement SEL effectively, CASEL (2022) recommends using evidence-based programs and curricula to ensure a supportive learning environment and quality opportunities for students to consistently engage in SEL activities and learning. Furthermore, CASEL (2022) states that once SEL practices are integrated as a comprehensive school-wide initiative, students can engage in SEL through comprehensive instruction, relationships with peers and staff, and opportunities to live out their inclinations and worldviews. To be most effective, school-wide SEL must inhabit all facets of the school environment, people, and systems. This integrated approach fosters an environment for both adults and students to thrive in SEL practices and competencies (Jones et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2022). To address SEL needs in schools, districts have focused primarily on curriculum, measurement, and implementation in grades 6-12 and program implementation in grades K-5 (Tyton Partners, 2021).

Moreover, SEL is only effective if families are actively involved with the implementation process (Jones et al., 2021). Families occupy a student's microsystem and are a critical factor and

partner in a student's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Implementation of the CASEL 5 within the school system and the family promotes SEL practices in all aspects of the student's environment, resulting in more positive outcomes (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2022; Office of the Surgeon General, 2021).

### ***SEL Implementation***

Step one in the implementation of systemic SEL is to establish universal, evidence-based programs and instruction. This includes the engagement of all students and adults involved in the process (Albright et al., 2019; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Jagers et al., 2019; Mahoney et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2022). A developed theory of action to support SEL includes a foundation and support plan, the ability to strengthen adult SEL competencies and capacity, the promotion of SEL for students, and the establishment of a self-examining system to identify areas needing improvement (Albright et al., 2019; Mahoney et al., 2021; Turan, 2021). Multiple learning environments are also necessary for systemic SEL. Systems should have proximal settings with the capacity to influence and be influenced by the students (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). These proximal settings can be found in the classroom, in extracurricular program involvement, and in peer and adult relationships (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Mahmud, 2020; Mahoney et al., 2021). Systems should also have peripheral settings that extend beyond the individual's direct involvement but that may influence the proximal settings, such as a parent's work schedule (Albright et al., 2019; Bronfenbrenner, 2004; Jagers et al., 2019; Mahoney et al., 2021).

The establishment of SEL systems must also seek to develop a curriculum and programs in support of the CASEL transformative SEL competencies. Transformative SEL addresses the promotion of equity awareness among participants, focuses on justice-oriented citizenship, and discusses issues related to culture, identity, agency, belonging, and engagement (Jagers et al.,

2019; Rivas-Drake et al., 2021). Transformative SEL requires intentional analysis of the root causes of racial and economic inequities to foster healthier self-awareness and social awareness for participants (Jagers et al., 2019).

CASEL (n.d.) identified the following 10 indicators for school systems to implement to establish a functioning schoolwide SEL program:

- Explicit SEL instruction
- SEL integrated with academic instruction
- Youth voice and engagement
- Supportive school and classroom climates
- Focus on adult SEL competencies
- Supportive discipline
- A continuum of integrated supports
- Authentic family partnerships
- Aligned community partnerships
- Systems for continuous improvement

These 10 indicators are built within the school over time and not necessarily in the order listed above (Albright et al., 2019). According to CASEL (n.d.), implementation may take three to five years before a school fully demonstrates each of the indicators. Additional characteristics to the CASEL framework for a fully implemented school-wide SEL program are strategies to promote positive relationships; support of positive behavior; promotion of engagement; relationships; SEL competencies taught in elective courses and extracurricular activities; hiring, organizing, and training staff in SEL best practices; and measurement and data use (Albright et al., 2019; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2022). Overall, a successful SEL program



capitalizes on the strengths within the school—what the school is already good at or known for—to build SEL competencies within youth. Once on the implementation track, schools will find that an increase in student SEL competency practice is connected to positive school engagement and academic resilience, and to decreases in behavior challenges and depression (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Ross & Tolan, 2018; Turan, 2021).

### ***SEL Curriculum***

As many districts across the United States adopt specific SEL-based curriculums, research shows that the practice of using a multifaceted approach can be effective in implementing SEL (Kwiatkowski, 2019). A multifaceted approach incorporating videos, guest talks, and discussion allows the individual to see and hear examples of putting SEL practices in place and to apply those practices in their life (Kwiatkowski, 2019). By connecting with the lived experiences of others, an individual can apply more control over their emotions as they interact with their surroundings. Specifically, this approach develops an individual's ability to make responsible decisions, practice relationship skills, and demonstrate self-awareness (Kwiatkowski, 2019). Like other curricula and SEL approaches, these multifaceted approaches are focused on the microsystem and the mesosystem of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory. As districts work to address the social-emotional development needs of students, various curriculums can support their efforts.

The following are examples of some of the key SEL curriculums being used in school districts across the U.S.

#### **Strong Teens and Strong Kids Curriculum.**

The Strong Teens and Strong Kids curriculum is a Pre-K through 12th-grade SEL curriculum comprising 12 lessons designed to positively impact cognitive, affective, and social

functioning within youth participants during a short period of time (Merrell's Strong Kids, n.d.). Research on the Strong Teens and Strong Kids curriculum shows that, when implemented, participants demonstrate an increase in the resiliency of self-awareness when faced with natural challenges during the maturation process, specifically the prevention of internalizing symptomatology by promoting social and emotional wellness and coping (Caldarella et al., 2019; Neth et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2016). Overall research on outcomes of the Strong Teens and Strong Kids curriculum has shown an increase in SEL knowledge and application and a decrease in internalizing symptoms (Caldarella et al., 2019; Neth et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2016; Surya et al., 2023). In addition, studies examining the Strong Teens and Strong Kids curriculum have shown growth in personal understanding of SEL, a positive change in communication, and an increase in self-awareness (Caldarella et al., 2019; A. Green et al., 2021; Neth et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2016). The Strong Teens and Strong Kids curriculum aligns with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems framework by helping participants navigate through what the framework identifies as the microsystem of development. The system is where the individual interacts with their immediate environment including internalizing issues that arise during adolescence (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The Strong Teens and Strong Kids curriculum specifically addresses how youth find healthy ways to process internal issues (Caldarella et al., 2019; Neth et al., 2020; Surya et al., 2023).

### **SPARK Mentoring Program Curriculum.**

The SPARK Mentoring Program delivers content and activities to youth and young adults ages 5 to 22 to positively impact resiliency within academic success, SEL competencies, and the abilities to connect to school, family, and community. SPARK addresses these specific skills to reduce risks of drug use, bullying, suicide, depression, anxiety, and dropping out of high school

(SPARK for Schools, n.d.). Studies of the SPARK curriculum implemented at the elementary, middle, and high school levels indicated students showed an increase in the SEL competencies of responsible decision-making, communication, problem-solving, resiliency, awareness, self-awareness, and relationship skills (A. Green et al., 2021; A. Green et al., 2021; A. Green et al., 2022). With a focus on interacting within multiple environments and experiences, the SPARK curriculum addresses the development of SEL competencies within the microsystem layer of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems framework. Within the microsystem individuals develop through interactions within multiple environments; in SPARK, individuals interact with the program and the adults implementing the curriculum. Implementation of the SPARK curriculum allows individuals to develop the ability to communicate in two-way, active interactions with multiple surroundings, people, and situations. This, in turn, advances individuals into the mesosystem, the second system of Bronfenbrenner's theory, where the developing individual experiences multiple settings and situations in their environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Research indicates the SPARK curriculum would be sufficient to implement within schools to help students develop multiple SEL competencies (A. Green et al., 2021; A. Green et al., 2021; A. Green et al., 2022).

### **Second Step Curriculum.**

The Second Step curriculum empowers Pre-K through 8th-grade students through research-based programs that provide SEL curriculum in both classroom and out-of-school environments to increase participants' SEL competencies, addressing all of the CASEL 5 competencies (Second Step, n.d.; Thayer et al., 2019; Wallender et al., 2020). Studies showed that through the implementation of Second Step, the overall mental health of students improved (Low et al., 2019; Thayer et al., 2019; Wallender et al., 2020). In addition, several studies

implementing Second Step showed the curriculum helped students develop the ability to balance emotions by educating the individual on all five SEL competencies (Kemple et al., 2019; Low et al., 2019; Thayer et al., 2019; Wallender et al., 2020). Similar to other curricula for adolescents, Second Step addresses key components of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) microsystem, where the individual begins to experience interactions with the surrounding environment, and advances into the mesosystem as the individual begins to interact with multiple situations and people.

### **Positive Action Program.**

The Positive Action Program curriculum focuses on universal, school-based SEL competency development (Lewis et al., 2021). Studies that examined schools where the Positive Action Program was implemented showed that participants demonstrated an improvement in attitude toward self, others, and school (Stalker et al., 2018). Studies also showed that a majority of students receiving the Positive Action Program curriculum improved their skills in self-management, relationships, social awareness, and self-awareness (Lewis et al., 2021; Stalker et al., 2018). Overall this curriculum addresses a high level of development of the individual within the mesosystem as the individual interacts in multiple settings where these skills are developed (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

### **MOSAIC Curriculum.**

The MOSAIC curriculum (Mastering Our Skills and Inspiring Character) addresses the Social-Emotional Character Development (SECD) and how it develops positive virtues of forgiveness, gratitude, diligence, generosity, and future-mindedness. One study showed that the MOSAIC curriculum fostered social-emotional skills and character virtues where the development of a student's ability to identify and pursue a positive purpose was the focus (Hatchimonji et al., 2022). The results of this study showed the MOSAIC curriculum supports

the concept of pairing the development of character virtues with SEL skills to affect a greater positive impact on the individual (Hatchimonji et al., 2022). The virtues of forgiveness, gratitude, diligence, generosity, and future-mindedness were the results of this study and connected to CASEL's SEL competencies of self-awareness, responsible decision-making, self-management, relationship skills, and social awareness (Hatchimonji et al., 2022). Development in Bronfenbrenner's mesosystem is evident in the outcomes of this curriculum as the individual interacts with multiple environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

### ***SEL Afterschool Programs***

SEL afterschool programs are similar to the SEL curriculum, but are in a separate category as they do not necessarily use a hardcopy curriculum or a variety of curricula and activities to teach the five SEL competencies. Skyhawks Sports Academy is an athletic program used in this study to determine the level of SEL competencies taught by coaches and attained by participants.

Multiple programs use the Positive Youth Development (PYD) mindset to implement SEL competencies through a variety of avenues. PYD programs engage youth within their proximal process of school, community, peers, and family to achieve a positive outcome for an individual (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2019; Moore et al., 2021; Richmond et al., 2019; Riciputi et al., 2020; Yu & Deutsch, 2021). In general, PYD programs provide individuals with opportunities to demonstrate and refine strengths, interact with peers, and grow leadership skills (Malete et al., 2022; Richmond et al., 2019; Riciputi et al., 2020; Youth.gov, n.d.). Programs in the category of PYD focus on promoting positive assets, specifically the role of resilience in overcoming adversity within the individual's environment (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2019; Guagliano et al., 2019; Moore et al., 2021; Yu & Deutsch, 2021). PYD programs focus on, but

are not limited to, family support; positive adult interactions; positive peer groups; a strong sense of self and future ambitions; and interest and involvement in school and community activities (Youth.gov, n.d.). Examples of organizations using PYD programs include 4-H, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and the YMCA. Based on this definition, Skyhawks Sports Academy would also classify as a PYD program (Youth.gov, n.d.).

Athletic after-school programs focused on PYD are key initiatives in support of teaching SEL competencies to youth (Moore et al., 2021; Richmond et al., 2019; Truskauskaitė-Kunevičienė et al., 2020). Participants in athletic programs gain self-awareness by working toward one common goal with their peers and knowing their individual role and how that role impacts the overall team (Moore et al., 2021; Truskauskaitė-Kunevičienė et al., 2020). Athletic PYD programs also support the development of relationship skills by individuals connecting with peers and coaches (Moore et al., 2021; Truskauskaitė-Kunevičienė et al., 2020; Riciputi et al., 2020). Coaches connect with participants, especially given the longevity of most programs, and participants connect with coaches and peers over time as all involved experience successes and failures together (Guagliano et al., 2019; Moore et al., 2021; Yu & Deutsch, 2021). Athletic PYD programs are quintessential opportunities in developing transferable SEL skills connected to school, home, and the community (Bean et al., 2018; Maletė et al., 2022; Moore et al., 2021; Yu & Deutsch, 2021). Athletic programs are a prime example of Bronfenbrenner's proximal process, as an individual begins to experience various situations with their surrounding environments, providing a direct connection to development through the influence of these surroundings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Following are several PYD athletic programs and the specific areas of SEL they

positively impact in youth participants.

### **The InSideOut Initiative.**

The InSideOut Initiative (ISOI) is an evidence-based program that aligns school communities with purpose-based sports by connecting student-athletes with coaches to develop the CASEL 5 competencies within youth participants (InsideOut Initiative, n.d.). The coach-youth relationship is one of the most important aspects of delivering and teaching SEL competencies to youth (Hebard et al., 2021). According to one study by the InSideOut Initiative, adults demonstrated effectiveness as leaders of SEL competencies by demonstrating these skills within their practice (Hebard et al., 2021). In this study, when a coach or adult leader demonstrated self-reflection and self-awareness, youth participants increased their ability to demonstrate self-reflection and self-awareness (Hebard et al., 2021). The ISIO program directly aligns with CASEL's SEL competencies, specifically self-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills (Hebard et al., 2021). Youth participants in the ISOI showed development through proximal process (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) as they interacted with both coaches and peers through active participation in sports.

### **Learning in Fitness and Education through Sports.**

The Learning in Fitness and Education through Sports (LiFEsports) PYD program aims to positively impact social competence in youth ages 9 to 14 through involvement in sports, fitness, and educational activities that address the competency skills of self-control, effort, teamwork, and social responsibility during the course of a four-week summer camp (LiFEsports at The Ohio State University, n.d.). In addition, research shows an increase in the SEL competencies of self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and social awareness within its participants is also evident (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2021; Barcza-Renner et al.,

2022). One study showed verbal and physical reinforcements, expectations and praise, and tokens given to participants were key to the continued growth of SEL competencies within participants (Albright et al., 2019; Anderson-Butcher et al., 2021; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). Peer and coach support during physical activities also positively influenced SEL competency outcomes (Barcza-Renner et al., 2022). Within this study, results showed improvement in four of the five SEL competencies (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2021). As participants interacted and engaged with both adults and peers during involvement in *LiFEsports*, the individual developed proximal process (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

### **Camp Play-A-Lot (PAL).**

Camp Pal is a six-week PYD summer day camp focused on positive physical outcomes and demonstrating several psychosocial outcomes related to SEL (Henert et al., 2021). In one study, campers maintained high levels of self-perception within their social life and overall self-worth within their environment, and growth in personal and interpersonal development (Henert et al., 2021). These two outcomes fit within the SEL competencies of self-awareness and social awareness (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). By focusing on physical activity, this study showed that Camp PAL develops SEL competencies through providing participants the opportunity to experience feelings of competence in both personal and interpersonal skill areas (Henert et al., 2021). These skills, or SEL competencies, can then be transferred to other aspects of the participant's life, or what Bronfenbrenner (1979) calls proximal process, as the individual engages in new experiences at Camp PAL and interacts with peers and adults. In addition to Camp PAL, summer day camps promote the development of an individual's perceived competence, desire to explore, sense of responsibility, and ability to function within a team (Barcelone & Hartman, 2021; Henert et al., 2021).



### **Summer Day Camp.**

One study of summer day camps sought to understand the impact of a day camp on participants' self-perception and academic attitude through recreational and academic interventions (Barcelona & Hartman, 2021). This study showed participants finished camp with a higher level of academic enjoyment than before the camp and an increased level of connectedness with camp leaders and peers (Barcelona & Hartman, 2021). With an increased level of connectedness, campers developed the ability to demonstrate self-awareness, relationship skills, and social awareness as they navigated activities and curriculum and met challenges with guidance from camp leaders and consultation from peers (Barcelona & Hartman, 2021). A key aspect in the developmental stage of proximal process (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), is interaction with two or more environments or people. Participants in this day camp interacted within the environments of the camp by engaging in curriculum and recreational activities. In each of these environments, campers had to gain an awareness of their attitude to appropriately function within either environment (Barcelona & Hartman, 2021).

### **Conclusion**

This study focused on the Skyhawks Sports Academy, an afterschool PYD program, and how camps and coaches impacted the development of the five SEL competencies of participants. No research currently exists on the Skyhawks Sports Academy camps in regard to SEL development and the ability to promote SEL practices.

Four themes surfaced through the results of the literature review of the history of SEL and SEL initiatives developed in curriculum and programs: A shift in focus by public schools from competencies to SEL competencies; statewide initiatives promoting SEL; a stronger definition of SEL competencies; and the development of SEL curricula and afterschool

programs.

School districts are shifting from a focus on academics to a focus on non-cognitive, SEL competencies due to the downward trends in youth mental health (Duckworth & Gross, 2014; Dweck, 2017; Tyton Partners, 2021; West, 2016). Since COVID-19, an increasing number of districts are making necessary shifts, prioritizing SEL competency development over academic development (Aim Higher Act, 2018; SELF Act, 2018; Yoder et al., 2020).

States are developing and passing initiatives into laws to implement SEL curricula and programs in schools and districts (Aim Higher Act, 2018; SELF Act, 2018). In support of the shift in public education to mental health, new state laws are requiring districts to incorporate specific SEL curricula and programs into schools as part of standard expectations (Aim Higher Act, 2018; SELF Act, 2018; Yoder et al., 2020).

The leader in the SEL movement for the past 20-plus years is CASEL, which has developed five key competencies for curricula and programs to use throughout development and measurement (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). States and districts are utilizing the work of CASEL as they seek to increase the required presence of SEL opportunities in schools (Yoder et al., 2020).

SEL curriculum and SEL PYD afterschool programs are taking precedence as the means to develop SEL competencies in youth. To support this shift in public education, districts and schools are implementing SEL-based curricula and programs to support the learning of students (Yoder et al., 2020). SEL competencies are recognized as foundational skills every student must acquire to fully, and successfully, engage in academics.

### **Chapter III: Design and Methodology**

A potential solution for addressing mental health issues, workforce readiness, and learning gaps is to provide instruction to students that develops social-emotional learning skills in systemic ways (Durlak et al., 2011; Eccles & Barber, 2001; Jackson et al., 2020). One method to implement this learning is through extracurricular activities: school-based athletic programs or optional noncredit school clubs (Eccles et al., 1993; Eccles & Barber, 2001; H.B. 1660, 2020). Goal-driven, competitive school-based athletic and non-athletic programs are productive influences because they promote peer-to-peer interaction and allow adults to demonstrate an advanced level of SEL competencies (Darling et al., 2005; Eccles et al., 1993; Eccles & Barber, 2001).

Involvement in extracurricular activities predicts positive academic adjustments and psychological adjustments, improves educational status, and increases civic engagement (Bartko & Eccles, 2003; Blackwell et al., 2007; Eccles & Barber, 2001; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Kitchens, & Gormley, 2018). Ultimately, extracurricular activities have a positive influence on the development of adolescents and young adults (Bartko & Eccles, 2003; Eccles & Barber, 2001; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). Understanding the role of social-emotional learning and its connection to extracurricular activities is imperative for today's school and educational leaders. This intrinsic case study examined the effects of social-emotional learning through participation in Skyhawks Sports Academy.

A key connection between social-emotional learning and extracurricular activities is the development of the adolescent's brain, which is greatly influenced by the environment and contextual experiences (Bartko & Eccles, 2003; Blackwell et al., 2007; Durlak et al., 2011; Osher et al., 2017; Moffitt et al., 2011). To further understand this connection, this current study

utilized the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to understand the connection between an adolescent's development of SEL competencies within a PYD environment (Bartko & Eccles, 2003; Blackwell et al., 2007; Durlak et al., 2011; Osher et al., 2017; Moffitt et al., 2011). This framework focuses on the proximal process of an individual as they engage in regularly occurring activities over an extended period (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 1998). Like the activities in this study, there is a high level of scaffolding and reciprocity, and the activity becomes more complex and develops with the individual (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). During this period, other people—teachers, coaches, and mentors—are elemental to the developing person. These relationships can affect the developing individual positively or negatively (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Through extracurricular activities, the adolescent has the opportunity to foster decision-making skills, creativity, and exploration, and to begin understanding their role in society, all of which are heightened at this stage in brain development (Bartko & Eccles, 2003; Blackwell et al., 2007; Durlak et al., 2011; Eccles & Barber, 2001; Mahoney et al., 2003; Moffitt et al., 2011; Osher et al., 2017). Experiences offered through extracurricular activities create ecological transitions within the adolescent (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Moffitt et al., 2011). These transitions are when an individual's environmental contexts and interactions within those contexts change and shift as they progress through the nesting stages of development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Moffitt et al., 2011). Furthermore, these transitions evolve a framework in the individual to cope with developmental changes throughout life and demonstrate stronger learning goals, a more positive belief about the importance of effort, and fewer ability-based attributions, which ultimately lead to academic success for the adolescent as a student (Blackwell et al., 2007; Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Mahoney et al., 2003).

This framework was applied by the researcher in the analysis of data. The following section presents an overview of the research design, participants, data collection, and analytical methods used for this study and concludes with the limitations of the study.

