

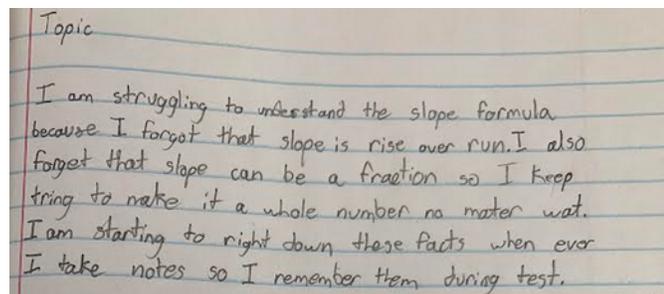
## Introduction

I have spent most of my adult life outside of education, working in corporate America, unable to see my role in life and identify with the goals of the company. I have had great bosses, but I was looking for a way to leave a positive impact on my community. Currently, I am a mathematics and drama teacher at the International District High School where I teach approximately 140 students during a regular school year. This introduction shows the reader how I have worked with my students in terms of expression and building relationships with them, while encouraging them to learn and accomplish goals.

For my classes, students receive writing prompts once a week, and they spend 5 - 10 minutes writing on the prompt. This allows the students to practice and see their thoughts on paper. Occasionally, their prompts include writing about what struggles or successes have they had recently, or anything that is creating concerns in their learning. The following Figure TBD is a sample reflection from a 9<sup>th</sup> grade student with the pseudonym Isaac, who, in the past, repeatedly had responded to my questions with the phrase, "I don't know." When asked to write over time, I saw his attitude change from "I don't know," to understanding where he may need to self-manage his learning. Instead of "I don't know," he seems to pinpoint exactly what he does not know.

Figure TBD

*Isaac's Sample Reflection*



His response reflects what he is currently finding difficult in math. Isaac was a D student who became a B student by the end of the Fall semester.

Today, Isaac has a different self-narrative, and hopefully, he will take a different path in his education. This story of Isaac is important to this document, as we see how students can develop their thinking and become more concise. Seeing students move from the self-narrative of “I don’t know,” to a more certain thinking “I am struggling to understand...” can reflect the interaction between me and the student. I consider myself lucky, as I started my teaching career with students who showed an interest in their education and took the time to write reflections when requested. They responded well to the situation, and I hope to understand better why they did. I would like to understand teacher-student relationships and how they can be impacted, and this document is the beginning of that study.

### **Researcher Role**

After being terminated from a corporation, I decided to pursue a passion: teaching. I enrolled in an alternative licensure program because I wanted to be a teacher after spending several years working for large corporations. During my enrollment in the teaching program, I became an intern for a high school and supported mathematics courses in the South Valley of Albuquerque, New Mexico, which is on the outskirts of town and near farmland. After working for two years in the South Valley, a prior school administrator invited me to consider a teaching position at a centrally located, urban high school with similar attributes.

While the school has similar attributes in terms of demographics and test scores, the new school seems different in terms of how I am experiencing the relationships between me and my students. This has led to personal research on motivation and relationships. Through the research for this document, I hope to study the population of this urban high school and suggest

components of transformational leadership and social-emotional learning that contribute to positive, impactful relationships between math students and teachers in this marginalized student population. Before diving into the research, this document begins here with a discussion on the school setting, current state-level and district-level guidelines, as well as school and zip code demographics are introduced. After introducing these, this document will introduce transformational leadership, social emotional learning, the reason for this research and its relevance.

### **Setting and Dynamics**

To understand the context of this research and what components of transformational leadership and SEL that might provide positive impactful relationships, the demographics and setting of high school are introduced here. This research takes place in a high school located in the International District in the middle of Albuquerque, New Mexico, which is part of Albuquerque Public Schools (APS). APS is part of the New Mexico Department of Education (NMPED), which has produced guidance for the school districts, and APS has put into place a handbook related to equity and access, which addresses SEL. The following Figure (TBD) shows the demographics and attendance rates of the school where the research takes place.

Figure (TBD)

#### *Demographics and Attendance Percentages by Demographic*

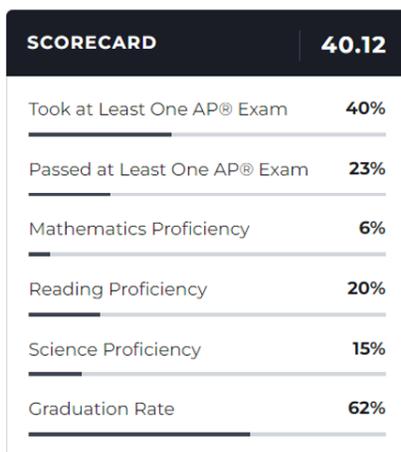
<b>Race and Hispanic Origin</b>	<b>Zip Code 87108</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Attendance %</b>
White/Caucasian	33.30%	8.50%	87.70%
Black or African American	4.10%	5.90%	89.90%
American Indian and Alaska Native	6.20%	7.90%	86.20%
Asian	2.30%	1.60%	93.70%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.08%	7.90%	100.00%
Hispanic or Latino	51.90%	71.60%	87.90%
Two or More Races	1.90%	4.50%	87.90%