### **Research Design**

This research used an intrinsic case study design as it was the most effective design due to the need for flexibility with multiple perspectives of coaches and youth participants and due to a focus on a singular PYD program: Skyhawks Sports Academy (Stake, 1995; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2009). In addition, the researcher used multiple data collection tools to collect both qualitative and quantitative data, such as an observation tool, a survey, and interviews. Finally, the researcher used interpretive strategies to capture the narrative of the intransigence of a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995). The intrinsic case study provides a deeper, richer unit of study and analysis demonstrating the connections between the case, Skyhawks Sports Academy, and the development of SEL competencies in its youth participants (Flyvbjerg, 2011). The researcher examined how SEL practices are embedded in the program to identify which social-emotional skills are developed as a result of participation in Skyhawks Sports Academy camp.

### **Research Questions**

This intrinsic case study applied the following questions to gather the necessary data for the researcher. The research questions were designed to elicit insights from coaches and youth participants to understand how a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp can influence SEL competencies within youth participants.

1. What SEL competencies are impacted in participants by day five of a Skyhawks camp?

2. How does the Skyhawks' program integrate SEL competencies into the coaching practices?
3. How does the Skyhawks coaches' training prepare coaches to teach SEL competencies to adolescents?

### **Participants and Setting**

This intrinsic case study was designed to understand how Skyhawks Sports Academy impacted SEL competencies development in youth participants through coaches' one-on-one and group instruction and interaction during camp. Skyhawks Sports Academy operates in over 20 states in the U.S. and in several other countries, with thousands of youth participating every year in addition to hundreds of coaches. The population for this study comprised coaches and youth athletes who participated in Skyhawks Sports Academy camps. This study included four Pacific Northwest sites for data collection. The camps occurred between July and August 2023. Three of the camps took place in public parks with large multipurpose fields, and one camp used an athletic field at a public school. The athletic focus in three of the camps was soccer, and one camp focused on golf. Camps ran for approximately six hours per day, Monday through Friday. In addition to summer camps, Skyhawks Sports Academy also offers year-round camps that run in the evenings for one to two hours, one day a week. The researcher used summer sports camps as the primary focus of this study.

The researcher used homogenous sampling for youth and coach participants. Participants represent subgroups of all youth athletes and coaches, but through homogeneous sampling, both sets of participants were studied due to their involvement within Skyhawks Sports Academy (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The researcher gained approval to conduct research at camps from the Northwest Regional Manager of Skyhawks Sports Academy (Appendix A). Parent or

guardian consent was obtained via email; the request was sent to parents and guardians the week before each camp by the Skyhawks Sports Academy Northwest Regional Manager (Appendix C). Parents and guardians who preferred that their youth opt out of the survey replied to the email with the youth's name, which was then forwarded to the researcher. On site, assent was gained as participant groups came to the researcher's table to complete the survey on day one of camp (Appendix B). To conduct coach interviews, the Northwest Regional Manager of Skyhawks Sports Academy provided a list of coach email addresses to the researcher. The researcher emailed coaches to request participation in an interview (Appendix D). Interested coaches replied to the email, and a day and time were scheduled to conduct an in-person interview between the coach and the researcher. The researcher gained consent from each coach before the interview was conducted (Appendix E). The researcher interviewed five coaches and sampled 64 youth participants.

Research question three asks how the training the coaches receive prepares them to teach SEL competencies. Training for Skyhawks coaches covers several areas. The first element for coaches to learn and apply is the 10 Keys to Successful Coaching, Table 1 (Skyhawks Sports Academy, 2021).

**Table 1***10 Keys to Successful Coaching*

Key	Description
Energy Level	A coach demonstrates a high energy level at all times.
Use Count Down	A coach uses the countdown method “5, 4, 3, 2, 1” as an attention-getter and transition strategy.
Show Don’t Tell	A coach demonstrates the activity or skill for the youth participants.
Use Common Sense	A coach does not conduct personal business during camps, uses appropriate language and conversation, and is on time.
Teaching	A coach uses teaching cues to engage participants including re-teaching, focusing on the positive, and encouraging participation during each drill, skill, or game.
Be Safe	A coach counts participants often, evaluates the surroundings, watches for strangers, and takes water breaks often.
No Lines	A coach keeps participants from lining up to avoid acting out and boredom.
Learn Names	A coach memorizes youth participants’ names to demonstrate a level of connection.
Be Organized	A coach prepares the daily schedule before camp starts.
Have Fun	A coach demonstrates a high level of engagement in all aspects of a camp.

*Note.* This table shows the 10 key coaching recommendations provided by the Skyhawks Sports Academy to its coaches (Skyhawks Sports Academy, 2021). Used with permission.



Skyhawks coaches are encouraged to apply these 10 keys throughout the day as they engage with participants. In addition to the 10 keys to successful coaching, coaches receive specific training on teaching life skills through sports (Skyhawks, 2021). This training includes teaching tips, daily themes, and daily agendas (Skyhawks, 2021).

Further training provided to Skyhawks coaches around teaching SEL competencies is found in Table 2, Teaching Tips for Coaches. These tips guide coaches as they prepare for each camp day with participants.

**Table 2***Teaching Tips for Coaches*

Tip	Description
Model It	A coach will explain and demonstrate every activity.
Expect It	A coach will have high expectations for participants.
Teach It	A coach will teach participants positive life skills. Specifically, respect, teamwork, inclusion, leadership, and sportsmanship.
Praise It	A coach will recognize and acknowledge participants who are demonstrating positive life skills.
Discuss It	A coach will discuss with all participants the demonstrated positive life skills.
Correct It	A coach will be respectful when correcting negative behaviors of participants.
Acknowledge It	A coach will acknowledge both appropriate and inappropriate behaviors.
Reinforce It	A coach will remind participants how it felt to be recognized for demonstrating a positive life skill.
Reward It	A coach will reward a participant who consistently demonstrates one or more of the positive life skills. A coach will find an opportunity to elevate the participant's role during the camp.

*Note.* This table shows nine teaching tips for Skyhawks coaches to use as they work daily with participants (Skyhawks Sports Academy, 2021). Used with permission.

***SEL Integration***

In addition to the tips from Table 2, Skyhawks coaches are provided a daily agenda to introduce and explain that day's SEL competency, referred to as the positive life skill. The agenda also includes teaching points, application, and review for each competency (Skyhawks,

2021). For a five-day camp, Skyhawk coaches will teach the SEL competencies of respect, teamwork, inclusion, leadership, and sportsmanship.

Youth participants begin camp by participating in a warm-up game with one or more coaches while a lead coach checks in participants as they arrive. Once all the participants are present at the camp, the lead coach gathers the participants to a central location to introduce the SEL competency of the day. The lead coach will define the SEL competency and ask for examples from the participants. After participants give examples, the lead coach will cover specific teaching points and practical applications centered on the SEL competency of the day (Skyhawks, 2021). At the conclusion of each day's camp, the lead coach will review the SEL competency of the day (Skyhawks, 2021).

Following the SEL competency lesson, the lead coach organizes students into smaller groups based on age. Once participants are in smaller groups by age, based on the number of coaches, they will begin a first skill-building activity. Youth participants will watch the coach model the skill and then practice that skill as the coach works one-on-one with participants to show them the proper technique. Participants in each of the four camps were ages 6 to 12.

### **Data Collection**

For this intrinsic case study, multiple instruments were used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data from coaches and youth participants involved in Skyhawks Sports Academy (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). The researcher administered the WCSD-SECA (Appendix I) at each of the four sites, with a total of 64 youth participants. The researcher also collected coach observation data at each of the four sites using the SEL PQA (Appendix G). In addition, a third set of data was collected through semi-structured interviews with five Skyhawks coaches. Interviews were conducted at various locations over the span of two months.

### ***Instrumentation***

**WCSD-SECA.** The Washoe County School District Social and Emotional Competency Assessment (WCSD-SECA) short form is an open-source instrument used to measure students' self-reported social and emotional competencies (Washoe County School District, 2018). The researcher used this tool to collect quantitative data from youth participants in four Skyhawks Sports Academy camps to understand how the youth were impacted around SEL competencies. The first day and the last day of one of the five-day sports camps, the researcher asked youth participant volunteers several descriptive questions: age, gender, ethnicity, and total number of Skyhawks camps they have attended. Next, participants were asked to respond to the 17 items on the WCSD-SECA short-form (Appendix I). Each item on the survey is a reflective statement about the individual completing the assessment around the SEL competencies. Participants provided their first name and last name's initial for the researcher to match day one responses to day five responses.

***Credibility.*** This instrument was developed collaboratively by WCSD-SECA, CASEL, and the University of Illinois Chicago. This instrument works well across subpopulations of students, and the items are researched to best demonstrate SEL competencies (Crowder et al., 2019). The WCSD-SECA short form was validated using an Item Response Theory (IRT) approach. The IRT is used to explain the relationship of unobserved attributes to observed outcomes (Embretson & Reise, 2013). The trustworthiness of the WCSD-SECA short form was evident in the 17 items assessed in a broad range of ability levels, with limited ceiling or floor effects; and a small number of items demonstrated differential item functioning by youth grade, gender, and ethnicity (Washoe County School District, 2018). The researcher had permission to use this instrument (Appendix K). The results of the validation of the WCSD-SECA were based

on the 40-item version of the SECA administered to 2,140 5<sup>th</sup>-, 1,842 6<sup>th</sup>-, 1,829 8<sup>th</sup>-, and 1,433 11<sup>th</sup>-grade students during the 2016 school year in Nevada's Washoe County School District (Crowder et al., 2019). Data was then analyzed with the Rasch model (Crowder et al., 2019). The Rasch model provided psychometric properties for the SECA, supplying a high or low level among the dimensions within each of the social-emotional competencies and how well each item targeted the student population (Crowder et al., 2019).

**SEL PQA.** The researcher conducted field observations to collect qualitative data about coaches' practices when working with youth participants. The researcher used the Social & Emotional Learning Program Quality Assessment (SEL PQA) observation tool (Appendix H). The SEL PQA Table 3, is an observational rating tool assessing the quality of coaches' instructional practices related to youth participants' SEL competency development and growth (Centre for Youth Impact, 2022).

**Table 3***SEL PQA*

Domain	Scale	Number of Items
Safe Environment	Creating Safe Spaces	6
Supportive Environment	Emotion Coaching	4
	Scaffolding Learning	4
	Fostering Growth Mindset	3
Interactive Environment	Fostering Teamwork	3
	Promoting Resp. and Leadership	5
	Cultivating Empathy	4
Engaging Environment	Furthering Learning	5
	Supporting Youth Interests	3
	Supporting Plans and Goals	4
		Total Items: 41

*Note.* This table shows the domains, scales, and the number of items (observation statements) of the SEL PQA.

**Validation.** The SEL PQA is a previously validated tool, and the researcher has permission to use the instrument in this research (Appendix I). Before conducting research using the SEL PQA for this study, the researcher piloted this instrument by observing a coach providing two hours of instruction at a non-Skyhawks baseball practice. The researcher piloted

this instrument to record observation notes as they happened in real-time during the practice, followed by categorizing the observation notes into the SEL PQA instrument. By piloting, the researcher was able to understand how to best collect data using this instrument. The researcher found that standing near the coach as the coach worked with one or a group of youth participants allowed the researcher to hear what the coach was saying as they instructed the youth.

The SEL PQA retains high levels of inter-rater dependability of item scores (i.e., 80% or higher) and relatively high levels of internal consistency among items corresponding to each of the SEL PQA scales, which range from 0.65 to 0.87 and averaged 0.76 (Centre for Youth Impact, 2022).

**Semi-structured Interviews.** The researcher conducted interviews with five Skyhawks coaches. Interviews took place in a public-school library, a tea shop, a coffee shop, and a restaurant. The seven interview questions, Appendix F, addressed the training received and the implementation of the five SEL competencies within the coach's practice.

**Credibility.** In order to create credible questions, the researcher used the questions in Appendix F to interview a current Skyhawks coach, not included as one of the five interviewed coaches for this study. The purpose of the interview was to determine whether the questions gathered clear information about SEL knowledge and implementation in coaching practices.

### **Quantitative Data Collection**

Quantitative data was collected in a pre- and post-survey format. Youth participants completed the pre-survey on day one and the post-survey on day five of the camp. For each site, the researcher set up a table away from the activities and next to where students kept personal belongings. The table was supplied with clipboards, pens, and hard copies of the WCSD-SECA. Youth participants completed the hardcopy survey by self-reporting one of four scores for each

of the 17 items on the survey: 1, Very Difficult; 2, Difficult; 3, Easy; and 4, Very Easy. The researcher used emojis in place of numbers for the ratings on the survey but converted them back into numbers 1 to 4 when inputting the data into SPSS. The researcher collected responses and transferred them into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet at the conclusion of day one and again at the conclusion of day five. The researcher did not input participants' names into Excel; rather, each participant was given a pseudonym.

At site one, 57 youth participants and seven coaches focused on soccer skills. Twenty-two youth participants completed the WCSD-SECA on both day one and day five. On day one, participants were sent to the researcher by group, during the first activity with their assigned coach. The lead coach sent each group one at a time to the survey table, for a total of six groups. On day five, the lead coach repeated the same process for participants to complete the survey.

At site two, 23 youth participants and two coaches focused on developing soccer skills. On day one, after the warm-up game, the lead coach organized participants into two groups. Once groups were working with their assigned coach, that coach began sending four participants at a time to the researcher's table to complete the WCSD-SECA. The lead coach repeated this same process on day five. A total of 13 youth participants completed day one and day five of the assessment.

Site three, a soccer camp, had 30 youth participants and three coaches. The lead coach at this camp was also the lead coach at site one. Participants completed the WCSD-SECA on day one and day five during the first small group activity and were sent to the researcher in groups of four to five. Fifteen youth participants completed day one and day five of the WCSD-SECA assessment.



Site four centered on developing the golf skills of participants. This camp had 31 youth participants and three coaches. On day one, the lead coach sent four students at a time to the researcher's table during the first activity in their small group. On day five, the lead coach sent two to four students at a time to the researcher to complete the WCSD-SECA during the warm-up game. Fourteen youth participants completed day one and day five of the WCSD-SECA assessment.

### **Qualitative Data Collection**

**SEL PQA.** The first set of qualitative data that was collected was through observing coaches at each of the four sites to complete the SEL PQA observation instrument. The researcher collected data by recording observations of coaches interacting with youth participants at the four sites in this study. The researcher spent a total of three hours and 30 minutes at site one; four hours at site two; two hours and 30 minutes at site three; and one hour and 40 minutes at site four. A total of 11 hours and 40 minutes were spent recording observations at the four sites.

When all observations were completed, the researcher recorded observation notes onto the SEL PQA in the appropriate domain. Each of the 41 items on the SEL PQA was scored on a one-, three-, and five-point scale. After each item within a domain was scored, the researcher scored the SEL PAQ. The score was calculated by finding the mean of the response values for items within each scale. Domain mean scores ranged from one to five. Each domain represented one variable. Observations were recorded by hand and then transferred into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

**Semi-structured interviews.** Additional qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with Skyhawks coaches. To understand how Skyhawks coaches' practices

affected SEL competencies in youth participants, the researcher collected qualitative data on five Skyhawks coaches using a semi-structured interview tool. The researcher recorded and transcribed every interview on Microsoft Word using his laptop.

### **Analytical Methods**

As an intrinsic case study, the researcher used multiple instruments, qualitative and quantitative, to collect and combine data to create a detailed narrative based on the results from each instrument (Flyvbjerg, 2011). The use of multiple instruments requires both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods (Yin, 2009).

### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

*WCSD-SECA.* To answer the first research question, the researcher collected quantitative data from 64 youth participants using the WCSD-SECA short-form instrument. The researcher took each set of responses from each participant, per item, and input them into SPSS. Next, the researcher found the mean score for each participant for each of the eight domains. Because there were 64 pairs of mean data across eight domains, the researcher conducted a paired-samples t-test (Field, 2013). A paired samples t-test compares the mean difference between the two surveys completed by each youth participant (Field, 2013). Descriptive data for each youth participant was used to draw correlations between responses from the surveys and individual youth participants (Hoy & Adams, 2016).

### **Qualitative Analytical Methods**

The researcher used two qualitative instruments to analyze data related to the coaches within this study. The first instrument was an analytical coding method used for semi-structured interviews. The second instrument, SEL PQA, was used to analyze the coaches as they worked with youth participants at each of the four camps used in this study.

**SEL PQA.** Each item on the SEL PQA is scored with one of three observable coach practices: 1 indicated little or no evidence; 3 indicated some evidence; and 5 indicated the practice was completely taught. These items then produce 10 scale scores categorized in four domains: safe environment, supportive environment, interactive environment, and engaging environment. Within each domain are scales and within each scale are items. Table 3 shows the breakdown of the SEL PQA domains, scales, and items.

**Semi-structured Interviews.** The researcher also collected qualitative data through face-to-face, one-on-one interviews with five Skyhawks coaches. Responses from these interviews addressed the third research question. Two interviews were held in a public-school library, a tea shop, a coffee shop, and a restaurant. The researcher used an interview protocol with scripted questions (Appendix F) but also allowed the researcher to ask secondary questions to each interviewee (Maxwell, 2013). Questions addressed the training each coach received, specifically around intentionally implementing SEL competencies into their coaching methods. Interviews were transcribed using Microsoft Word's transcribe tool and were reviewed by the researcher for clarification. After reviewing each interview transcription, the researcher followed Guba and Lincoln's protocol for developing categories (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The qualitative data gathered from these interviews was used to support the quantitative data gathered from the SEL PQA.

The researcher used Guba and Lincoln's four guidelines for developing categories within qualitative data (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The first guideline is to highlight unique words or phrases present in multiple responses from different participants. The researcher used different color highlighters, each color representing a single theme or category from each of the responses. The second guideline the researcher used was to create categories relevant to the study; in this

case, the researcher first created five categories, one for each of the SEL competencies. The third guideline from Guba and Lincoln was to create additional categories of similar themes within the responses from the coaches. Using the highlighted words and phrases, the researcher parsed out these examples into each category. The final guideline the researcher used to develop categories was to create a category for phrases from responses requiring further inquiry; these phrases provided the researcher with unpredicted information (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

### **Limitations**

The researcher worked to eliminate the limitations of the study. However, with all case studies, certain limitations present themselves. Case studies, such as this study, focus on a specific phenomenon. SEL competencies within a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp do not necessarily reflect all sports camps (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Following are the limitations of this study:

- The first limitation of this study was the researcher observed four camps over the course of one summer. Skyhawks Sports Academy operates camps across the country, throughout the year, and in varying structures. The researcher looked at one structure: the weeklong summer sports camp. Participants might have different experiences in different camp settings.
- The second limitation is there is no pre-intervention (sports camp) assessment. Pre-assessment data would provide a baseline to use as a comparison to the post-intervention assessment.
- The third limitation was gaining access to coaches for semi-structured interviews. Connecting and scheduling with coaches was a challenge.
- The fourth limitation was the variability in differences between camps and coaches. A total of four sites were used to collect both youth and coach data.

- The fifth limitation was the youth participants' ability to fully comprehend the survey questions. The researcher had to proctor the survey to multiple students at each site due to their reading abilities.

### **Role of the Researcher**

At the time of the study, the researcher was the principal at a middle school in Eastern Washington. The researcher, in his role as a public-school educator and leader, designed this study to better understand how summer sports camps impacted youth SEL competency development and growth. The researcher sought to discern if he, through his role as a principal, should provide a means to improve student access to sports camps. Students within the researcher's school did not participate in any of the Skyhawks Sports Academy camps used in this study.

## Chapter IV: Results

### Introduction

The implementation of social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies through SEL-based initiatives has led to an enhancement in youth of the abilities to self-manage, exhibit self-awareness, display social awareness, make responsible decisions, and build and maintain healthy relationships (Aghatabay et al., 2023; Cipriano et al., 2023; Dunn, 2019; Huck et al., 2023). One avenue through which SEL competencies are nurtured is through after-school extracurricular activities offered by public schools or by external Positive Youth Development (PYD) programs (Albright et al., 2019; Mahmud, 2020; Mahoney et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2022). PYD programs, such as clubs or sports activities conducted beyond regular school hours or terms, aim to engage youth in constructive activities that yield positive outcomes (Moore et al., 2021; Riciputi et al., 2020; Yu & Deutsch, 2021). An example of such a program is the Skyhawks Sports Academy, which focuses on enhancing athletic skills among youth through sports (Skyhawks Sports Academy, n.d.). School-based athletic and non-athletic programs driven by goals and competition serve as beneficial influences by fostering peer interaction and providing opportunities for adults to demonstrate advanced SEL competencies (Darling et al., 2005; Eccles et al., 1993; Eccles & Barber, 2001). Engagement in extracurricular activities has been linked to positive outcomes such as academic and psychological adjustments, enhanced educational attainment, and increased civic involvement (Bartko & Eccles, 2003; Blackwell et al., 2007; Eccles & Barber, 2001; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Kitchens & Gormley, 2018). Ultimately, extracurricular activities improve the development of adolescents and young adults (Bartko & Eccles, 2003; Eccles & Barber, 2001; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). Recognizing the significance of SEL and its association with extracurricular activities is paramount for contemporary educational leaders and school administrators.

One theoretical lens that can demonstrate the process of a youth's development of SEL competencies is Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems framework. Bronfenbrenner (2004) delineates two developmental propositions through which individuals are shaped by the systems surrounding them. The first proposition involves individuals developing through interactions with people, objects, and symbols in their immediate environment, termed proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Bronfenbrenner, 2004). Proximal processes entail activities overseen by individuals possessing greater knowledge of the activity than the developing individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 2004). In the second proposition, individuals engage in activities they have previously learned without direct guidance from someone more knowledgeable (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Both propositions encompass five systems clarifying the proximal process (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). These systems, including the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem, envelop and interact with the individual and each other, thereby shaping the individual's interactions with peers, family members, and various situations—establishing the individual's complete environment (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). Although all layers contribute to the proximal process concurrently, the mesosystem embodies its essential components (Bronfenbrenner, 2004; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Merçon et al., 2020). The mesosystem comprises two or more environments with which an individual frequently interacts (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Proximal processes within the mesosystem of youth entail enduring patterns within their immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Examples of such enduring patterns in youth development include parental engagement in games, providing comfort, peer interactions during play, participation in athletic or club activities, skill development, demonstrating empathy, and school attendance (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). In the current investigation, Bronfenbrenner's

framework is employed to examine the interaction between youth participants and coaches (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Merçon et al., 2020).

The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to examine the impact a coach has on a youth's development of SEL competencies while participating in a five-day Skyhawks Sports Academy camp. Quantitative data was gathered through a pre- and post-camp survey of youth participants. Qualitative data was gathered through observations of coaches working with students and through semi-structured interviews with Skyhawks coaches. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What SEL competencies are impacted in participants by day five of a Skyhawks camp?
2. How does the Skyhawks' program integrate SEL competencies into its coaching practices?
3. How does the Skyhawks' coaches training prepare coaches to teach SEL competencies to adolescents?

These questions were answered through both quantitative and qualitative data using the intrinsic case study method of practice. The intrinsic case study approach relies on various data sources to gather evidence, given the often blurred or undefined boundaries between the phenomenon and its context (Yin, 2009). This method entails collecting both qualitative and quantitative data, reflecting the complexities involved in understanding how a particular program uniquely engages with youth participants. This chapter will present the quantitative data from the pre- and post-survey of youth participants, and the qualitative data results of coach observations and semi-structured interviews.

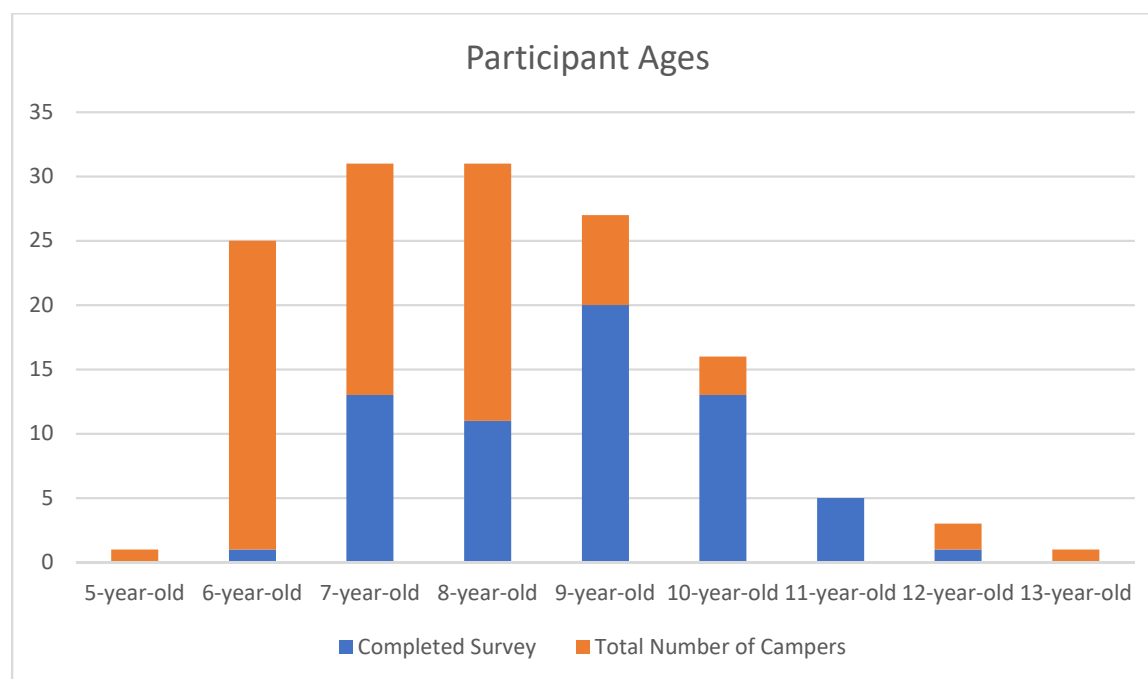


## **Participant Profile**

The researcher utilized homogenous sampling to recruit participants, encompassing both young athletes and coaches for this study. These participants constitute specific segments within the broader population of youth athletes and coaches, yet through homogenous sampling, the study focuses on both groups by virtue of their affiliation with Skyhawks Sports Academy (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). A total of 64 youth participants took the pre- and post-survey, 15 coaches were observed for the SEL PQA, and five coaches participated in the semi-structured interviews.

## **Survey Participants**

The WCSD-SECA survey collected quantitative data from campers from each of the four sites. Locations of the sites were in the Pacific Northwest: three in Washington state and one in Idaho. In all, 64 out of a potential 140 participants completed both the pre- and post-survey. Site one had 22 participants; site two had 13; site three had 15; and site four had 14. Of the completed surveys, 31% were from female youth participants and 69% were male. Ages of the participants ranged from 6 to 12 but ages of overall campers ranged from ages 5 to 13. Figure 4 shows that among the survey participants, there was one 6-year-old out of 25 6-year-olds across all four sites. Additionally, there were 13 participating 7-year-olds out of 31; 11 participating 8-year-olds out of 31; 20 participating 9-year-olds out of 27; 13 participating 10-year-olds out of 16; five participating 11-year-olds out of five; and one participating 12-year-old out of three.

**Figure 4***WCSD SECA Ages of Campers****SEL PQA Participants***

The SEL PQA was the instrument utilized to collect qualitative data from each of the four sites through coach observations. All coaches at each site were observed, for a total of 15 coaches. Of the coaches observed, 40% were female and 60% were male. No other demographic data was gathered.

***Semi-Structured Interview Participants***

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to provide insight into the training coaches received, including SEL practices (Dexter, 1970). Of the five coaches who participated in the interviews, one was also a coach that was observed as a participant in the SEL PQA. The remaining four interview participants were not part of any of the four camps. Three of the semi-structured interview participants were contacted by the researcher with contact information

provided by the Skyhawks Sports Academy (Tymitz & Wolf, 1977). The researcher contacted one participant through their place of work and one participant was contacted with information provided by a mutual acquaintance (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Tymitz & Wolf, 1977). The demographic data that was gathered was gender, racial/ethnic identity, age range, and number of years coaching for Skyhawks Sports Academy. For gender, 40% of the participants were female and 60% were male. Four participants identified as White and one identified as Hispanic/Latinx. Regarding age ranges, three participants were in their 20s, one was in their 30s, and one was in their 40s. Experience as a Skyhawks coach varied from one and a half years to eight years. Full interview participant demographic data is listed in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Semi-Structured Interview Participants*

Group	Gender	Racial/Ethnic identity	Age	Experience
Coach 1	Female	White	20s	8 years
Coach 2	Female	Hispanic/Latinx	20s	1.5 years
Coach 3	Male	White	20s	2 years
Coach 4	Male	White	30s	3 years
Coach 5	Male	White	40s	3 years

## **Data Collection Instruments**

### ***WCSD-SECA Instrument***

The WCSD-SECA short-form survey (Appendix I), which the youth participants took on day one and again on day five, is a series of 17 statements with topics that correspond to each of the five SEL competencies. Participants responded to each prompt by completing a four-point Likert scale. Four statements fell under the self-awareness competency, three for social awareness, six for self-management, two for relationship skills, and two for responsible decision-making. Due to the young ages of the participants, emojis were used on the Likert scale, ranging from very difficult to very easy. Before completing the 17 statements, participants provided their name, age, gender, and total number of Skyhawks camps they have attended. The researcher included information for each camper as to whether they were a full day or half day camp participant. Full day participants attended camp from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. and half day campers attended camp from 8-11 a.m. Full day campers at each site went swimming for an additional two hours after a lunch break. Each participant completed the WCSD-SECA at the beginning of day one of camp and at the beginning of day five. Table 5 shows participant information for each site.

**Table 5***Youth Participants WCSD-SECA*

Name	Full/Half Day	Gender	Age	Total Camps Attended
<b>Site 1</b>				
Participant 1	H	F	7	2
Participant 2	F	F	7	4
Participant 3	H	F	7	3
Participant 4	F	M	9	4
Participant 5	H	F	9	4
Participant 6	F	M	9	4
Participant 7	H	M	10	2
Participant 8	H	M	10	4
Participant 9	F	F	8	4
Participant 10	F	M	9	2
Participant 11	F	M	11	2
Participant 12	F	M	8	3
Participant 13	F	M	8	2
Participant 14	F	F	8	2
Participant 15	F	F	8	1
Participant 16	F	M	9	4
Participant 17	F	M	9	4
Participant 18	H	M	7	1
Participant 19	F	F	11	3
Participant 20	H	M	6	4
Participant 21	H	F	7	4
Participant 22	H	M	7	1
<b>Site 2</b>				
Participant 23	F	M	10	4
Participant 24	F	M	11	4
Participant 25	F	M	10	1
Participant 26	F	M	8	1
Participant 27	F	M	8	4
Participant 28	H	F	9	1
Participant 29	H	M	12	4

Participant 30	H	F	10	4
Participant 31	F	F	9	2
Participant 32	F	F	10	4
Participant 33	H	F	9	1
Participant 34	F	F	9	1
Participant 35	F	M	7	2

**Site 3**

Participant 36	F	M	10	2
Participant 37	F	F	11	1
Participant 38	H	M	9	3
Participant 39	F	M	10	2
Participant 40	F	F	8	1
Participant 41	F	M	9	2
Participant 42	F	M	10	2
Participant 43	F	M	8	2
Participant 44	F	F	7	1
Participant 45	F	M	9	4
Participant 46	F	M	8	4
Participant 47	F	M	10	2
Participant 48	F	M	7	1
Participant 49	F	M	7	1
Participant 50	F	F	9	2

**Site 4**

Participant 51	F	M	7	1
Participant 52	F	M	8	2
Participant 53	F	F	9	4
Participant 54	H	F	9	3
Participant 55	H	M	9	4
Participant 56	H	M	11	1
Participant 57	H	M	10	1
Participant 58	H	F	7	2
Participant 59	Unknown	M	10	1
Participant 60	F	F	9	3
Participant 61	F	M	7	1
Participant 62	H	M	9	1
Participant 63	F	M	10	4
Participant 64	Unknown	M	9	2

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### ***SEL PQA Instrument***

The SEL PQA (Appendix G), used to observe coaches during the four camps, is an observation instrument employed to gather qualitative data around coaches' practices. The SEL PQA encompasses four domains: Safe Environment, Supportive Environment, Interactive Environment, and Engaging Environment. Observations took place over the course of multiple days at each of the four sites. The researcher combined observation notes for all four sites to score domains on one SEL PQA.

### ***Semi-Structured Interviews Instrument***

The semi-structured interview (Appendix F), used with the five Skyhawks coaches, consisted of one close-ended question and six open-ended questions. Unscripted secondary questions were asked throughout each interview based on participants' responses. Interview questions addressed the training received by Skyhawks coaches and how they implement practices to influence youth participants' SEL skills. Interviews were conducted one-on-one and in-person. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed on a laptop using the Microsoft Word transcribe web feature.

**Quantitative Instrument Reliability and Validity.** The importance of reliability and validity in quantitative research hinges on how a particular instrument has been used by researchers and how that data has been interpreted (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The 17-item WCSD-SECA short-form survey was used in its entirety. The reliability of the WCSD-SECA short form was demonstrated through the evaluation of 17 items across various ability levels, displaying minimal ceiling or floor effects. Additionally, a small subset of items exhibited differential item functioning based on youth grade, gender, and ethnicity (Washoe County School District, 2018). The WCSD-SECA short form underwent validation using an Item

Response Theory (IRT) approach, which explains the connection between underlying attributes and observable outcomes (Embretson & Reise, 2013). Credibility of the WCSD-SECA relied on data from the administration of the 40-item SECA to 2,140 5th graders, 1,842 6th graders, 1,829 8th graders, and 1,433 11th graders during the 2016 academic year in Nevada's Washoe County School District (Crowder et al., 2019). Subsequent data analysis employed the Rasch model (Crowder et al., 2019), offering psychometric insights into the SECA, including the delineation of proficiency levels across social-emotional competencies and the alignment of individual items with the student population.

**Qualitative Instrument Credibility.** Qualitative data collection methods prioritize the accuracy and trustworthiness of descriptions, conclusions, explanations, or interpretations, contrasting with the approach taken in quantitative methods (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). Where quantitative validation focuses on authenticating data through external standards and more objective approaches, qualitative credibility relies on utilizing research standards and strategies such as peer review, triangulation, and member checking (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Two types of qualitative data were collected for this study. One set of data was collected using a previously validated instrument, the SEL PQA, and the other set of data was collected through semi-structured interviews.

The SEL PQA demonstrates consistent inter-rater credibility in item scoring, with scores typically exceeding 80%, and exhibits moderate to high internal consistency across its scales, ranging from 0.65 to 0.87 with an average of 0.76 (Centre for Youth Impact, 2022). Prior to its application in this research, the researcher conducted a pilot test of the SEL PQA by observing five, two-hour sessions with two coaches during a non-Skyhawks baseball practice. During the pilot test, the researcher recorded real-time observation notes and subsequently categorized them



using the SEL PQA instrument. This pilot enabled the researcher to refine data collection methods using the instrument. It was observed that standing near the coach while they interacted with individual or groups of youth participants facilitated clear auditory access to the instructional dialogue.

Before conducting semi-structured interviews, the researcher piloted the interview in an effort to mitigate threats to the credibility of interview responses (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The researcher piloted the interview with an expert participant, a current Skyhawks coach. Piloting took place to allow the researcher to rehearse the semi-structured interview protocol, ensuring clarity by eliminating any ambiguous questions and emphasizing topics and terminology familiar to Skyhawks coaches (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The semi-structured interviews that were used for this study were recorded and transcribed, verbatim, for the purpose of qualitative analysis (Maxwell, 2013).

## **WCSD-SECA Survey Results**

### ***Quantitative Results for Research Question 1: SEL Competencies***

To determine if the mean difference between paired survey responses is statistically significant, the researcher conducted a paired samples t-test on the 64 participants' responses to each of the 17 items on both of the completed WCSD-SECA surveys (Field, 2013; Laerd Statistics, 2015). For this study each participant took the WCSD-SECA on two separate occasions: once at the beginning of the Skyhawks camp and again at the end. For the paired samples t-test, the participants were the independent variables and the assessment was the dependent variable (Laerd Statistics, 2015).

The WCSD-SECA comprised 17 items, each with a four-point Likert scale response. For each item, participants chose one emoji to circle. For the "Very Difficult" emoji a point value of

“1” was given; a value of “2” was given for a “Difficult” response; a value of “3” was given for an “Easy” response; and a value of “4” was given for a “Very Easy” response. Values for each participant’s response to the 17 items for both surveys were recorded into Microsoft Excel then transferred into IBM SPSS Statistics. A total of 64 youth participants completed the survey on day one and on day five. However, the researcher did not include item data if a participant did not complete one or more items on either survey.

A paired-samples t-test was calculated in IBM SPSS Statistics to determine any statistical significance within the 17 item pairs, Table 6. Calculations revealed an increase in mean in 13 of the paired items, a decrease in mean for three pairs, and one paired item with no change (see Table 5). Day five elicited a statistically significant increase in item pair six, social awareness, compared to day one,  $M = 0.313$ ,  $t(63) = 2.934$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d = .367$ . In addition, day five elicited a statistically significant increase in item pair 16, responsible decision-making, compared to day one,  $M = 0.250$ ,  $t(63) = 2.341$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d = .293$ . Conversely, day five elicited a statistically significant decrease in item 14, relationship skills, compared to day one,  $M = -0.171$ ,  $t(63) = -1.745$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d = -.218$ . For item pairs six, 14, and 16 there was a statistically significant difference between means ( $p < .05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis can be rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted.

**Table 6***SPSS Results Paired-Samples T-Test*

SEL Competency	N	Item Pair	Mean	t	df	One-sided p	Cohen's d
Self-Awareness	64	1	.125	1.271	63	.104	.159
	63	2	.222	1.605	62	.057	.202
	61	3	.115	1.095	60	.139	.140
	62	4	.064	.646	61	.260	.082
Social Awareness	64	5	.080	.659	63	.256	.082
	64	6	.313	2.934	63	<b>.002</b>	.367
	61	7	.016	.159	60	.437	.020
Self-Management	64	8	-.141	-1.218	63	.114	-.152
	62	9	.016	.129	61	.449	.016
	64	10	.000	.000	63	.500	.000
	59	11	.070	.683	58	.249	.089
	64	12	.140	1.136	63	.130	.142
	61	13	-.016	-.151	60	.440	-.019
Relationship Skills	64	14	-.171	-1.745	63	<b>.043</b>	-.218
	61	15	.100	1.286	60	.102	.165
Responsible	64	16	.250	2.341	63	<b>.011</b>	.293
Decision Making	64	17	.093	1.029	63	.154	.129

A second paired-samples t-test, Table 7, was calculated in IBM SPSS Statistics to determine any statistical significance within the 17 item pairs; however, the researcher removed the 19 participants that were attending their first Skyhawks camp. Day five elicited a statistically significant increase in item pair six (social awareness), eight (self-management), 15 (relationship skills), and 16 (responsible decision-making), see Table 7. Item pairs six, 15, and 16 showed a statistically significant increase in their respective SEL competencies, and item pair eight showed a statistically significant decrease in self-management. Item pairs six and 16 remained statistically significant as with the previous paired-sample t-test. However, three item pairs did show change. Item pair eight became significant, as a decrease, and was not in the previous test. Next, 14 became not statistically significant, was a decrease in the previous test, and 15 became statistically significant, an increase. Both item pairs 14 and 15 are in the relationship skills SEL competency on the WCSD-SECA.

**Table 7**

*SPSS Results Paired-Samples T-Test Two or More Camps*

SEL Competency	N	Item Pair	One-sided p	Cohen's d
Social Awareness	45	6	<b>.007</b>	.381
Self-Management	45	8	<b>-.047</b>	-.255
Relationship Skills	42	15	<b>.014</b>	.353
Responsible Decision-making	45	16	<b>.043</b>	.262

### ***Qualitative Results for Research Questions Two and Three: Skyhawks Coaches' Training***

The first piece of qualitative data gathered were coaches' observations using the SEL PQA. The SEL PQA encompasses four primary domains, and each domain contains at least one scale. In addition, using the definitions provided by the CASEL 5, the researcher linked each domain in the SEL PQA to one of the five SEL competencies (see Table 8).

**Table 8**

#### *SEL PQA*

Domain	Scale(s)	SEL Competency
Safe Environment	Creating Safe Spaces	Responsible Decision-making
Supportive Environment	Emotion Coaching Scaffolding Learning Fostering Growth Mindset	Self-Management
Interactive Environment	Fostering Teamwork Promoting Responsibility & Leadership Cultivating Empathy	Social Awareness/Relationship Skills
Engaging Environment	Further Learning Supporting Youth Interests Supporting Plans & Goals	Self-Awareness

The overall score of the SEL PQA, Table 9, is derived from the aggregation of the four domain scores, each of which is calculated as the average of the corresponding scale scores, which were computed as averages of the individual item scores. (Refer to Table 6 for the detailed scores.) The researcher included notes from each observation as supporting evidence to accurately score each item. The researcher recorded observations by hand in a notebook then transferred those notes into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Once observations were organized in

Excel, the researcher placed observations one-by-one into the items on the SEL PQA. The researcher used the item descriptor as the theme for each observation note to be categorized. A score of “1,” “3,” or “5” was given to each item on a fillable SEL PQA document based on whether the complete definition of the descriptor was supported by one or more of the observation notes.

**Table 9**

*SEL PQA Scores*

Domain	SEL Competency	Scale Terms	Item Scores	Scale Scores	Domain Score
Safe Environment	Responsible Decision Making	Creating Safe Spaces	3, 5, 5, 5, 5, 3	4.3	<b>4.3</b>
Supportive Environment	Self-Management	Emotion Coaching	5, 3, 5, 3	4	<b>4.43</b>
		Scaffolding Learning	5, 5, 5, 5	5	
		Fostering Growth Mindset	5, 3, 5	4.3	
Interactive Environment	Social Awareness & Relationship Skills	Fostering Teamwork	5, 5, 5	5	<b>4.53</b>
		Promoting Responsibility and Leadership	3, 5, 5, 5, 5	4.6	
		Cultivating Empathy	3, 5, 5, 3	4	
Engaging Environment	Self-Awareness	Further Learning	3, 5, 5, 5, 3	4.2	<b>3.06</b>
		Supporting Youth Interests	3, 1, 5	3	
		Supporting Plans & Goals	3, 1, 1, 3	2	

The essential system within the proximal process of Bronfenbrenner's framework used for this study was the mesosystem. The mesosystem represents two or more immediate environments an individual interacts with or in frequently (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Within each of the scales in the SEL PQA are observables that reflect a required element of interaction between a coach and a youth participant. The SEL PQA focuses on an adult's interactions with a youth in correlation with intentionally teaching SEL competencies through the coaching of tangible skills. In this study, those tangible skills were connected to athletics.