At the high school, a majority of the students are minority students. Currently, over 91% of the students (assuming the category of Two or More Races as non-White/non-Caucasian) are considered minority students, while the remaining percent are White/Caucasian. Race is important in that this research looks at marginalized populations, and this school has a high number of attendees who may be considered marginalized. Furthermore, as a minority, I would like to understand how I can impact students in a way that might help them.

As part of this study, current student achievement at the high school can help shed light on who comprises the population. To understand the current academic achievement of the high school students at the International District High School, a scorecard was obtained from online published information from *U.S. News and World Report*. Student proficiency is below in all content areas. The Figure (TBD) shows the Scorecard for the high school from the *U.S. News and World Report*.

Figure (TBD)

*Scorecard for the high school from the U.S. News and World Report.*



Based on the scorecard, 6% of the students were considered proficient in math, and 20% considered proficient in reading, and 15% are proficient in science. The high school is a low-income school with 36.7% of the population being English Language Learners (Strategic

Analysis and Program Research, 2022). Furthermore, 100% of the students are on free and reduced lunch programs, 91.5% are minority, and as a school, is ranked in the bottom 50% of all New Mexico schools. The school has a 62% graduation rate (Overview of International District High School).

The International District High School has dynamics that include collaborative teacher periods, sensitivity training, and union guidelines. These three are important to consider because teachers within a department try to collaborate on exams, classroom guidelines, and how to grade the students. The grading relates to whether the teachers will include an equity-based system, how they will implement it, and benchmarks students must achieve. In addition, the district requires annual sensitivity training, encourages professional development in areas of restorative practices and social and emotional learning.

Furthermore, teachers are represented by a union which helps guide how teachers are treated, what they must and must not be obligated to do, and how teachers can spend their time. For example, teachers are required 10 professional days (or equivalent) but must be paid outside of those 10 hours if they must attend additional development, or the union will get involved.

Thus, training in the area of SEL may not always come up and cannot be enforced if it does not gain traction to the extent it may be needed. The union does not require teachers to teach the same subjects every year and may be split between departments and grade levels. Finally, teachers need to follow district and department policies in terms of attendance. These dynamics may impact this document because it may be difficult to have consistent implementation of research, participation in research, cooperation among teachers, and omit students who are impacted by the dynamics. For example, first period students are not penalized for lateness, so the study should consider this.

## **Significance**

### **Educational Significance**

Social-emotional learning has been broadly studied and is shown to improve skills that students have (Durlak, J. A. et al. 2011). As a teacher, one has the opportunity to include social-emotional learning into their classrooms, but teacher training in SEL is not widespread, and there is a growing need to train teachers in SEL for the classroom (Schonert-Reichl, K. A., 2017). Aside from general education, core subject teachers, such as those who teach mathematics, look for ways to improve student learning and SEL might be a resource to improving student learning (Gutstein, Eric, et al., 2022). This document can provide a resource in helping the reader understand what components of Transformational Leadership and SEL might best serve marginalized students in a similar setting.

### **Personal Relevance**

As a teacher in the classroom, I hope to find a style of leadership that students can follow or with which they can collaborate. I find that students respond differently to me when I am in a certain mood, or when they have experienced something outside of their control. However, I find it useful to understand how to motivate and change the atmosphere of the classroom by addressing how I interact with the students.

Furthermore, one day, I plan to open a school where I can work with marginalized students who have an interest in a well-rounded education. The ability to lead students in a manner that allows them to grow and have the possibility to choose their life paths has been motivating for me. Personally, I find the students who connect with me and trust me have taken an interest in their education. Furthermore, my students have fun in class and do extremely well on their standardized tests if they put in the effort in class.