The second set of qualitative data collected to answer research questions two and three was through semi-structured interviews with five Skyhawks coaches, four current and one former (Table 4). The researcher asked each of the five participants the same seven questions (Appendix F) but also asked secondary questions based on responses to each established question (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Upon completion of each interview the researcher verified information within the transcription by reading through the transcription while listening to the recorded audio. Next, the researcher moved responses of each participant to Microsoft Excel. A total of 59 responses were provided from coaches for this study.

The researcher used the scale terms from the SEL PQA instrument to code interview responses, Table 10 (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The SEL PQA is a vetted and reliable instrument and provides clear and concise definitions that describe SEL competencies. Using the SEL PQA also gave the researcher common language between observations and interviews, which both gathered data around coaches' work with youth participants during Skyhawks camps. In addition to SEL PQA scale terms, the researcher used the code Training to represent responses that spoke only to the specific training received from the Skyhawks Sports Academy prior to coaching and not connected to an SEL competency. Table 7 shows that of the coaches' 59 responses, 38

responses were coded Safe Spaces, five were coded Emotion Coaching, two Scaffolding Learning codes were assigned to responses, five were coded Fostering Teamwork, two responses were coded Promoting Responsibility and Leadership, four responses were coded Cultivating Empathy, and three were coded Further Learning. In addition to the training code, seven of the 10 scale terms were used as codes for interview responses.

**Table 10**

*Semi-Structured Interview Response Codes*

Code 1	Code 1 Frequency	Percentage
Safe Spaces	38	64%
Emotion Coaching	5	8%
Scaffolding Learning	2	3%
Fostering Teamwork	5	8%
Promoting Responsibility and Leadership	2	3%
Cultivating Empathy	4	7%
Further Learning	3	5%
Total	59	

To establish themes to address research questions two and three, the researcher categorized the codes from the semi-structured interview responses into the same SEL competencies used for the SEL PQA (see Table 7). A total of three themes were established: Responsible decision-making, self-management, and self-awareness. Social awareness and



relationship skills were used in the SEL PQA, but for the semi-structured interviews, due to similar characterizations, they were included in the self-awareness theme. Table 11 shows the themes that were established for the semi-structured interviews and their frequencies within the 59 responses.

**Table 11**

*Themes for Semi-Structured Interviews*

Theme	Code	Frequency/Percentage	
Responsible Decision-making	Safe Spaces	38	64%
Self-Management	Emotion Coaching	7	12%
	Scaffolding Learning		
Self-Awareness	Fostering Teamwork	14	24%
	Promoting Responsibility and Leadership		
	Cultivating Empathy		
	Further Learning		

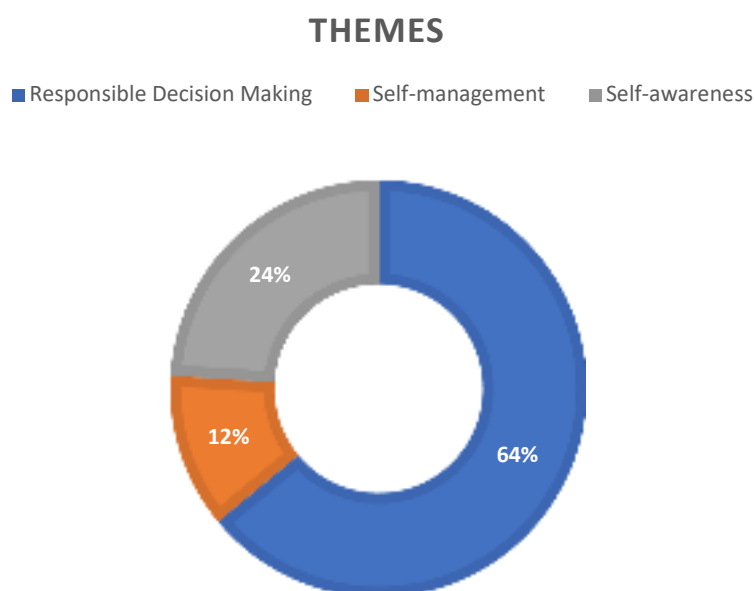
**Themes.** The researcher used Bronfenbrenner’s theoretical framework to guide the research. More will be discussed in chapter five, but it is imperative to understand the theoretical framework used in this research and its connection to the semi-structured interviews and the development of youth participants in connection to the coaches. According to Bronfenbrenner (2004), the element of development in this stage is identified as proximal process.

Bronfenbrenner outlines two propositions that impact individual development within proximal process. The first involves interactions with people, objects, and symbols in the immediate environment, resulting in proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Bronfenbrenner, 2004). These processes comprise guided activities led by individuals more knowledgeable in the area; in this research, the Skyhawks coaches led the guided activities (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 2004). The second proposition describes how individuals engage in activities they have learned from proposition one, without direct guidance from more knowledgeable individuals. In this study, those individuals are the youth participants (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The semi-structured interviews with the five coaches demonstrated multiple connections to the theoretical framework through the three themes (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5**

*Theme Frequency*

***Responsible Decision-making.*** Responsible decision-making was the theme used most



frequently within the five semi-structured interviews. These responses focused on running a

Skyhawks Sports Camp that was enjoyable to youth participants. Responsible decision-making is the act of making considerate choices in personal and social interactions, and considering ethics, safety, and impacts on the personal and collective well-being of every individual at a Skyhawks Sports Camp. Responsible decision-making while coaching includes fostering curiosity, analyzing information for sound judgments, and finding solutions to challenges (Sprenger, 2020). Anticipating consequences, applying critical thinking, and reflecting on promoting well-being in a sports camp setting is crucial (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). Responsible decision-making also involves assessing the effects of decisions on personal, social, and institutional levels (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.).

An example of responsible decision-making comes from one of the coaches who took part in the semi-structured interview; this coach said, “I really like learning the skills of the sport that I’m teaching, but I care more about if they [the participants] are enjoying their experience here and teaching that.” A key to this response is intentional decision making in order to foster an environment that a participant will enjoy and modeling interactions that will promote responsible decision-making in youth participants (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

A second coach who participated in the semi-structured interviews stated, “I think you give a kid a positive experience. I think it’s just the energy you bring as the leader. It’s positive and are you all in and are you willing to flex to respond to student need.” In this example, the coach expressed the need to be “all in,” meaning giving everything they had to the camper’s experience, placing the youth participant at the center of the coach’s attention to create a positive interaction between coach and youth (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). That same coach went on to state that they did go through a series of trainings, and a key takeaway regarding leading a

camp was to “show up 100%. The guy who did the training was really passionate about you showing up 100%. And I just remember, like, he was really trying to inspire his coaches to really be there for the kids.” A key component to trainings, beyond logistics, is how a coach emotionally leads a camp, giving youth participants their full attention and making responsible decisions about their own actions toward participants.

A third coach interviewee also said about training, “I didn’t receive any actual training. I didn’t really have to go through any of that because I’ve been in the coaching groove for about the last 10 years and they [Skyhawks Sports Academy leaders] saw that. So pretty much all of the training that they would go through I already demonstrated.” This coach already demonstrated both the ability to successfully engage youth participants in activities and the qualities of an effective coach, and therefore was able to bypass formal training.

***Self-Awareness.*** Self-awareness was the second most frequent theme among the five semi-structured interview coach participants. This competency encompasses a coach’s ability to recognize emotions across situations during a camp and understand their impact on behavior (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). Self-aware coaches prioritize clear communication with youth participants, embodying active listening and problem-solving skills. They also adeptly recognize situational demands and demonstrate cultural competence, fostering an inclusive and supportive environment (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). Additionally, resisting negative influences, advocating for others, offering support, fostering positive relationships, promoting teamwork, and seeking help when needed are integral qualities in self-awareness as a coach (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.; Sprenger, 2020).

One participant expressed the importance of actively listening to and engaging with youth participants. This interviewee valued the goal to “be interested in what they [youth participants] have to say about their lives, invest into their personal life [in order to] build trust.” Intentionally communicating with youth participants requires a coach to possess a level of self-awareness that enables them to build relationships with each camper. This same coach interviewee added that, “every kid is different, every kid goes by different backgrounds, so your coaching style has to be tweaked to each individual kid because not each kid is going to learn the same way.” This coach demonstrated strong self-awareness as they recognized that to foster an inclusive camp in which each camper can learn and grow, it was important to not label youth participants.

A second coach who participated in the semi-structured interviews added, “Connecting with kids, it’s so fun building those relationships.” A key component of self-awareness is the ability to build relationships with youth participants.

In addition to building relationships and adapting one’s coaching style to each participant, a third coach in the semi-structured interviews added:

When you get in the real world you’re going to be working with other people. You might not like somebody, but you still need to learn to work with them. There’s different backgrounds and that’s important to teach them how to handle themselves in those situations. You know, carry yourself, conflict resolution.

Strong self-awareness was demonstrated by this coach in recognizing the value of modeling and teaching youth participants the transferable skill of conflict resolution beyond the athletic field and into life.

***Self-Management.*** The third theme that emerged from the semi-structured interviews was self-management. The competency of self-management is the capacity to regulate emotions,

thoughts, and behaviors to achieve personal and group objectives (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.; Elias et al., 1997). It also involves setting and pursuing personal and shared goals, using planning skills, and showing initiative (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). Coaches who model self-management build collective agency among youth participants, empowering individuals to make informed choices and contribute meaningfully to the camp (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.).

One key to effective coaching is the ability to utilize the competency of self-management. One coach participant stated, “The job taught me how to have patience, and the word patience is key when working with students and kids at a young age.” Similarly, a second coach shared, “Patience would be the first thing to be really important. Be patient with them. They’re kids, just be patient and never raise your voice.” Practicing patience is the ability to self-manage the negative emotions that might arise when coaching youth participants. A third coach added:

Don’t let them frustrate you. Don’t let him antagonize you because they’re looking for a reaction out of you. You’ll get pretty frustrated. You don’t want to snap at a kid because they’re just kids, you have to keep yourself in check. It’s important to learn to keep a level head as a coach.

Similarly, to practicing patience, a key aspect of a coach’s self-management is regulating their own emotions in order to maintain a healthy climate within the camp. The coach establishes the overall attitude of a camp by modeling the ability to self-manage emotions and behaviors.

## **Conclusion**

The intrinsic design of this study gathered both quantitative and qualitative data. Three sets of data were gathered in order to best capture the experiences of youth participants during a

Skyhawks five-day camp and how those outcomes connect to coaches' influence on developing SEL competencies within the participants (Yin, 2009). A total of 64 youth participants took part in the survey data, 15 coaches participated in the observation data, and five coaches took part in the semi-structured interviews. The survey data used the paired-samples t-test to determine if there was statistical significance in SEL competencies from day one to day five of camp in response to research question one. For research question two, two sets of qualitative data were collected. Observation data was collected by the researcher using a non-participant approach to gather observation notes from four separate camps at four different sites (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Observation notes were then placed in one or more of four domains within the SEL PQA instrument. The four domains that comprise the SEL PQA were Safe Environment, Supportive Environment, Interactive Environment, and Engaging Environment. The SEL PQA measured the level of coaching practices related to the teaching of SEL competencies. The second set of qualitative data—semi-structured interviews—addressed how the Skyhawks' program integrates SEL competencies into its coaches' training and how coaches implement this training in ways that influence youth participants' SEL skills. Chapter V will address how the results from the paired samples t-test, the SEL PQA scores, and the themes from the semi-structured interviews relate to the research questions.

## **Chapter V: Discussion**

The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to explore the influence of a coach on a youth's development of social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies during a five-day Skyhawks Sports Academy camp. Quantitative data was collected using pre- and post-camp surveys completed by the youth participants. Qualitative data was obtained through observations of coaches interacting with participants and through semi-structured interviews with Skyhawks coaches. Developing SEL skills in youth is a high priority as the United States has witnessed a decline in mental health in youth, marked by increasing rates of hopelessness, depression, anxiety, and behavioral challenges (Perou et al., 2013; Whitney & Peterson, 2019; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020; Kalb et al., 2019; Curtin, 2020). In the past five years, post-COVID-19 school closures, educators continued to observe heightened isolation, with many students remaining in online or remote learning. Among those who returned to in-person classes, educators noted a decline in students' abilities to connect and build relationships with peers and adults (McGraw Hill, 2021).

Enhancing SEL skills such as self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness can help address the mental health crisis among the nation's youth (CASEL, n.d.; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; McGraw Hill, 2021; Sande et al., 2019; Wallender et al., 2020; West et al., 2016). Developing these competencies enables young people to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve goals, empathize with others, maintain healthy relationships, and make positive life choices (CASEL, n.d.; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; West et al., 2016). Past research and this current study demonstrate that extracurricular activities, such as after school sports or sports camps can positively impact SEL



skills within youth (Almlund et al., 2011; Cheng & Hitt, 2018; Darling et al., 2005; Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Kitchens & Gormley, 2018; Tyton Partners, 2021).

Chapter five of this study will delve into the results of the quantitative and qualitative data from this research, organized by three guiding research questions, to identify how Skyhawks Sports Academy camps impact youth participants' SEL competencies. This chapter will show the correlation of the current study and its theoretical framework, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Specifically, results will show how youth participants interacted with Skyhawks' coaches during a camp, and how those participants engaged in camp activities (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Bronfenbrenner, 2004).

The research questions that guided this study are:

1. What SEL competencies are impacted in participants by day five of a Skyhawks camp?
2. How does the Skyhawks program integrate SEL competencies into the coaching practices?
3. How does the Skyhawks coaches' training prepare coaches to teach SEL competencies to adolescents?

### **Summary of the Results**

To date, the Skyhawks Sports Academy has not been the subject of a research study around SEL and is not explicitly explored in SEL literature. However, Positive Youth Development (PYD) programs like the Skyhawks Sports Academy have shown a positive impact in SEL competencies (Bean et al., 2018; Moore et al., 2021; Yu & Deutsch, 2021). The research for this study utilized both quantitative and qualitative data collecting methods to provide a narrative on the topic of SEL and a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). This study employed an intrinsic case study design to capture various perspectives from coaches

and youth in a Skyhawks camp (Stake, 1995; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2009). An intrinsic case study examines how SEL practices intertwine within the Skyhawks program, providing insight on the acquired social-emotional skills (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Multiple data collection tools, including observation, surveys, and interviews, gathered qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data was collected through youth participants ( $n=64$ ) completing a survey. Qualitative data was collected through observing 15 Skyhawks coaches during four camps and five semi-structured interviews with Skyhawks coaches. Additionally, two documents provided to Skyhawks coaches as training documents were also used. Interpretive strategies delved into the Skyhawks Sports Academy's impact on youth participants to provide an analysis of developed SEL competencies in participants (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Marshall & Rossman 2016; Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995).

Of the camps the researcher attended to collect quantitative data through the WCSD-SECA and qualitative data through the SEL PQA, three were soccer camps and one was a golf camp. Soccer is considered a team sport, which requires participants to cooperate and collaborate with their teammates, fostering healthy relationships and acquiring necessary social skills (Boone & Leadbeater, 2006; Salchi, 2022). In team sports, individuals must learn to work together, often prioritizing the team's success over personal gain or recognition (Salchi, 2022). Team sports develop social acceptance, as teammates learn to appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of each team member, understanding that everyone has different opinions, feelings, and attitudes, which can complement one another (Boone & Leadbeater, 2006; Salchi, 2022). In contrast, golf is considered an individual sport, which focuses more on personal accomplishment and proficiency, allowing for autonomy and building cognitive toughness and resilience (Salchi,

2022). Both team and individual sports have the potential for positive SEL competency growth, but they differ in specific SEL competencies that are impacted (Pluhar et al., 2019).

Quantitative data was gathered through a survey, WCSD-SECA (Appendix I), in which youth participants completed 17 Likert-scale questions, each about a specific SEL competency. The researcher applied a paired samples t-test to survey results to determine if any of the responses were statistically significant. A total of three of the 17 responses showed statistical significance. The three SEL competencies that showed statistical significance were question six: Social awareness; question 14: Relationship skills; and question 16: Responsible decision-making. Questions six and 16 showed an increase in the associated SEL competency, and question 14 showed a decrease in the associated SEL competency.

Qualitative data was gathered using two instruments; the first was the SEL PQA. The results of the SEL PQA were the calculated mean of four domains on a scale of one to five. Domain one: Safe Environment had a mean of 4.3; Domain two: Supportive Environment had a mean of 4.43; Domain three: Interactive Environment had a mean of 4.53; and Domain four: Engaging Environment had a mean of 3.06. The second qualitative data collection method was semi-structured interviews. The researcher developed three themes by analyzing interview responses: Responsible decision-making, self-management, and self-awareness.

### ***Arrangement for Research Questions Response***

In this study, the qualitative data collected for research questions two and three will support the quantitative data gathered to answer research question one. The researcher will focus on three specific SEL competencies identified from the statistically significant quantitative data from the WCSD-SECA: social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Each competency will be addressed individually, with responses to research questions one, two,

and three integrated into each section. The arrangement of this section will show a response to all three research questions under each of the three statistically significant SEL competencies. Part one will focus on social awareness, part two on relationship skills, and part three on responsible decision-making, with each part providing responses to all three research questions.

### ***Part One - Social Awareness***

The first SEL competency that will be addressed is social awareness. Socially aware individuals demonstrate empathy, compassion, and concern for others' feelings, express gratitude, and recognize situational demands and the influence of organizations on behavior (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.; Sprenger, 2020).

#### **Research Question One: Summary of Results and Discussion for Social Awareness.**

The first question that guided this study is: What SEL competencies are impacted in participants by day five of a Skyhawks camp? The key findings to answer this question come from the quantitative data results from the youth participant survey, WCSD-SECA (Appendix I). After running a paired samples t-test, three of the 17 item pairs had statistically significant results. Table 12 shows the results from the three statistically significant responses.

**Table 12**

*SPSS Results Paired-Samples T-Test*

SEL Competency	N	Item Pair	Mean	t	df	One-Sided p	Cohen's d
Social Awareness	64	06	.313	2.934	63	<b>.002</b>	.367
Relationship Skills	64	14	-.171	-1.745	63	<b>.043</b>	-.218
Responsible Decision-Making	64	16	.250	2.341	63	<b>.011</b>	.293

The first statistically significant result from the WCSD-SECA was item pair six. For item six, youth participants responded to the following statement on a Likert scale: Knowing what people may be feeling by the look on their faces. This item fell under the SEL competency of social awareness, with results indicating that youth participants demonstrated statistically significant growth in this area ( $p = .002$ ) and an effect size of .367. A p-value of .05 or lower is considered statistically significant. For this study, the researcher used Cohen's  $d$  to measure effect size. A small effect size falls below .20, a moderate effect size falls between .20 and .75, and a large effect size is greater than .75. For item six the Cohen's  $d$  effect size was .367, moderate (Urdan, 2017). A moderate effect size is significant and meaningful due to the importance of the SEL competency development of social awareness within proximal process (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Urdan, 2017). Throughout a Skyhawks sports camp, youth participants engage in activities where they are constantly interacting with coaches and peers. Social awareness, which involves developing compassion and empathy toward others (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.), was demonstrated by youth participants who showed the ability to interpret others' emotions based on non-verbal expressions.

**Research Questions Two & Three: Summary of Results and Discussion for Social Awareness.** Research questions two and three guided this study to collect qualitative data using two instruments, the SEL PQA, and the semi-structured interviews. Questions two and three are: How does the Skyhawks' program integrate SEL competencies into the coaching practices, and how does the Skyhawks coaches' training prepare coaches to teach SEL competencies to adolescents? The observations made at the four camps in this study compiled scores that were then averaged out on the SEL PQA, with five being the highest, positive effect. On the SEL

PQA, the researcher placed the SEL competencies of social awareness and relationship skills into the Interactive Environment domain as observations focused on teamwork, responsibility and leadership, and empathy. The Interactive Environment score was 4.53, the highest overall score of the four domains in the SEL PQA. Of the three observation categories within that domain, teamwork scored a five, responsibility and leadership scored a 4.6, and empathy scored a four. Of the three categories with the Interactive Environment domain, responsibility and leadership and cultivating empathy are characteristics of social awareness, with teamwork falling into the SEL competency of relationship skills. The SEL PQA is scored from the perspective of the coach but examples of social awareness came from both youth participants and coaches.

At a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp, youth participants demonstrate a wide range of athletic skills, abilities, and knowledge of the specific sport. On multiple occasions, youth participants with higher levels of athletic skills, abilities, and knowledge of the sport helped other youth participants who were less skilled at the activity. A coach interviewee responded that, “When you’re teaching a sport, you’re going to have kids who are really good at something and kids who have never done it before. You have to teach them to be on the same page.” The skilled youth participants recognized that others were not as far along in their knowledge of the activity or sport, or not as athletically talented; rather than remaining passive, the skilled participants worked with the less skilled participants to elevate their abilities in and knowledge of the sport, demonstrating empathy and compassion, two key characteristics of social awareness (Collaboration for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). This example of youth participants working together was supported in a response from the semi-structured interview around the need to know how to work with different kinds of people throughout life, a key transferable skill necessary to function in the present and the future. This is also an example of

responsibility and leadership, as one coach interviewee responded, “I think some of the kids that are talented can also benefit from being leaders and helping out the other kids.” The more skilled participant takes on the role of coach to teach a skill to the less skilled participant.

Empathy and compassion were also evident on one occasion when a youth participant noticed another participant sitting alone during lunch and invited that participant to come sit with them. A coach sets the tone for the level of social awareness and demonstrates compassion, empathy and inclusiveness to foster an environment where participants also have opportunities to demonstrate those SEL competencies. Two of the training documents Skyhawks coaches receive, *10 Keys to Successful Coaching* and *Teaching Tips for Coaches*, state that a coach is to engage participants by focusing on the positive and teaching positive life skills such as inclusion, respect, and leadership (Skyhawks Sports Academy, n.d.). A response from the semi-structured interviews highlighted the need for coaches to adjust their coaching styles, as each youth participant is unique. One observation from the SEL PQA highlighted a coach approaching an upset youth participant. In this scenario, the coach noticed the participant was distressed about wanting a specific role in an activity. Instead of ignoring or shaming the participant for being upset over something that might seem minor, the coach acknowledged their feelings and assured them they could have that role in the next round of the activity. Previous studies on Positive Youth Development programs similar to the Skyhawks Sports Academy have shown growth in participants’ social awareness (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2021; Barcelona & Hartman, 2021; Barcza-Renner et al., 2022; LiFEsports at The Ohio State University, n.d.). This growth in social awareness was linked to youth engaging in physical activities and experiencing competence in personal and interpersonal skills as they interacted in the camp environment with coaches and peers, and through activities (Barcelona & Hartman, 2021; Henert et al., 2021).

In a Skyhawks camp, social awareness within Bronfenbrenner's theoretical framework develops in the proximal process when youth participate in activities over the course of five days and experience multiple interactions with coaches and peers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). From day one of camp, when a coach sets expectations for social awareness by modeling empathy and compassion, a youth participant experiences this interaction both firsthand and through observation of how coaches interact in this way with other participants. By day five of camp, a youth participant has experienced multiple touchpoints of social awareness through the proximal process, making growth in this skill inevitable.

### ***Part Two - Relationship Skills***

The SEL competency of relationship skills involves cultivating and maintaining supportive connections through clear communication, active listening, cooperation, and conflict resolution (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). Relationship skills also include navigating diverse social environments, demonstrating cultural competence, providing leadership, and advocating for others while fostering teamwork and seeking support when needed (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.; Sprenger, 2020). Following are the results and discussion for all three research questions around the competency of relationship skills.

#### **Research Question One: Summary of Results and Discussion for Relationship Skills.**

The second significant result for research question one: What SEL competencies are impacted in participants by day five of a Skyhawks camp? was found in item pair 14. Youth participants responded on a Likert scale to the prompt: Respecting a classmate's opinions during a disagreement. This prompt was in the SEL competency category of relationship skills, and results showed a decrease in the ability of youth participants to develop healthy relationship with



others, Table 11. Of the three statistically significant results from the WCSD-SECA, relationship skills showed statistical significance with a p-value lower than .05 ( $p = .043$ ) and an effect size of  $-.218$ . A  $-.218$  for a Cohen's  $d$  effect size demonstrates a moderate significance due to falling between .20 and .75 (Urdu, 2017). A moderate effect size is significant and meaningful, and in the case of item 14, youth participants demonstrated a moderate reduction in the ability to demonstrate relationship skills.

The item 14 prompt delves into the concept of recognizing and respecting another person's point of view within the SEL competency of relationship skills. Key components of relationship skills are learning how to agree and disagree, knowing how to react in a controlled manner, and respecting the conflict that is occurring with another individual (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d). Relationship skills are taught by a coach demonstrating how to react in various scenarios, preparing youth participants for how to react and how to work together (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d).

One potential reason for the decrease in this SEL competency can be connected to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and proximal process. A key aspect of the proximal process is the environment that the developing individual is in must occur regularly over an extended period (Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). A Skyhawks Academy Sports camp is only five days, which is not necessarily regular or an extended period. Previous research studies have shown that participants' relationship skills have increased in PYD programs; however, these programs could be defined as regularly occurring over an extended period (Guagliano et al., 2019; LiFEsports at The Ohio State University, n.d.; Moore et al., 2021; Yu & Deutsch, 2021).

It is important to note that youth participants did not show a decrease in relationship skills if they participated in more than one camp. In addition, participants who participated in more than one camp showed a statistically significant increase in the SEL competency of relationship skills. Two items on the WCSD-SECA addressed relationship skills: items 14 and 15. In this study, item 14 showed statistical significance, but in a decrease of SEL competency relationship skills. However, rerunning a paired samples t-test that excluded the 19 youth participants who attended their first Skyhawks Sports Academy camp and only included the 45 youth participants who had attended two or more camps resulted in item 14 no longer being statistically significant and item 15 (n 42) being statistically significant at .014.

**Research Questions Two & Three: Summary of Results and Discussion for Relationship Skills.** Research questions two and three are: How does the Skyhawks program integrate SEL competencies into the coaching practices, and how does the Skyhawks coaches' training prepare coaches to teach SEL competencies to adolescents? These two questions guided this study to collect qualitative data using two instruments, the SEL PQA and semi-structured interviews. The observations made at the four camps in this study were compiled and averaged on the SEL PQA, where five represents the highest positive effect. In the SEL PQA, the researcher included the SEL competencies of social awareness and relationship skills within the Interactive Environment domain, focusing on teamwork, responsibility and leadership, and empathy. The Interactive Environment score was 4.53, the highest overall score among the four domains in the SEL PQA. Within this domain, teamwork received a score of five, responsibility and leadership scored 4.6, and empathy scored four. Among the three categories within the Interactive Environment domain, responsibility and leadership, and cultivating empathy reflect social awareness, while teamwork pertains to the SEL competency of relationship skills.

Although the results of the WCSD-SECA showed a statistical decrease in youth participants' relationship skills, the SEL PQA and semi-structured interviews demonstrated that coaches model and actively engage with students around the competency of relationship skills. Observations documented within the Interactive Environment of the SEL PQA that scored a five were when coaches provided youth participants with opportunities to work collaboratively in small groups, develop and work toward accomplishing shared goals, and practice group processing skills. Several observations documented within the SEL PQA supporting those items were when a coach worked with multiple youth participants, encouraging them to participate in the activity and work together as a team. Additionally, coaches leading soccer camps instructed and modeled passing skills, and emphasized the need to work together by passing the soccer ball to accomplish the shared goal of scoring a goal. Further examples of relationship skills development noted on the SEL PQA supported the item of coaches discussing with youth participants the causes or consequences of other people's emotions. On multiple occasions the researcher observed a coach instructing a youth to participate with a focus on the success of the group, stressing teamwork to achieve a shared goal. Teamwork was supported by one of the coach interviewees who shared that a key element of their coaching style is emphasizing the concept of team and working together, and how each member of the team plays a vital role in the success of the team. This particular interviewee worked predominately in Skyhawks Cheer camps, and spoke about the importance of working together during stunts and the dangers of not working together, potentially dropping the flyer. This coach stressed that if one person does not do their job on the team, someone else's safety is in jeopardy. Another coach interviewee highlighted the importance of providing youth participants with a positive team experience to

foster a sense of community. Additionally, another coach interviewee emphasized working with youth participants on the practice of inclusion to achieve effective teamwork.

Further evidence of relationship skills development occurred at one of the sites in this research when a youth participant approached a coach to report that another participant hit them. The coach spoke with each participant, reminding the participant who hit the other participant about respecting physical boundaries. The key relationship skill observable was that the coach listened to each participant's interpretation of the incident that led to the physical altercation and helped them resolve the conflict appropriately. Conflict resolution was echoed by a coach interviewee, crediting working with youth on conflict resolution during Skyhawks camps as a reoccurring opportunity.

A coach-participant relationship is an example of proximal process and is evident in Skyhawks Sports Academy camps. Skyhawks coaches teach relationship skills and provide youth participants the opportunity to develop and demonstrate these skills throughout Skyhawks camps. However, due to the length of a single camp, this SEL competency is unable to show a level of fruition (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994).

### ***Part Three - Responsible Decision-Making***

According to the CASEL (n.d.), responsible decision-making involves making thoughtful and compassionate choices about personal conduct and social interactions in various settings. This includes considering ethical standards, safety, and the potential impacts of one's actions on individual and collective welfare. Responsible decision-making entails fostering curiosity and open-mindedness, analyzing information to make reasoned judgments, and identifying solutions to challenges. Additionally, responsible decision-making requires anticipating and evaluating the consequences of one's actions, recognizing the applicability of critical thinking, and reflecting on

one's role in promoting well-being within personal, family, and community environments. Following are the results and discussion for all three research questions around the theme of relationship skills.

### **Research Question One: Summary of Results and Discussion for Responsible**

**Decision-Making.** Item pair 16 was the third and final item pair that showed statistical significance. Youth participants responded to the prompt: Thinking about what might happen before making a decision. Results from the WCSD-SECA, responsible decision-making, were statistically significant with a p-value of .011, less than .05, and a moderate effect size of .293, falling between the moderate level of .20 and .75. A moderate effect size for responsible decision-making is significant and meaningful due to the importance of that SEL competency within the development during the proximal process (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Urdan, 2017). Past research of the SEL curriculum had a positive impact of responsible decision-making by focusing on providing participants the opportunity to interact within multiple environments and experiences (A. Green et al., 2021; A. Green et al., 2022). Additionally, research has shown an improvement in responsible decision-making by pairing development with character virtues like forgiveness, gratitude, diligence, and generosity (Hatchimonji et al., 2022). Throughout a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp, youth participants encounter multiple opportunities to make decisions. From day one, participants must decide whether to be involved and what their level of involvement will be. Research questions two and three will dive deeper into those opportunities for responsible decision-making within a day at a Skyhawks camp.

### **Research Questions Two & Three: Summary of Results and Discussion for**

**Responsible Decision-Making.** The SEL PQA and responses from the semi-structured interviews supported research questions two and three: How does the Skyhawks program

integrate SEL competencies into the coaching practices, and how does the Skyhawks coaches' training prepare coaches to teach SEL competencies to adolescents? The skill of responsible decision-making is taught and demonstrated at the inauguration of a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp. During the four site observations to complete the SEL PQA, it was observed that after youth participants arrived they were asked to participate in an activity while other participants arrived. This was the first opportunity to make a responsible decision, whether or not to participate, making the first step toward involvement in the camp. From there a plethora of opportunities arose as participants went from activity to activity. Observations of responsible decision-making occurred as participants were scrimmaging at the three soccer camps, centered on teamwork, with the decision being whether to pass the ball or take a shot.

The SEL competency of responsible decision-making fell into the SEL PQA domain of Safe Environment. Observations made at the four sites provided a domain score of 4.3 out of five in this domain. Table 13 displays the descriptors for the six items within the Safe Environment domain, highlighting the descriptor for a score of five.

**Table 13**

*Safe Environment*

Item	Definition	SEL PQA Score
1	The emotional climate is always positive; young people and staff are observed offering encouragement, affirmations, or support to others.	3
2	Staff use positive and warm words, tone of voice, and body language that convey enthusiastic welcome, sincere affection, or genuine interest in young people's well-being.	5
3	Staff create a safe space for young people to share and	5

provide young people with specific guidance or supports for creating a safe space.

4	Staff group management style is characterized by proactive or positive approaches.	5
5	Staff consistently hold young people and themselves accountable to an agreed-upon set of guidelines, behavior expectations, or consequences.	5
6	There is no evidence of bias on the part of staff based on religion, culture, race/ethnicity, class, gender, ability, appearance, or sexual orientation and there is evidence of mutual respect and active inclusion.	3

Domain Score: 4.3

Item one in the Safe Environment domain was scored a three with the descriptor being “The emotional climate of the session is predominantly positive. Negative behaviors are mediated by staff or young people.” Observations included:

- Coach to camper: “Do you need your shoes tied?” [offering to tie them]
- Coach sorting teams: Some campers struggle with wanting to be with certain others, but the coach continues sorting without getting derailed.
- Coach to group [in a positive tone]: “Let’s remember to keep our hands to ourselves.”
- Campers getting tired [body language; coach stays positive.
- Coach says, “Good job [camper’s name], I like the effort.”
- Day 3: Campers eating snack together under a tent, engaging in friendly chatter.
- During snack: Group of campers sit in a circle with a coach and play a game.
- During activity: Coach says “Nice try” when a camper misses a shot.
- During activity: Coach says to camper, “That was perfect, good work.”

- Day 3: Coach says the names of all the campers as they arrive and during morning activities.

Coaches showed a strong ability to create a safe environment according to the SEL PQA, which also supports the training document, 10 Keys to Successful Coaching (Table 11), provided by the Skyhawks Sports Academy. In this training document coaches learn the importance of demonstrating a high energy level at all times and engaging participants by focusing on the positive, including encouraging participation during each drill, skill, or game. A coach also needs to memorize youth participants' names to demonstrate a level of connection and demonstrate a high level of engagement in all aspects of a camp (Skyhawks Sports Academy, 2021). These keys to coaching are conscious decisions that Skyhawks coaches must make each day of camp to demonstrate a high level of responsible decision-making, with each key representing a deliberate choice.

In addition to the coaching keys in Table 11, Skyhawks coaches are also provided with another training document, Teaching Tips for Coaches (Table 12). In the area of responsible decision-making within Teaching Tips for Coaches, a coach will have high expectations for participants, teach positive life skills, recognize and acknowledge participants demonstrating these skills, discuss the demonstrated skills with all participants, respectfully correct negative behaviors, acknowledge both appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, and reward participants who consistently demonstrate positive life skills (Skyhawks Sports Academy, 2021). As with the 10 Keys to Successful Coaching, the Teaching Tips for Coaches requires a level of conscious commitment by a coach as they led and orchestrated each day of camp, working with youth participants and teaching them to make responsible decisions.



Additional data supporting a coach's training on responsible decision-making was evident in the semi-structured interviews. One of the coaches who participated in the semi-structured interview conveyed the following:

I care more about are they [youth participants] enjoying their experience here and teaching to that. I'm looking at responsible decision-making. You want to teach them how to solve problems themselves. Through sportsmanship or playing fair, [working with youth participants to reflect on the questions] are you being respectful? Are you accepting the outcome even if you lose the game?

This coach interviewee articulated the importance of working with youth participants specifically in the area of responsible decision-making around solving problems that arise while working with others. A second semi-structured participant communicated:

I think you give a kid a positive experience. I think it's just the energy you bring as a leader. Is it positive and are you all in, are you willing to flex to respond to student need? What skills you're trying to meet? [It's important to meet] every kid where they're at and give them a positive experience. And you know, you have kids who like the sport and want to be there for a positive experience. So much of what you offer as leaders is what you model and on how you respond to other teams winning and losing or someone making mistake. They want to be around someone who cares about [them], who is going to make them feel okay. I think the way you do that is by being present and modeling self-awareness and being responsible and having good relationships.

This coach stressed the importance of working with youth by modeling appropriate decision-making and setting an example of how one should interact with others, especially when conflict arises.

A third coach who participated in the semi-structured interviews stated:

One big thing that I've done a lot and has helped is doing conflict resolution because some kids...get mad at each other. To go up to them and say, okay this [conflict] happened. What should you do when you're in this situation? Should you get mad at him? Should you chirp back at him? Should you fight back? [It's important to recognize when] to drop it when it needs to be dropped. Kids getting in arguments, they fight, that's normal. [They need] to learn how to deal with that.

As with the other interview participants, this coach stressed the need to work with youth participants around the area on conflict resolution and how to make responsible decisions when faced with conflicts.

Coaches are trained in responsible decision-making through the training and implementation of 10 Keys to Successful Coaching and Teaching Tips for Coaches (Skyhawks Sports Academy, 2021). A result of implementing the keys and tips from these training documents resulted in the growth of responsible decision-making among the youth participants in this study.

The interactions between a Skyhawks coach and a youth participant demonstrates responsible decision-making within proximal processes by fostering supportive and responsive interactions that promote the participant's development across multiple layers within Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Proximal process emphasizes the reciprocal interactions between the developing individual and their immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Responsible decision-making by the Skyhawks coaches includes the use of positive reinforcement to encourage desired behaviors in the youth participant, which may include praising effort, acknowledging progress, and celebrating

successes, which motivates the youth and reinforces positive behaviors and attitudes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner, 2004). A coach's responsible decision-making during interactions impacts the participant's experience when a coach provides constructive feedback, encouragement, and support, enhancing the youth participant's confidence and emotional well-being (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). A coach's responsible decision-making involves being attuned to each youth's needs and abilities, adapting coaching strategies and communication styles to suit individual youth, and fostering a supportive and responsive environment where learning and growth can occur, and the youth is empowered to make responsible decisions (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). What is unique in this study is that through proximal process a coach's demonstration of responsible decision-making and teaching to responsible decision-making equally impacted youth participants statistically significantly in a positive direction. (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner, 2004).

## **Conclusions**

Several conclusions may be drawn from the results of this study. Conclusions will be constructed within Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems development framework, highlighting the proximal process of the developing youth participant. According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998), proximal process is described as follows:

Especially in its early phases, but also throughout the life course, human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate environment. To be effective, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time. Such enduring forms of interaction in

the immediate environment are referred to as proximal processes. Examples of enduring patterns of proximal processes are found in feeding or comforting a baby, playing with a young child, child-child activities, group or solitary play, reading, learning new skills, athletic activities, problem solving, caring for others in distress, making plans, performing complex tasks, and acquiring new knowledge and know-how.

According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998), six facets comprise the proximal process. The first is when the developing youth participant is engaged in activities with other people, objects, or symbols. In this study, the activity is a five-day Skyhawks Sports Academy camp and the primary engagement is between the youth participants and the coaches.

The second facet is the activity must occur regularly (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). As discussed previously in this chapter, a five-day sports camp is not considered as occurring on a regular basis; nonetheless, two SEL competencies were positively impacted: social awareness and responsible decision-making. However, that was not the case with relationship skills, which decreased in a camp, going against Bronfenbrenner's theory that proximal process only has positive impacts on development. Yet, if the focus of the study was only on those youth participants who have attended more than one camp, relationship skills were impacted positively. A focus on that same sub-group, however, showed a decrease in the SEL competency of self-management, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

The third facet of proximal process is the activity becoming more complex. In this study, the athletic skills addressed in each camp were scaffolded from day one to day five. For example, coaches worked on how to properly kick a soccer ball, focusing on foot placement on the ball before teaching how to pass or shoot the ball. Along with the task of athletic skills becoming more complex, the overall activity of participating in a camp becomes more complex. Increasing

complexity also occurs in each camp's "word of the day." In a Skyhawks camp, the lead coach shares a word of the day, which is a specific character trait. Each day an additional trait is added for a total of five traits that the participants must implement and practice each day.

The fourth facet of effective proximal process is bidirectional, mutual, interactions between youth participants and coaches. For positive development to occur, there must be two-way interaction between a coach and a youth participant, which is evident in the qualitative data gathered from both the SEL PQA and the semi-structured interviews. An example of bidirectional interaction from the SEL PQA was when a coach worked with two youth participants who were in conflict. The coach spoke with each participant individually and then together to reach a solution to move past the conflict.

Facet five of the proximal process states that interactions are limited to people, but interactions may also occur with objects and symbols. Interactions with objects or symbols must require a level of attention and engagement with the developing individual. Two items stand out at a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp that pertain to this facet. The first is the interaction the youth participant has with the object of a soccer ball, in the case of the three soccer camps in this study. Each participant has a different relationship with a soccer ball based on experience. In this study, youth participants were asked how many Skyhawks camps they attended but were not asked about their skill level. Nonetheless, each camper interacted with the soccer ball at a different level that progressed over the length of the five-day camp. The second item that stands out is the symbol of the Skyhawks logo, which is present at each site in the form of a banner. For youth participants who are attending at least their second camp, this symbol represents past experience with the Skyhawks, presenting a level of expectation and familiarity, thus influencing the interaction these participants will have within the camp, knowing it is a Skyhawks camp.

The final facet of proximal process focuses on the continuing maturation of the developing individual. As the individual matures, their developmental abilities expand in proficiency and scope of knowledge. In turn, proximal processes must become more elaborate and comprehensive. As development progresses, pauses between activities can lengthen but must still occur regularly for development to not regress. A second aspect of facet six of proximal process requires extended interactions with individuals beyond primary caregivers, or, as Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) labeled the term, principal persons. Other individuals such as relatives, siblings, peers, teachers, friends, mentors, and coaches may take on the role of principal persons. This involvement is not restricted to childhood but continues throughout life. This facet is slightly more complicated to connect within this study but could be better addressed if the study focused more on youth participants who participated in multiple Skyhawks Sports Academy camps. Evidence of this facet is present with the role of a coach as a potential principal person, but not to a degree that firm conclusions could be made without additional data. This topic will be discussed further in the limitations of this study.

Conclusions include: (1) Youth participants showed growth in the SEL competencies of social awareness and responsible decision-making as a direct result of participating in a five-day Skyhawks Sports Academy camp; (2) Youth participants can demonstrate growth in relationship skills if they attend more than one Skyhawks camp; (3) Growth in specific SEL competencies among youth participants directly results from a coach's training and the implementation of that training in practice.

The first statistically significant SEL competency in the WCSD-SECA was social awareness. Participants responded to three items on the WCSD-SECA that focused on social awareness, questions five, six, and seven. Of the three items for social awareness, question six

showed statistically significant data. However, all three items evidenced a growth in mean as seen in Table 14.

**Table 14**

*WCSD-SECA Social Awareness Means*

Item	n	Day 1 Mean	Day 5 Mean	Total Growth	One-Sided p
5 - Learning from people with different opinions than me.	64	3.11	3.19	2.57%	.256
6 - Knowing what people may be feeling by the look on their face.	64	2.91	3.22	10.65%	.002
7 - Knowing when someone needs help.	61	3.36	3.38	0.60%	.437

Of the three items that addressed social awareness on the survey, item six saw the greatest increase in mean. Of the three prompts, item six is the most concrete and observable example given the presence of a physical, tangible facial expression. Since youth have more difficulty expressing emotions in words, facial expressions provide the most effective avenue to communicate and interpret emotions (Nelson & Russell, 2011; Nowicki & Duke, 1994). This also supports why item seven showed the lowest increase in mean, since needing help is typically expressed through words rather than nonverbal expression, making this type of communication more challenging for a peer to interpret and observe.

It can be concluded that participation in a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp leads to the development and growth of social awareness, providing youth participants the opportunities to exhibit empathy, compassion, and concern for others' feelings, and to express gratitude (Bean et al., 2018; Moore et al., 2021; Yu & Deutsch, 2021). Furthermore, social awareness is the ability to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.; Sprenger, 2020). As noted on the SEL PQA instrument, social awareness is first demonstrated by the coaches as they interact with each youth participant from day one of camp through day five, the last day of camp. By continuously demonstrating social awareness, the coach is able to transfer social awareness to the youth participants both directly and indirectly as the youth participant interacts with the coach, peers, and the environment of a camp, a key element of proximal process in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory of development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Bronfenbrenner, 2004).

In addition to social awareness, the conclusion can be made that youth participants grow in the SEL competency of responsible decision-making by participating in a Skyhawks Sports Academy five-day camp. Responsible decision-making, according to CASEL, is the ability to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations, or what Bronfenbrenner terms proximal process (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). Proximal process within responsible decision-making is the interaction of the developing individual with diverse situations or environments. In the case of a Skyhawks camp, the diverse situations are the interactions the youth participant has with other participants, coaches, and the overall camp experience. In turn, by experiencing proximal process, the youth participant has the ability to



develop responsible decision-making skills (Bean et al., 2018; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Moore et al., 2021; Yu & Deutsch, 2021). Two items on the WCSD-SECA addressed responsible decision-making: item 16 (statistically significant) and 17, with all 64 youth participants responding. Similar to social awareness, youth participants saw an increase in mean for both items. See Table 15.

**Table 15**

*WCSD-SECA Responsible Decision-Making Mean*

Item	n	Day 1 Mean	Day 5 Mean	Total Growth	One-Sided p
16 – Thinking about what might happen before making a decision.	64	2.78	3.03	8.99%	.011
17 – Knowing what is right or wrong.	64	3.30	3.39	2.73%	.154

By participating in a five-day Skyhawks camp, youth participants can demonstrate growth in the areas of open-mindedness, analytical thinking, problem-solving, anticipating consequences, and reflecting on promoting well-being in each of the environments they interact with as a result of positive development in responsible decision-making (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Bronfenbrenner, 2004; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). A subtle difference appears between item 16 and 17. Item 16 does not include the element of right or wrong; it only states that the youth thinks about outcomes before deciding, implying that the youth does not necessarily know what is right or wrong; thus, they might still choose a situationally right or wrong decision. Either way, the data is significant in

that the youth in this study think about their decisions before acting, whether those decisions are deemed right or wrong by others.

Although a five-day sports camp is not considered as an activity that occurs on a regular basis, facet two of proximal process, positive growth, was evident in two SEL competencies. This can be concluded that although facet two was not accomplished, other facets were present, thus resulting in a positive proximal process. PYD programs optimize proximal processes by creating supportive, enriching environments where youth can engage in productive activities, develop essential athletic and SEL skills, and form meaningful relationships with peers and coaches that contribute to their positive development (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2019; Guagliano et al., 2019; Malette et al., 2022; Moore et al., 2021; Richmond et al., 2019; Riciputi et al., 2020; Youth.gov, n.d.; Yu & Deutsch, 2021).

A second conclusion centers on the SEL competency of relationship skills. Results from this study initially showed a statistically significant decrease in this competency. However, after removing the 19 youth participants who indicated they were participating in their first camp on the WCSD-SECA, a paired samples t-test of the remaining 45 participants revealed a statistically significant increase in relationship skills among those attending at least their second camp (Table 7, page 83). It can be concluded that the SEL competency of relationship skills requires the second facet of proximal process, occurring regularly, and that positive development in relationship skills will occur in a youth participant if they attend more than one Skyhawks Sports Academy camp (Bronfenbrenner, 2004; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Merçon et al., 2020). Previous studies have found that athletic PYD programs foster the development of relationship skills through connections with peers and coaches (Moore et al., 2021; Truskauskaitė-Kunevičienė et al., 2020; Riciputi et al., 2020). These programs

facilitate strong bonds as coaches and participants interact over extended periods, experiencing both successes and challenges together, which further strengthens participants' relationship skills (Guagliano et al., 2019; Moore et al., 2021; Yu & Deutsch, 2021).

A third conclusion in this study centers on the training of the Skyhawks coaches. It can be concluded that the training documents, *10 Keys to Successful Coaching* and *Teaching Tips for Coaches*, provide coaches with concrete implementation strategies that allow them to make an impact on participants' SEL competencies of social awareness and responsible decision-making (Albright et al., 2019; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2022). The key concept within proximal process is the developing individual's interactions with their surrounding environment (Bronfenbrenner, 2004; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Merçon et al., 2020). The two training documents used by Skyhawks coaches encompass the type of interactions a coach will have with each youth participant, directly impacting proximal process and the development of the youth. One way to look at these two documents in connection to proximal process is to look at the description for each key and tip. Each key and tip relate to an interaction with the coach and youth participants or proximal process. Table 16 combines both documents to show how a coach is involved in proximal process.

**Table 16***Proximal Process: 10 Keys to Successful Coaching & Teaching Tips for Coaches*


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**Example of Proximal Process**


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A coach demonstrates a high energy level at all times.

A coach uses the countdown method “5, 4, 3, 2, 1” as an attention-getter and transition strategy.

A coach demonstrates the activity or skill for the youth participants.

A coach does not conduct personal business during camps, uses appropriate language and conversation, and is on time.

A coach uses teaching cues to engage participants including re-teaching, focusing on the positive, and encouraging participation during each drill, skill, or game.

A coach counts participants often, evaluates the surroundings, watches for strangers, and takes water breaks often.

A coach keeps participants from lining up to avoid acting out and boredom.

A coach memorizes youth participants’ names to demonstrate a level of connection.

A coach prepares the daily schedule before camp starts.

A coach demonstrates a high level of engagement in all aspects of a camp.

A coach will explain and demonstrate every activity.

A coach will have high expectations for participants.

A coach will teach participants positive life skills. Specifically, respect, teamwork, inclusion, leadership, and sportsmanship.

A coach will recognize and acknowledge participants who are demonstrating positive life skills.

A coach will discuss with all participants the demonstrated positive life skills.

A coach will be respectful when correcting negative behaviors of participants.

A coach will acknowledge both appropriate and inappropriate behaviors.

A coach will remind participants how it felt to be recognized for demonstrating a positive life skill.

A coach will reward a participant who consistently demonstrates one or more of the positive life skills. A coach will find an opportunity to elevate the participant's role during the camp.

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*Note.* Used with permission (Skyhawks Sports Academy, 2021).

The keys and tips in Table 16 are better defined as the actionable methods for a coach to explicitly and implicitly teach SEL competencies (Darling et al., 2005; Eccles et al., 1993; Eccles & Barber, 2001). In this study, results from the SEL PQA and the semi-structured interviews addressed the second and third research questions, demonstrating the descriptors from Table 16. In addition to the two training documents, two coaches who participated in the semi-structured interviews referenced online training videos offered by Skyhawks. One coach described the videos as resources that can be watched at the coach's convenience, while the other coach said the videos could be especially helpful when leading a camp for a sport they are less familiar with. In both cases, the training videos were supplemental, optional, resources for coaches. It can also be concluded that Skyhawks coaches present a specific disposition, which does not necessarily require formal training.

An effective coach demonstrates and models SEL competencies, which then transfer to youth participants (Hebard et al., 2021). Additionally, verbal and physical reinforcements during physical activities, along with setting clear expectations and offering praise, are key dispositions that foster the growth of SEL competencies in youth participants. (Albright et al., 2019; Anderson-Butcher et al., 2021; Barcza-Renner et al., 2022). Overall, a coach with high SEL competencies can effectively connect with youth participants, build trust, and enable them to learn and apply both athletic and SEL skills directly from the coach (Barcelona & Hartman,

2021). During the data collection for the SEL PQA, coaches were observed working with participants in conflict, acting as neutral listeners to both parties and helping them resolve their interpersonal issues. Coaches were also observed sharing their personal challenges in sports and life and how they overcame them. At the beginning of each day, the lead coach discussed the “word of the day.” In one observation, a coach talked about how he demonstrated the word of the day, “respect,” and then asked students to share how they can show respect and describe what it looks like. On multiple occasions, Skyhawks coaches were seen cheering on participants, praising their effort even if they hadn’t yet mastered a skill. Overall, Skyhawks coaches demonstrated a disposition that they enjoyed leading youth participants. This was evident in all five semi-structured interviews, where coaches shared the value they experience by working with youth. Notably, three of the five interviewees were both schoolteachers and Skyhawks coaches.

These dispositions were most evident during the data collection of the SEL PQA, which bridges SEL competencies and proximal process. According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998), proximal process interactions within a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp occur when the youth participant engages regularly with coaches, peers, activities, and sports equipment with increasing complexity from day one to day five. Effective proximal processes involve mutual interactions between participants and coaches, which are essential for positive development. These interactions with coaches, peers, camp activities, and sports gear require attention and engagement. As the participant matures, their developmental abilities expand, necessitating regular activities to prevent regression, such as attending multiple Skyhawks Sports Academy camps. Extended interactions with coaches also play a key role. SEL competencies within the proximal process of a Skyhawks camp are imperative to this study. The definitions of the five

competencies in connection to a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp are as follows (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.):

- **Self-Awareness:** Recognizing one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and understanding how they influence behavior. In a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp, this includes identifying personal strengths and areas for improvement in athletic skills.
- **Self-Management:** Effectively regulating one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations to achieve goals and aspirations. In a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp, this involves maintaining focus and perseverance during practices and games.
- **Social Awareness:** Understanding and empathizing with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures. In a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp, this means appreciating teammates’ different skills and perspectives and fostering an inclusive environment.
- **Relationship Skills:** Establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships through communication, listening, cooperation, and conflict resolution. In a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp, this includes building teamwork and resolving conflicts both on and off the field.
- **Responsible Decision-Making:** Making thoughtful and respectful choices about personal and social behavior based on ethical standards and safety considerations. In a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp, this involves making strategic decisions during games and respecting rules and fellow participants.

Table 17 presents multiple examples of proximal process data gathered using the SEL PQA. Each example includes the correlating connection to one or more SEL competencies, demonstrating how coaches and youth participants model, learn, and apply SEL competencies

during the proximal process of a camp. As stated previously, proximal process is a combination of the microsystem and the mesosystem. In Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, the microsystem is the first layer of development, encompassing the physically present relationships and activities the developing individual directly experiences. The mesosystem is the second layer, which involves the interrelations between two or more settings where the individual actively participates. Simply put, a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp is an example of where proximal process will occur.

**Table 17**

*Examples of Proximal Process from the SEL PQA and the SEL Competency Demonstrated*

Observation of Proximal Process	SEL Competency Alignment
Two campers don't want to get started after the water break. Both coaches encourage the campers "almost break time."	Self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making
During snack: A group of campers sit in a circle with a coach and play a game.	Relationship skills
During activity: A coach says "Nice try" when a camper misses a shot.	Self-awareness
Camper A says to coach, "Camper B punched me." Coach talks to camper B, reminds about keeping hands to self. Listens to each camper's side of the incident. Resolves issue with the two campers, says thanks to both.	Relationship skills, self-awareness
During snack: Coach to campers, "Are you having fun!?" Camper E, "No, coach! Well, yes, but it's so tiring!"	Self-awareness



During snack: Coach talks to two campers about a past injury; the two campers talk about some of their past injuries.	Relationship skills
Group of campers not participating in an activity, coach goes over and checks in, has a conversation, campers begin participating.	Responsible decision-making, self-awareness, social awareness
Lead coach talks about the key word for the day, respect, and what it means to show respect and who to respect. Campers share examples of respect.	Self-awareness, responsible decision-making
Camper H leaves an activity, visibly upset. Coach comes over and checks in, “You ok? H says, “I want to be a tagger [role in the activity].” Coach: “You can be on the next round.” Other coach goes over to H, checks in; H returns to activity.	Relationship skills, self-awareness, responsible decision-making
Camper starts a game during lunch (under tent, sitting in circle with a coach and other participants).	Relationship skills, responsible decision-making
Campers more skilled at soccer help less skilled campers.	Social awareness, responsible decision-making
At beginning of day(s) lead coach reviews previous day’s word and examples how that word was lived out. Students provide examples as well.	Self-awareness
Coach participating in game with campers. Models and explains what to do as they play [soccer skill]. Encourages campers as they play.	Self-management, self-awareness, responsible decision-making
Coach models big steps and then power shot with the inside of your foot. Coach demonstrates to campers how to do the power shot, “Toe down, I want you to practice that.”	Self-awareness, self-management

Coaches are engaged in each drill, standing in close proximity within the activity	Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness
Coach to camper, “We don’t use toes, toes are inaccurate. We never know where it’s going to go.”	Self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, self-management
Coach to camper, “I like how you used the other foot [to shoot].” [Camper had shot with weak foot.]	Self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making
Coach to camper, “Give yourself space, nice.”	Self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making
Coach says to all, “One camper has been an example of all five words this week.” Coach says camper’s name, gives camper a Gatorade in appreciation.	Self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making
In addition to skills, campers participate in competitions.	Responsible decision-making
Coach works with camper to participate in activity, explains how the group needs them to be successful.	Relationship skills
During snack: Camper C goes over to camper D and asks if they want to sit with them in the shade. “Do you want to sit in the shade, bud?” Camper D was sitting alone.	Social awareness, responsible decision-making, relationship skills
Coach starting Friday camp asks, “Remember our word from Monday?” Camper says, “Respect.” Coach reviews previous words of the day, connects them to the last word of the day, Sportsmanship. Campers give examples of what sportsmanship looks like.	Social awareness, responsible decision-making
Campers allowed some choice within a specific activity.	Responsible decision-making

Campers allowed to choose warm-up game.	Responsible decision-making
Coach says, “Everyone needs to participate and work together as a team. Work on passing.”	Responsible decision-making, relationship skills

### Recommendations for Further Research

This study raised several new questions for the researcher and led to areas of further research.

- Further research on Skyhawks Sports Academy youth participants who have participated in multiple camps. Research would potentially show more statistically significant data within more of the SEL competencies. One limitation of this study that further research could address is why self-management decreased among the youth participants who attended at least two camps.
- Research can also be done on how coaches’ SEL competencies are impacted by interacting with youth participants during camps. In several semi-structured interviews, coaches discussed how they had changed as coaches over time due to interacting with youth participants. With minimal training provided, the Skyhawks Sports Academy runs camps that have positive impacts on youth participants. Research can be added around the dispositions of a coach in connection to the level of SEL competencies a coach demonstrates and understands prior to leading a camp.
- Additional data could be collected within a similar intrinsic case study to support a research question seeking input from parents and guardians of youth participants and their observations of SEL competencies. A pre- and post-survey similar to the WCSD-SECA could be used to gather the necessary quantitative data to support this research question. An extension of this study would be to collect qualitative data from parents and

guardians, further explaining proximal process and how the interactions at home influence interactions at a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994).

- A similar study could be done utilizing a longitudinal approach. This approach would be able to assess the development of each of the five SEL competencies over a series of Skyhawks Sports Academy camps (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). This kind of study could help address facet six of proximal process with a focus on the coach-youth participant relationship over multiple camps with the caveat that the same youth participant and coach are the center of the study.
- A final study could research what would be defined as a “regular basis” within Bronfenbrenner’s proximal process. This would potentially address whether attending multiple five-day camps could be considered a regular basis if experienced during a set window of time.

### **Implications for Professional Practice**

The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to explore CASEL’s social-emotional learning competencies that youth develop through participation in the extracurricular PYD program Skyhawks Sports Academy camp through the teaching and modeling of those competencies by Skyhawks coaches. Athletic camps provide opportunities for students to cultivate essential social-emotional skills crucial for academic and lifelong success (Durlak et al., 2011; Hahn et al., 2007; Mahoney et al., 2021). The data gathered in this study will contribute to both the Skyhawks organization and the broader field of PYD athletic programs, providing insights on their influence on SEL competencies.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory was used to explore how the environment of a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp and coach interactions affect youth participants' development by focusing on the microsystem and mesosystem, examining how coaches' influence and interaction impact the participants' social-emotional learning competencies. According to Bronfenbrenner (2004), development is influenced by two key propositions. The first proposition states that development occurs through interactions with people, objects, and symbols within the immediate environment, known as proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Bronfenbrenner, 2004). These proximal processes involve activities guided by individuals with more knowledge than the developing individual; in this study, those individuals were the coaches at each Skyhawks camp (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 2004). The second proposition states that individuals engage in activities or opportunities they have previously learned through proximal processes but without direct involvement from a more knowledgeable person (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This study demonstrated that one avenue to address healthy proximal process and SEL competency development is through a Skyhawks Academy Sports camp. These are two specific implications for anyone who works with youth.

First, all five of the CASEL SEL competencies are essential, but few programs can address every SEL competency. In a Skyhawks Sports Academy camp, all five competencies are addressed. Further, when youth participants attend multiple camps, the competencies of social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making show significant growth. As educators and youth workers seek ways to address the concerns around both mental health and academic success, a focus on developing SEL competencies should be the first step for both concerns. By addressing the SEL competencies of self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, social awareness, and responsible decision-making through curriculum, extracurricular

activities, and Positive Youth Development programs, educators can narrow the gap in mental health stability and academic success (Cipriano et al., 2023; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; McGraw Hill, 2021).

Second, with recent bills put forward by the House of Representatives, SEL has garnered the attention of the U.S. government, making funding available for educational institutions to implement SEL practices (SELF Act, 2018; Aim Higher Act, 2018). Educators seeking ways to increase SEL competencies can utilize resources for curriculum, school-sponsored extracurricular activities, and Positive Youth Development programs like Skyhawks. SEL is traditionally addressed through classroom curriculum, but the research in this study shows that programs that involve adults in a coach-like role can impact SEL competencies effectively. School leaders can utilize the Skyhawks program by bringing such programs into the school and providing them as an after-school opportunity for students not already involved in extracurricular activities. This can apply to schools with a high level of low socio-economic status students, who may not be able to afford the cost of a Skyhawks camp. Using the school budget, a school leader can provide students with the opportunity to grow in SEL competencies by participating in a camp for free. It is important to note that the Skyhawks Sports Academy can flex its camp format into a model that works best for a school. For example, a camp can occur during an extended school break or after school on certain days over a set period.

The third implication is for parents and ensuring their children engage in PYD programs such as Skyhawks. The maturation of SEL competencies is paramount in child development and is accomplished through proximal process. Without youth engagement in programs like Skyhawks, parents are risking a potential delay in the development of their children (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.; McGraw Hill, 2021; Sande

et al., 2019; Wallender et al., 2020; West et al., 2016). PYD programs require little from parents other than financial resources. School leaders can help communicate the need for proximal process through informing parents of SEL initiatives and benefits, and ways to involve their children. Educators can also advertise athletic PYD programs as both athletic skill development and SEL development. It is recommended that educators use the term “soft skills” rather than SEL competencies, since soft skills is a term more familiar to non-educators.

The next implication is for Skyhawks Sports Academy and the training provided to the academy coaches. Although simple, the two training documents, *10 Keys to Successful Coaching* and *Teaching Tips for Coaches*, effectively convey the essence of coaching. The Skyhawks should seek ways to build on the foundation of these two documents with additional training, intentionally focusing on situations where the documents’ keys and tips could be implemented. A recommendation for the Skyhawks Sports Academy is to use the SEL PQA tool that was used in this study on their camps over the course of a summer of camps. The data acquired from the SEL PQA would help them determine the specific areas they need to improve through additional training to have a greater impact on proximal process of youth participants.

A similar implication is for schools around extracurricular activities led by coaches and advisors. School leaders provide professional development and training for classroom educators, and they should do the same for coaches and advisors. Similar to the previous implication, individual schools should use the SEL PQA over a school year of athletic and other activities to gauge the level of training needed in specific areas of the SEL PQA. Intentional training on how to implement strategies that develop SEL competencies will have a greater impact on the proximal process of participating youth.

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## Appendix A

### Site Approval

February 27, 2023

Northwest Nazarene University  
Attention: IRB Committee  
Helstrom Business Center 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
623 S. University Boulevard  
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Mr. Jeremy Vincent

Dear IRB Members:

This letter is to inform you that the Skyhawks Sports Academy has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study. Mr. Vincent has permission to conduct his research study through the Skyhawks Sports Academy. The authorization dates for this research study are August 2023 through February 2024..

Respectfully,



Nick Chapman

Northwest Regional Manager  
Skyhawks Sports Academy

## Appendix B

### Assent Script

Hello, my name is Jeremy Vincent, and I am a school principal. I really enjoy being a principal and learning about what students, like yourselves, need from school, including sports and camps like the Skyhawks.

Today, I get to watch you learn how to play [specific sport] and I also get to watch your coaches as they teach you how to play [specific sport].

I'm very excited to be here because I know how fun today's camp will be and I know how great it is to have programs like the Skyhawks!

You will learn a lot from this camp, and not just [specific sport]. At the end of today's session, if it's ok with your parent(s), it would really be helpful for me if you took a few minutes to complete a survey that will ask you some questions about yourself. It's pretty easy, all the questions are multiple choice.

If you do not want to take the survey, that is ok.

Thank you and have a great camp!

## **Appendix C**

### **Parent/Guardian Informed Consent**

#### **A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND**

Your child is being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Jeremy Vincent from Northwest Nazarene University. The purpose of this study is examining Social Emotional Learning competencies taught by Skyhawks coaches during camps. This study will contribute to the Mr. Vincent's completion of his PhD.

#### **B. PROCEDURES**

Should you decide to allow your child to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of a 17-item survey that will be administered to individual participants at the current Skyhawks Sports Academy on the first and the last day of camp. Your child will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to Social Emotional Learning competencies.

The survey will take approximately 7 minutes each time.

#### **C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS**

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your child's involvement in this study (that is, no risks beyond the risks associated with everyday life).

1. Some of the discussion questions may make you uncomfortable or upset, but you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.
2. Confidentiality: Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy; however, your records will be handled as confidentially as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study. All data will be kept in a secure, password-protected folder on the researcher's personal computer. In compliance with the Federal wide Assurance Code, data from this study will be kept for three years, after which all data from the study will be destroyed (45 CFR 46.117).
3. Only the primary researcher and the research supervisor will be privy to data from this study. As researchers, both parties are bound to keep data as secure and confidential as possible.

**D. BENEFITS**

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information you provide may help educators to better understand the impact of sports camps on social emotional learning.

**E. PAYMENTS**

There are no payments for participating in this study.

**F. QUESTIONS**

If you have questions or concerns about participation in this study, you should first talk with the investigator. Jeremy Vincent can be contacted via email at [jvincent@my.nnu.edu](mailto:jvincent@my.nnu.edu), via telephone at [REDACTED] or by writing: Jeremy Vincent [REDACTED]

Should you feel distressed due to participation in this, you should contact your own health care provider.

**G. CONSENT**

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

**PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY.** You are free to decline for your youth participant to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Your decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on your present or future status as a professional.

## Appendix D

### Semi-structured coach interview participant request email

Coaches,

My name is Jeremy Vincent, and I have the privilege of serving as a middle school principal in Spokane Valley. In addition to my role at the school, I am pursuing my doctoral studies in the Department of Education at Northwest Nazarene University.

I recently received your contact information from Louis Johnson, and I'm reaching out with a unique opportunity. My research focuses on the valuable non-athletic skills that campers acquire, such as self-management and relationship building, through their participation in Skyhawks Sports camps.

I am seeking the perspectives of Skyhawk coaches, both past and present, through one-on-one interviews to understand coaching styles and the knowledge imparted through Skyhawk's training. Your insights would be incredibly valuable to the success of my research.

If you are interested in participating or if you have any questions, please respond to this email or reach out to me via text at (████) █████. As a token of appreciation for your time and contribution, participants in the interview process will receive a **\$15 gift card to Starbucks**.

I know this research will be able to capture everything you do for kids as their coach, and I hope I have the opportunity to include your insights.

Thank you for your time.

Jeremy Vincent

## **Appendix E**

### **Coach Interview Informed Consent**

#### **A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND**

Jeremy Vincent, a doctoral student in the Department of Education at Northwest Nazarene University is conducting a research study related to the level of Social Emotional Learning competencies taught by Skyhawks coaches during camps. We appreciate your involvement in helping us investigate how to better serve and meet the needs of Northwest Nazarene University students.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a healthy volunteer, over the age of 18.

#### **B. PROCEDURES**

If you agree to be in the study, the following will occur:

1. You will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form, volunteering to participate in the study.
2. You will participate in a face-to-face interview about Social Emotional Learning competencies as a Skyhawks coach.

These procedures will be completed at a location of the Skyhawks camp where you were the coach. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes.

#### **C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS**

1. Some of the interview questions may make you uncomfortable or upset, but you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.
2. Confidentiality: Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy; however, your records will be handled as confidentially as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study. All data from notes and digital recordings will be kept in a secure, password-protected folder on the researcher's personal computer. In compliance with the Federal wide Assurance Code, data from this study will be kept for three years, after which all data from the study will be destroyed (45 CFR 46.117).
3. Only the primary researcher and the research supervisor will be privy to data from this study. As researchers, both parties are bound to keep data as secure and confidential as possible.

#### **D. BENEFITS**

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information you provide may help educators to better understand the impact of sports camps on social emotional learning.

#### **E. PAYMENTS**

Participants will receive a \$15 gift card to Starbucks.

#### **F. QUESTIONS**

If you have questions or concerns about participation in this study, you should first talk with the investigator. Jeremy Vincent can be contacted via email at [jvincent@nnu.edu](mailto:jvincent@nnu.edu), via telephone at ( ) or by writing: Jeremy Vincent

Should you feel distressed due to participation in this, you should contact your own health care provider.

#### **G. CONSENT**

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

**PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY.** You are free to decline participation to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Your decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on your present or future status as a professional.

*I give my consent to participate in this study:*

---

**Signature of Study Participant**

---

**Date**

---

**Signature of Person Obtaining Consent**

---

**Date**

**THE NORTHWEST NAZARENE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
HAS REVIEWED THIS PROJECT FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN  
PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH.**

## Appendix F

### Coach Interview

1. How long have you been/were you a Skyhawks coach?
2. Why did you become a Skyhawks coach?
3. What has been a takeaway for you as a Skyhawks coach?
4. What kind of training did the Skyhawks provide before you began working with campers?
5. Looking at coaching practices, are you familiar with the skills: self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills?
6. Did your training involve anything connected to how to teach/coach those skills?
7. Do you or how do you coach campers up on these skills?



## Appendix G

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM QUALITY ASSESSMENT			
Organization name:			
Site/program name:			
Name(s) of program offering(s) observed:			
Date of observation:			

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## INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE

The Social and Emotional Learning Program Quality Assessment (SEL PQA) draws from and builds on various program quality assessments (PQA) that the Forum for Youth Investments, David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality has developed with partners across the country over many years: the Youth and School-Age PQA, the Summer Learning PQA, and the Academic Skill-Building PQA. The SEL PQA articulates and measures staff practices that have been identified by research on positive youth development, social and emotional learning, and the science of learning and development, among others. The SEL PQA is designed to evaluate the quality of program, and identify staff training needs. It consists of a set of scoreable standards for best practices in afterschool programs, community organizations, schools, summer programs and other places where young people have fun, work, and learn with adults. Like all of our Program Quality Assessments (PQAs), the SEL PQA can be used for self-assessment and/or for external assessment. Assessments are conducted by carefully observing the interactions of staff and young people in a program; taking objective, detailed notes; and scoring based on anecdotal evidence recorded in observational notes. The SEL PQA is designed to empower people and organizations to envision the highest quality programming for young people by providing a shared language for adult practice and decision making and by producing scores that can be used for comparison and assessment of progress over time.

### THE 2020 REVISION

In March 2020, many programs transitioned to virtual learning environments. To support virtual assessment, in addition to the scoring option, Not Scored (NS), was created, allowing assessors to decide before the assessment not to score specific items because they are not applicable to the purpose or modality of the program. Similar to an "X", it was decided that a score of "NS" will also be excluded from the scale and domain averages so as not to negatively impact the scores. This change then updated the scoring calculations.

### DEFINITIONS

- Item or item row refers to a single row on the SEL PQA for which there are descriptors for scores 1, 3 and 5. Level 5 describes best practice.
- Scale refers to the group of 3-6 items falling under the same heading. For example, Scaffolding Learning is a scale that is made up of four items. Scale score refers to the average of the scores (one per item) that make up a scale. For example, the Emotion Coaching scale, has four items that can be scored as 1, 3 or 5 and then averaged for a scale score.
- Domain refers to the group of scales falling under one of the sections I-IV. For example, in the SEL PQA, a domain is "I. Supportive Environment," which contains scales that pertain to that domain. Domain score is the average of scale scores for each domain. For example, the domain "I. Supportive Environment" contains three scale scores to be averaged for a domain score.
- Organization refers to the agency that operates services for young people. An organization may be a community-based nonprofit agency, church or temple, private center, neighborhood association, or school.
- Site refers to the physical location of the activities being observed. For example, Middleton School or Bay Area Community Center.
- Program offerings refer to structured activities led by regular staff with the same young people over time. This includes the range of scheduled services available to young people at an organization (classes, workshops, meetings, special events, homework help, discussion groups, etc.)
- Session refers to one scheduled period of a program offering, e.g., a session might be when the photography club meets from 3 to 5 p.m. on Wednesday.
- Staff refers to the person or persons facilitating a session. Staff may include paid workers, volunteers or peer leaders.
- Activities are the planned interactions led by staff within a program offering. For example, the activities in an art club might include making a collage, learning different painting techniques and making sculptures with found objects.
- Program hours are the normal hours that the full range of program offerings are in session.
- Structured refers to the quality of being intentional, planned, prompted, initiated and/or named by staff; it does not refer to young people's informal conversation or actions.



## BENEFITS

The SELPCA offers several important attributes:

- **Experience-tested approach** – The standards for best practices that make up the SEL PCA are grounded in extensive experience working with young people. Together, the scales in the instrument represent a youth development approach that works.
- **Research-based rubrics** – The SEL PCA contains proven measurement rubrics that allow observers to differentiate programs in important and meaningful ways.
- **Opportunities to observe practice** – Staff using the SEL PCA must spend time watching what happens in their program.
- **Flexibility** – The SEL PCA is designed to meet a range of accountability and improvement needs, from self-assessment to research and evaluation.

## INTRODUCTION TO ITEMS & SCORING

The SELPCA items measure quality in different ways. Some items measure aspects of the environment or the way the session is structured. Some items measure if staff exhibit specific behaviors or best practice methods, or how frequently staff carry out the practice. Some items distinguish between young person-initiated behaviors that occur informally/spontaneously & those that have been set up intentionally by staff. Others measure how many young people have certain opportunities. It is important to note that items generally capture either staff practices or young people behaviors/opportunities, but not both. Both are indicators of a quality program, although the SELPCA & continuous improvement approach focus on staff behaviors as that is where staff can directly make changes or improvements.

Scores at all levels are based on a five-point measurement scale ranging from 1-5, where 1 generally represents the absence of a practice or the presence of a poor practice, 3 represents the informal presence of the practice or availability of the practice to only some young people, and 5 represents intentional delivery of the highest quality practices.

In observing and scoring, it is helpful to keep the following in mind:

- Think about the intent of the item when scoring. Consult the SELPCA handbook as needed.
- Follow through and pay attention to an entire sequence of events (e.g., young person behavior, staff response, young person response).
- If the item assesses young people's opportunity for something, score based on whether the opportunity was present or explicitly offered, even if some young people do not take advantage of the opportunity.
- Score based on what you see that day, even if there were extenuating circumstances present that affected scores.
- If there are two or more staff members, score on whether any one of the staff members carry out a certain practice. Otherwise, focus on the primary staff member.

## PROGRAM INFORMATION

*(Complete for Program Self-Assessment or External Assessment)*

Organization name: \_\_\_\_\_ Site/program name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of observation (m/d/y): \_\_\_\_\_  
 (If multiple observations were conducted, provide the date of the last one conducted.)

How was this observation conducted? Check all that apply:

☐ In-person observation ☐ Live virtual observation ☐ Observed a recorded session

Name(s) of program offering(s) observed: \_\_\_\_\_

Brief description of program offering(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Staff: Youth Ratio: Total number of staff observed \_\_\_\_\_ Total number of young people observed \_\_\_\_\_

Grades of young people observed (Circle all that apply):

K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 12+

Type(s) of program/activity observed (Check all that apply):

☐ Mentoring

☐ Literacy

☐ STEM

☐ Other academic enrichment  
 (e.g., homework help, tutoring, college prep)

☐ Career readiness  
 (e.g., entrepreneurship)

☐ Youth leadership

☐ Community service/  
 civic engagement

☐ Visual & performing arts  
 (e.g., drama, painting, music)

☐ Sports, fitness & physical health  
 (e.g., basketball, dance, cooking)

☐ Other:

II. SAFE ENVIRONMENT: CREATING SAFE SPACES

**CREATING SAFE SPACES | Staff provide a safe and welcoming environment**

ITEMS		SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES	
1.	<p>1 The emotional climate of the session is predominantly negative (e.g., disrespectful, tense, exclusive, even angry or hostile); negative behaviors, such as, rudeness, bragging, insults, "trash talking," negative gestures or other such actions are not mediated by either young people or staff.</p>	<p>3 The emotional climate of the session is predominantly positive. Negative behaviors are mediated (e.g., countered, curtailed, defused) by staff or young people.</p>	<p>5 The emotional climate is always positive (e.g., mutually respectful, relaxed, equitable, characterized by teamwork, camaraderie, inclusiveness); young people and staff are observed offering encouragement, affirmations or support to others.</p>
2.	<p>1 Staff use negative or disrespectful words, tone of voice, or body language.</p>	<p>3 Staff use neutral or respectful words, tone of voice, and body language.</p>	<p>5 Staff use positive and warm words, tone of voice, and body language that convey enthusiastic welcome, sincere affection, or genuine interest in young people's well-being (e.g., "Wow! It is so good to see you back at the program!" "Awesome... I am so sorry your pet died!" Staff smile frequently; staff make appropriate and culturally relevant gestures that are responded to positively by young people—high fives, fist bumps, handshakes, hugs, pats on the back, etc.)</p>

## 1. SAFE ENVIRONMENT: CREATING SAFE SPACES

## CREATING SAFE SPACES, continued | Staff provide a safe and welcoming environment

ITEMS		SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES	
1. Staff do not create a safe space for young people to share (e.g., staff do not respond supportively if young people share, express emotions or make mistakes, or staff do not provide an opportunity for young people to share).	3. Staff create a safe space for young people to share (e.g., avoid eye shoving or emotions or experiences, respond supportively if young people share but do not provide young people with specific guidance or supports for creating a safe space).	5. Staff create a safe space for young people to share and provide young people with specific guidance or supports for creating a safe space (e.g., allow someone to finish without being interrupted, allow person to say if they choose, only the person with the talking stick speaks, reinforce young people when they stand up for each other or someone outside the group).	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Staff group management style includes multiple instances of reactive or negative responses OR includes even one example of a harsh or demeaning response.	3. Staff group management style includes proactive and/or positive approaches, but also includes reactive or negative responses (e.g., mild reprimands, displaying annoyance, losing reward and consequences, yelling to get young people's attention).	5. Staff group management style is characterized by proactive or positive approaches (e.g., proactively promoting constructive engagement, calm redirection, structured at-benches, etc.), showing understanding of possible emotional or physical triggers of individuals in the group, etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/>





L. SAFE ENVIRONMENT: CREATING SAFE SPACES

CREATING SAFE SPACES, continued | Staff provide a safe and welcoming environment

ITEMS		SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES	
<p>3 Staff consistently hold young people accountable to an agreed-upon set of guidelines, behavior expectations, or consequences (e.g., staff opinion or preference takes precedence over any group agreements).</p>	<p>3 Staff consistently hold young people accountable to an agreed-upon set of guidelines, behavior expectations, or consequences.</p>	<p>5 Staff consistently hold young people and themselves accountable to an agreed-upon set of guidelines, behavior expectations, or consequences (e.g., staff note guidelines apply to themselves as well as to young people).</p>	<p>Do not score if guidelines, behavioral expectations, or consequences are not referred to. Mark with an X.</p>
<p>1 Staff do not consistently hold young people accountable to an agreed-upon set of guidelines, behavior expectations, or consequences (e.g., staff opinion or preference takes precedence over any group agreements).</p>	<p>3 There is no evidence of bias on the part of staff.</p>	<p>5 There is no evidence of bias on the part of staff based on religion, culture, race/ethnicity, class, gender, ability, appearance, or sexual orientation and there is evidence of mutual respect and active inclusion (e.g., most plans include dietary or religious food requirements; references made to more than one type of family grouping preferred pronouns are used).</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>6. There is evidence of religious, cultural, socioeconomic, class, gender, ability, appearance, or sexual orientation bias on the part of staff (e.g., comments based on stereotypical assumptions, slurs, clearly differential treatment, etc.).</p>			

## E. SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT | EMOTION COACHING | SCAFFOLDING LEARNING | FOSTERING GROWTH MINDSET

## EMOTION COACHING | Staff prompt young people to be aware of and constructively handle their emotions

ITEMS				SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES	
1.	1 Staff do not acknowledge, validate, or name emotions of young people.	3 Staff occasionally acknowledge, validate, and name emotions of young people.	5 Staff consistently acknowledge, validate, and name emotions of young people to 9. "It seems you are disappointed that you didn't get the part."	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2.	1 Staff do not ask young people to name or describe their emotions or identify the intensity of their emotions.	3 Staff ask some young people to name or describe their emotions or identify the intensity of their emotions (e.g., "So are you just disappointed or are you really crushed that you weren't chosen?").	5 Staff ask all young people to name or describe their emotions or identify the intensity of their emotions (e.g., "So everyone tell us how you felt after the art fair?").	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3.	1 Staff do not ask young people about or discuss constructive handling of their emotions.	3 Once, staff ask young people about or discuss constructive handling of their emotions (e.g., staff support young people to distinguish between feelings and actions, talk about ways to calm oneself, use "I feel" language rather than accusations, etc.).	5 More than once, staff ask young people about or discuss constructive handling of their emotions (e.g., staff support young people to distinguish between feelings and actions, talk about ways to calm oneself or to express grief in an accomplishment without putting others down, etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4.	1 Staff do not tell or ask young people about the causes of their emotions.	3 Staff tell young people about possible causes of their emotions – either in response to in-the-moment situations or in discussion of an external situation (e.g., "I think maybe you didn't speak up because you were afraid?").	5 Staff ask young people about the causes of their emotions (e.g., "Why were you so angry?" "What happened that made you feel that way?").	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## SCAFFOLDING LEARNING | Staff scaffold tasks for optimal learning

ITEMS		SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES	
1.	<p>1 Staff do not break difficult tasks into smaller or simpler steps for young people, or there are no tasks of sufficient difficulty to warrant exploring steps.</p>	<p>3 Staff break down difficult tasks into smaller or simpler steps but steps are not outlined or explained before they begin</p>	<p>5 Staff break down difficult tasks into smaller or simpler steps which are outlined or explained to young people before they begin (e.g., steps are explained in sequence; instructions are provided for specific steps; examples of completed steps are shared).</p>
2.	<p>1 Staff do not model skills.</p>	<p>3 Staff model skills for some young people.</p>	<p>5 Staff model skills for all young people.</p>
3.	<p>1 Staff do not encourage young people to try out skills or attempt higher levels of performance.</p>	<p>3 Staff encourage some young people to try out skills or attempt higher levels of performance.</p>	<p>5 Staff encourage all young people to try out skills or attempt higher levels of performance.</p>
4.	<p>1 Staff do not adjust the difficulty of the task or adjust supports when adjustments are clearly needed (e.g., when young people fail through the task easily, encourage frequent errors, or complain about not understanding how to do task).</p>	<p>3 Staff do not actively monitor the level of challenge for individuals or the group, but there is no clear evidence of inappropriate level of challenge.</p>	<p>5 Staff monitor or state an observation of the level of challenge for individuals or the group and adjust support to maintain an appropriate level of challenge, if necessary (e.g., "Do you understand how to do this?" "Let's try doing it together and then we'll see if you can do it on your own." "It looks like that may be too easy for you. Let's try something harder".</p>

## FOSTERING GROWTH MINDSET | Staff support young people in developing achievement effort beliefs

ITEMS		SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES	
1.	<p>1 Staff do not have young people attempt to figure out for themselves how to improve.</p> <p>3 Staff ask young people to attempt to figure out how to improve or correct their work but do not self-identify allow them to do so (e.g., staff jump in with correct answer before young person has time to respond, when a young person doesn't know how to improve, staff don't rephrase the question or give a hint).</p> <p>5 Staff guide or support young people in attempting to figure out for themselves how to improve (e.g., "So, what could you do differently?" "Next time, what could you do to keep yourself focused?").</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2.	<p>1 Staff do not support contributions or accomplishments of young people in either of the ways described for a score of 3 or 5, or simply don't support young people at all.</p> <p>3 Staff support contributions or accomplishments of young people, but use only subjective or evaluative comments such as "Good job!" "I like it!" or "You're so smart!"</p> <p>5 Staff support contributions or accomplishments of young people by acknowledging what they've said or done with specific, non-evaluative language (e.g., "The detail in that sentence helps me create the picture in my mind!" "You figured that word out from the context by your self!"</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3.	<p>1 Staff only attribute success or failure to factors outside of young people's control (e.g., innate ability, luck, fate, the mistakes of others, "Some people are just not good at math," "It was the teacher's fault for giving such a hard task.")</p> <p>3 Staff attribute success or failure to factors both within and outside of young people's control or make neutral/balanced about young people's credit of over success or failure.</p> <p>5 Staff attribute success to effort, strategy, attention, practice, or persistence (e.g., "Your brain is like a muscle, the more you exercise it, the better it works," "It may take some extra practice, but you'll get better at it," "I see you worked hard to meet your goal," "You can do this – just try a different strategy this time.")</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## FOSTERING TEAMWORK | Staff provide opportunities to collaborate and work cooperatively with others

ITEMS	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES
1. Staff do not provide opportunities for young people to participate in teams or small groups.	<div data-bbox="1159 1199 1198 1247" data-kind="parent" data-rs="2"><input type="checkbox"/></div> <div data-bbox="979 617 1198 890">3. Staff provide opportunities for young people to participate in small groups, but the activity doesn't include active collaboration (e.g., staff assign groups where young people work on individual art projects, at the same table; young people individually earn points for their group).</div> <div data-bbox="1027 911 1198 1163">5. Staff provide opportunities for young people to participate in small groups that require active collaboration (e.g., working together on a joint project, activities with discussion and planning, interdependencies, etc.).</div>
2. Staff do not provide opportunities for young people to work toward shared goals.	<div data-bbox="914 1199 954 1247" data-kind="parent" data-rs="2"><input type="checkbox"/></div> <div data-bbox="889 617 954 890">3. Staff provide opportunities for some young people to work toward shared goals.</div> <div data-bbox="800 911 954 1163">5. Staff provide opportunities for all young people (groups or individuals) to work toward shared goals (e.g., each young person contributes a section to a story; young people build a catapult together).</div>
3. Staff do not provide young people opportunities to practice group-process skills.	<div data-bbox="735 1199 776 1247" data-kind="parent" data-rs="2"><input type="checkbox"/></div> <div data-bbox="600 617 776 890">3. Staff provide all young people at least a limited opportunity to understand and practice group-process skills (e.g., a full group discussion is long enough for all young people to contribute; young people briefly share in pairs).</div> <div data-bbox="621 911 776 1163">5. Staff provide all young people multiple or extended opportunities to understand and practice group-process skills (e.g., contribute ideas or actions to the group; do a task with others; take responsibility for a part).</div>



## PROMOTING RESPONSIBILITY AND LEADERSHIP | Staff provide young people with opportunities to grow in responsibility and leadership

ITEMS	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES	
1. Staff do not provide young people with opportunities to be responsible for assigned tasks or activities.	<p>3 Staff provide some young people with opportunities to be responsible for assigned tasks or activities.</p> <p>5 Staff provide all young people with opportunities to be responsible for assigned tasks or activities (e.g., taking attendance, handing out snacks, leading an opening activity).</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Staff frequently take over or interfere intrusively in assigned tasks or activities.	<p>3 Staff occasionally take over or interfere intrusively in assigned tasks or activities.</p> <p>5 Staff never take over or interfere intrusively in assigned tasks or activities; supporting young people to carry out roles or responsibilities as independently as possible.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Staff do not provide opportunities for any young people to mentor an individual.	<p>3 Staff provide one young person an opportunity to mentor an individual.</p> <p>5 Staff provide more than one young person an opportunity to mentor an individual (e.g., young people teach or coach another).</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Staff do not provide opportunities for young people to lead a group.	<p>3 Staff provide one young person an opportunity to lead a group (e.g., one young person leads warm-up exercises or a small group discussion).</p> <p>5 Staff provide more than one young person an opportunity to lead a group (e.g., teach others; lead a discussion, song, project, event, outing or other activity).</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Staff do not provide young people with an opportunity to share their ideas or work with the entire group.	<p>3 Staff provide one young person with an opportunity to share their ideas or work with the entire group.</p> <p>5 Staff provide more than one young person with an opportunity to share their ideas or work with the entire group (e.g., report results of their small group activity to a large group; describe their individual project to the whole group; share ideas in partnership with adults).</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## II. INTERACTIVE ENVIRONMENT: FOSTERING TEAMWORK | PROMOTING RESPONSIBILITY AND LEADERSHIP | CULTIVATING EMPATHY

### CULTIVATING EMPATHY | Staff support young people in practicing empathy skills

ITEMS		SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES	
1.	<p>1 Staff do not provide young people with an intentional activity where listening to the stories, experiences, feelings, or viewpoints of others is part of the activity.</p>	<p>3 Staff provide young people an intentional activity where listening to the stories, experiences, feelings, or viewpoints of others is part of the activity but not its sole focus (e.g., staff have young people discuss and plan what organizations might be open to their community action project).</p>	<p>5 Staff provide young people with an intentional activity where listening, understanding, and acknowledging the personal stories, experiences, feelings, culture, or viewpoints of others is the sole focus of the activity (e.g., staff have young people in small groups share about an experience that shaped their life).</p>
2.	<p>1 Staff do not tell young people about or ask young people to discuss the causes or consequences of other people's emotions.</p>	<p>3 Staff tell young people about the causes or consequences of other people's emotions but do not involve young people in a discussion about it.</p>	<p>5 Staff ask young people to discuss the causes or consequences of other people's emotions (e.g., in response to in-the-moment situations, past experiences, or in discussion of other actual or fictional events or experiences).</p>
3.	<p>1 Staff do not provide explicit opportunities for young people to affirm, appreciate, or show kindness to others.</p>	<p>3 Staff provide explicit opportunities for some young people to affirm, appreciate, or show kindness to others.</p>	<p>5 Staff provide explicit opportunities for all young people to affirm, appreciate, or show kindness to others (e.g., staff have young people write notes to a peer who is ill; organize can goods drive for a food bank; have each young person describe the strengths they appreciate in a teammate and how it helps them build on their own strength to).</p>

## CULTIVATING EMPATHY, continued | Staff support young people in practicing empathy skills

ITEMS	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES
<p>1 Staff do not actively support young people's understanding and appreciation of differences.</p>	<p>3 Staff support young people's understanding and appreciation of differences only informally or in the moment (e.g., "Great! I see your group has found a way to take advantage of team members who are especially good with details, and those whose strength is seeing the big picture." "Diversity is one of the things that makes our program great!"</p> <p>5 Staff provide formal opportunities to learn about, discuss, and value differences (e.g., young people interview people from different generations, countries, or backgrounds; staff have young people learn about each other's strengths after they take personality inventories).</p>
<p>4.</p>	<div data-bbox="1162 1203 1203 1255" style="border: 1px solid black; width: 25px; height: 25px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div>



## FURTHERING LEARNING | Staff encourage young people to deepen their learning

ITEMS	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES
<p>1. Staff do not make, or have young people make, connections between session activities and young people's previous knowledge.</p>	<p>3 Staff make connections between session activities and young people's previous knowledge (e.g., "These angles remind me of a baseball field.")</p> <p>5 Staff have young people make connections between session activities and young people's previous knowledge (e.g., related topics previously studied, "real world" applications or issues. For example, staff ask young people questions like "How does our program gardening project relate to what you learned about river pollution?").</p>
<p>2. Staff do not support young people in linking concrete examples to content-related principles or categories.</p>	<p>3 Once, staff support young people in linking concrete examples to content-related principles or categories.</p> <p>5 More than once, staff support young people in linking concrete examples to content-related principles or categories. (e.g., "Getting more specific: names to your findings will help others understand you better." "What other four-sided figure would be a quadrilateral?" "Understanding a candidate's platform will help voters make informed decisions.")</p>

## FURTHERING LEARNING, continued | Staff encourage young people to deepen their learning

ITEMS		SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES
1 Staff do not encourage young people to deepen or extend knowledge.	3 One time, staff encourage young people to deepen or extend knowledge (e.g., staff ask young people questions that encourage young people to analyze, define a problem, or make comparisons, predictions, applications, inferences, or generate alternate solutions).	5 Two or more times, staff encourage young people to deepen or extend their knowledge or thinking (e.g., staff ask open-ended questions that encourage young people to analyze, define a problem, make comparisons or inferences, predict, apply, evaluate or generate alternate solutions. For example, "How do you think the distance from the lamp will affect the seedlings?" What does this have in common with what you learned last week?").
3.		
4.	1 Staff do not support young people to use logical reasoning.	3 Once, staff support young people to use logical reasoning.
		5 More than once, staff support young people to use logical reasoning (e.g., "Why do you think that would happen?" "Please explain your reasoning?").
5.	1 Staff tell young people where to or what to do and rarely or never make comments, ask questions that guide young people in discovering an answer to a problem, or guide young people's initiative in learning (e.g., "What else would a reader want to know about your character?" "What do you think would happen if you did X first?").	3 Staff sometimes make comments, ask questions that guide young people in discovering an answer to a problem, or guide young people's initiative in learning (e.g., "And what else do you notice?" "Your paragraph tells me what, but not why." "What tools do you think you need before you start?").
		5 Staff frequently make comments, ask questions that guide young people in discovering an answer to a problem, or guide young people's initiative in learning (e.g., "And what else do you notice?" "Your paragraph tells me what, but not why." "What tools do you think you need before you start?").

## SUPPORTING YOUTH INTERESTS | Staff shape opportunities for young people to make choices based on their interests

ITEMS	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES
1 Staff do not provide opportunities for young people to make choices.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Staff provide opportunities for young people to make at least one choice within the framework of the activities, but the choices are limited to discrete options presented by the staff (e.g., "Pick one of the following topics." "Do it this way or that way?").	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Staff provide all young people with multiple opportunities for choice among or within activities (e.g., "You can pick whatever you want—be any color, any design." "You can use the pattern or that one?").	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Staff neither discourage nor encourage young people making their creativity, curiosity, or imagination.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Staff support young people in using their creativity, curiosity, or imagination (e.g., staff encourage young people to use materials, knowledge, or skills in new ways to wonder or explore. For example, staff say, "Think about all the different ways you could end the story?").	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	<input type="checkbox"/>

## SUPPORTING PLANS AND GOALS | Staff provide opportunities to plan, set goals, and solve problems

ITEMS	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ANECDOTES	
1. Staff do not provide opportunities for young people to set goals or make or revise plans for projects or activities.	3 Staff provide one opportunity for young people (individual or group) to set goals, or make or revise plans for a project or activity (e.g., how to spend their time, how to do a task).	5 Staff provide multiple opportunities for young people (individual or group) to set goals, or make or revise plans for projects and activities (e.g., how to spend their time, how to do a task).
2. Staff do not provide opportunities for young people to record, represent, or share plans.	3 Staff provide opportunities for young people to discuss or share their plans with others.	5 Staff provide opportunities for young people to record or represent their plans (e.g., a small group draws a diagram before building; staff help all group make a large idea web to plan an event; young people create a list or timeline).
3. Staff do not have young people monitor progress toward goals.	3 Staff have young people monitor progress toward goals the staff set.	5 Staff have young people monitor progress toward goals the young people set for themselves.
4. Staff do not support young people to achieve a goal or solve a problem.	3 Staff support young people to try one way to achieve a goal or solve the problem.	5 Staff support young people to try more than one way to meet a goal or solve a problem (e.g., staff tell young people to devise more than one solution, try another approach; staff structure activity to use different processes to anticipate or solve a problem).

## SEL PQA OBSERVATION GUIDE

### *Summary of Scales*

#### **I. SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

*Creating Safe Spaces*

#### **II. SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT**

*Emotion Coaching*

*Scaffolding Learning*

*Fostering Growth Mindset*

#### **III. INTERACTIVE ENVIRONMENT**

*Fostering Teamwork*

*Promoting Responsibility and Leadership*

*Cultivating Empathy*

#### **IV. ENGAGING ENVIRONMENT**

*Furthering Learning*

*Supporting Youth Interests*

Scheduled starting time: \_\_\_\_\_ Actual starting time: \_\_\_\_\_

Scheduled end time: \_\_\_\_\_ Actual end time: \_\_\_\_\_



THESE DATA ARE PRESENTED IN FIGURE 1. OF THE 100,000,000 INHABITANTS OF THE WORLD, THE CONCENTRATION OF INHABITANTS IN COUNTRIES OF 100,000,000 OR MORE IS 10 PERCENT. THE CONCENTRATION OF INHABITANTS IN COUNTRIES OF 10,000,000 OR MORE IS 30 PERCENT. THE CONCENTRATION OF INHABITANTS IN COUNTRIES OF 1,000,000 OR MORE IS 60 PERCENT. THE CONCENTRATION OF INHABITANTS IN COUNTRIES OF 100,000 OR MORE IS 90 PERCENT. THE CONCENTRATION OF INHABITANTS IN COUNTRIES OF 10,000 OR MORE IS 99 PERCENT. THE CONCENTRATION OF INHABITANTS IN COUNTRIES OF 1,000 OR MORE IS 99.9 PERCENT. THE CONCENTRATION OF INHABITANTS IN COUNTRIES OF 100 OR MORE IS 99.99 PERCENT. THE CONCENTRATION OF INHABITANTS IN COUNTRIES OF 10 OR MORE IS 99.999 PERCENT. THE CONCENTRATION OF INHABITANTS IN COUNTRIES OF 1 OR MORE IS 99.9999 PERCENT. THE CONCENTRATION OF INHABITANTS IN COUNTRIES OF 0 OR MORE IS 100 PERCENT.

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1. Cytotoxicity of the polymer was evaluated by measuring the cell viability of fibroblasts, epithelial cells, and endothelial cells after 24 h of exposure to the polymer. The cell viability was measured by the MTT assay. The cell viability was measured by the MTT assay. The cell viability was measured by the MTT assay.

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- A. Along a horizontal line, draw a vertical line that divides the line into two equal parts. Label the left half "A" and the right half "B".
- B. Draw a vertical line that divides the line into two equal parts. Label the left half "A" and the right half "B".
- C. Draw a vertical line that divides the line into two equal parts. Label the left half "A" and the right half "B".
- D. Draw a vertical line that divides the line into two equal parts. Label the left half "A" and the right half "B".
- E. Draw a vertical line that divides the line into two equal parts. Label the left half "A" and the right half "B".

1. Is the paper well written and well organized?
2. Is the research question or hypothesis clearly stated?
3. Is the study design and methodology clearly described?
4. Is the data analysis and interpretation clearly presented?
5. Is the conclusion and discussion clearly stated?
6. Is the paper well written and well organized?
7. Is the research question or hypothesis clearly stated?
8. Is the study design and methodology clearly described?
9. Is the data analysis and interpretation clearly presented?
10. Is the conclusion and discussion clearly stated?

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published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 1997, the authors concluded that the use of a computerized system to monitor drug therapy was associated with a 25% reduction in the number of drug therapy errors. The authors also concluded that the use of a computerized system to monitor drug therapy was associated with a 25% reduction in the number of drug therapy errors.

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## Appendix I

### WCSD-SECA (Short-Form; Version January 2018)

**Directions:** Circle the emoji that tell us how easy or difficult each of the following are for you.

Name:

Age:

Gender:

How many Skyhawks camps have you attended (circle one): 1    2    3    4+

**Response Options:** 😞 = Very Difficult    😐 = Difficult    😊 = Easy    😄 = Very Easy

#### Self-Awareness: Self-Concept

1. Knowing what my strengths are. 😞 😐 😊 😄

#### Self-Awareness: Emotion Knowledge

2. Knowing when my feelings are making it hard for me to focus. 😞 😐 😊 😄
3. Knowing the emotions I feel. 😞 😐 😊 😄
4. Knowing ways I calm myself down. 😞 😐 😊 😄

#### Social Awareness

5. Learning from people with different opinions than me. 😞 😐 😊 😄
6. Knowing what people may be feeling by the look on their face. 😞 😐 😊 😄
7. Knowing when someone needs help. 😞 😐 😊 😄

#### Self-Management: Emotion Regulation

8. Getting through something even when I feel frustrated. 😞 😐 😊 😄
9. Being patient even when I am really excited. 😞 😐 😊 😄

#### Self-Management: Goal Management

10. Finishing tasks even if they are hard for me. 😞 😐 😊 😄
11. Setting goals for myself. 😞 😐 😊 😄



### Self-Management: School Work

12. Doing my schoolwork even when I do not feel like it. 😞 😞 😊 😊
13. Being prepared for tests. 😞 😞 😊 😊

### Relationship Skills

14. Respecting a classmate's opinions during a disagreement. 😞 😞 😊 😊
15. Getting along with my classmates. 😞 😞 😊 😊

### Responsible Decision-Making

16. Thinking about what might happen before making a decision. 😞 😞 😊 😊
17. Knowing what is right or wrong. 😞 😞 😊 😊

## Appendix J

### WCSD-SECA Short-Form Permission

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE WCSD SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT (WCSD-SECA)

### Background

This document provides responses to frequently asked questions about the WCSD-SECA instruments that are designed to assess social and emotional competencies (SECs) in grades 5-12. All instruments are free and open-source.

If you have additional questions about this assessment and related research, please contact Laura Davidson, Washoe County School District Director of Research and Evaluation at 775-348-3850 or [ldavidson@washoeschools.net](mailto:ldavidson@washoeschools.net).

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### 1. What is the WCSD Social and Emotional Competency Assessment?

The WCSD SECA is a set of instruments developed through a collaboration between Washoe County School District, the Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning (CASEL), and the University of Illinois at Chicago through an Institute of Education Sciences Research-Practitioner Partnership grant. The project resulted in the development of two instruments and a bank of items aligned to the [CASEL 5 clusters](#) and [WCSD SEL standards](#):

- **Long-Form Assessment:** 40-item instrument measuring eight domains of social and emotional competence: 1) self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses, 2) self-awareness of emotions, 3) self-management of emotions, 4) self-management of goals, 5) self-management of school work, 6) relationship skills, 7) social awareness, and 8) responsible decision-making.
- **Short-Form Assessment:** 17-item, short-form assessment of global social and emotional competence.
- **Item Bank:** 138 items assessing eight domains. Useful for training and item replacement.

#### 2. Can my organization/district/school use these instruments?

Yes! All three instruments are free and open-source. You and your organization can use and adapt the instruments any way you would like. You do not need to request permission to use these instruments, but we appreciate if you would cite the measure so we can track how organizations use the instruments and expand our knowledge base and connect users together. The measure can be cited as "Items from or adapted from the WCSD Social and Emotional Competency Assessment (Davidson et al., 2017)."

## Appendix K

3/13/23, 9:39 AM

Yahoo Mail - Re: New message from Casel.org

Re: New message from Casel.org

From: Info Casel (info@casel.org)  
 To: jeremyvincent@yahoo.com  
 Date: Monday, March 13, 2023 at 09:02 AM PDT

Thank you for your inquiry to CASEL. You may use the CASEL framework "wheel" as noted below. We just ask that you please not alter the image, and reference CASEL as the source.

Best,

The CASEL Team

**CASEL: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning**  
 815 W. Van Buren St., Suite 210  
 Chicago, IL 60607  
 312-226-3770 (main)

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LEADERS AS LEARNERS:  
BUILDING THE VILLAGE  
OUR CHILDREN NEED

ABOUT THE CASEL WHEEL: SEE [HERE](#) FOR MORE

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2023 CALL FOR  
SUBMISSIONS

[SUBMIT BY MAR. 14](#)

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**From:** Info Casel <info@casel.org>  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 7, 2023 at 9:02 AM  
**To:** Info Casel <info@casel.org>  
**Subject:** New message from Casel.org

From [first-name] Vincent (jeremyvincent@yahoo.com)  
 Researcher  
 Northwest Nazarene University  
 Spokane

Reason for Contact: info

I am currently working on my PhD through Northwest Nazarene University. My research centers on SEL practices centered on a Positive Youth Development athletic camp.

May I use the CASEL Wheel image within my research paper?  
 I intend to use it in chapter two, the literature review.

about:blank

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Appendix L

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Brontfenbrenner Ecological Systems Theory

2

Jeremy Vincent <jeremyvincent@yahoo.com>  
Too alexandra@psychologynotesing.com

Tue, May 16 at 7:08 AM

To whom it may concern,

I am writing on my PhD through Northern Nazarene University.

May I use the Brontfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory image for my dissertation? It will be properly cited in my dissertation.

Regards,

Jeremy Vincent

Alexandra C. <alexandra@psychologynotesing.com>  
Too Jeremy Vincent

Tue, May 16 at 10:26 PM

Hello Jeremy,

I think for reaching out. As long as you cite our website (The Psychology Notes Headquarters) as your source, you have our permission to use the Brontfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory diagram for your dissertation.

Regards,

Alex

Show original message

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