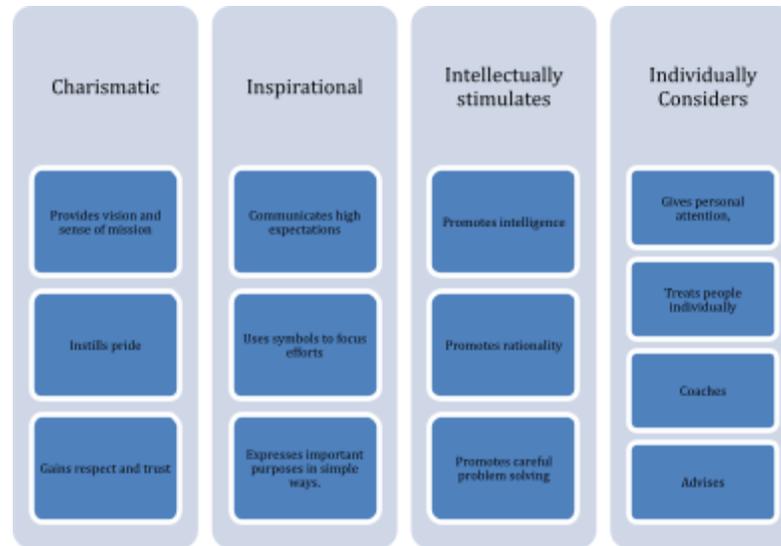
However, it is a challenge to motivate 100% of the students. Each class has one or two students who do not complete any work, and it can be really frustrating for me. On the other hand, my attendance rates are phenomenal when students feel they are able to do well and when I treat them a certain way. Thus, this research will help me learn different aspects of leadership and social emotional learning that could positively impact my classroom and the school I hope to open.

### **Transformational Leadership and Social Emotional Learning**

This document looks to study which components of transformational leadership, when coupled with components of SEL, yield positive, impactful results. Transformational leadership is described as “Superior leadership performance” and “occurs when leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their employees, when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group, and when they stir their employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group,” (Bass, B.M. 1990, p. 21). The following Figure (TBD) shows the four components of transformational leadership identified.

Figure (TBD)

*Components of Transformational Leadership (Bass, 1990)*

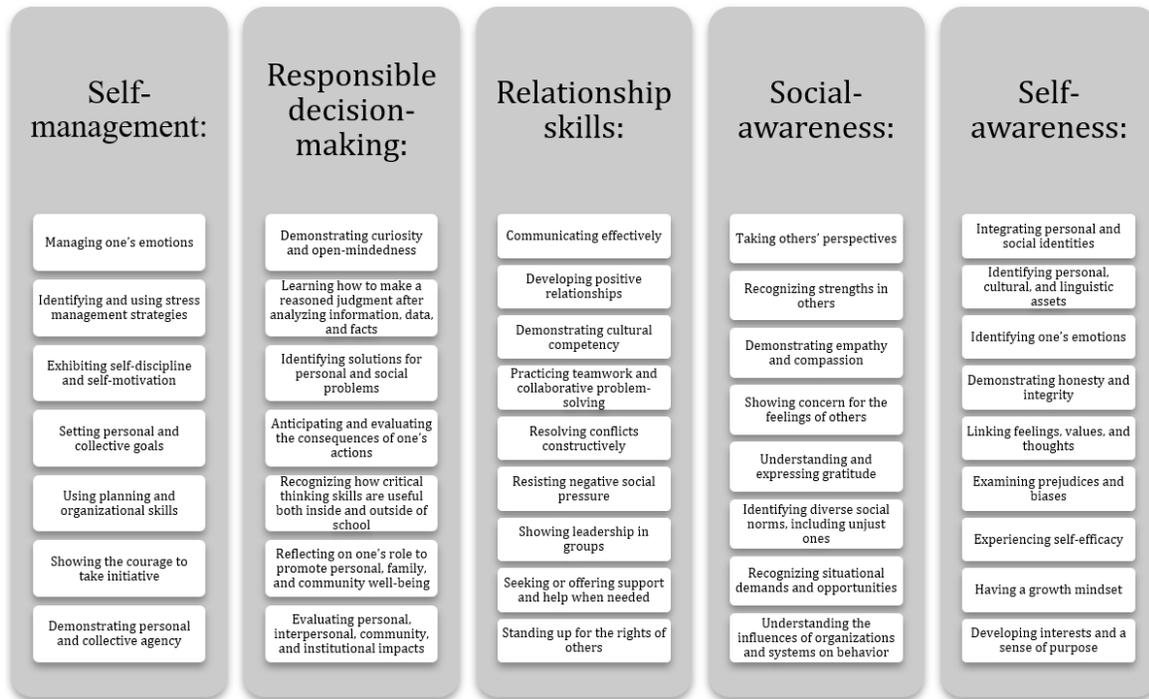


Furthermore, this document looks at the combination of transformational leadership and social emotional learning. The goal for the document will be to see which components of transformational leadership and social emotional learning can have a positive impact on outcomes. Typically in education, the principal is seen as the transformational leader, though teachers have the ability to have an impact, positively on students in the same manner. This document hopes to uncover the components of transformational leadership that teachers can use to make that impact.

In defining SEL, the CASEL organization has introduced a framework that comprises five major parts: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness (CASEL, 2022). The following Figure (TBD) shows the five components and examples of each component that CASEL shows as part of SEL.

Figure TBD

*CASEL Framework Social-Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2022)*

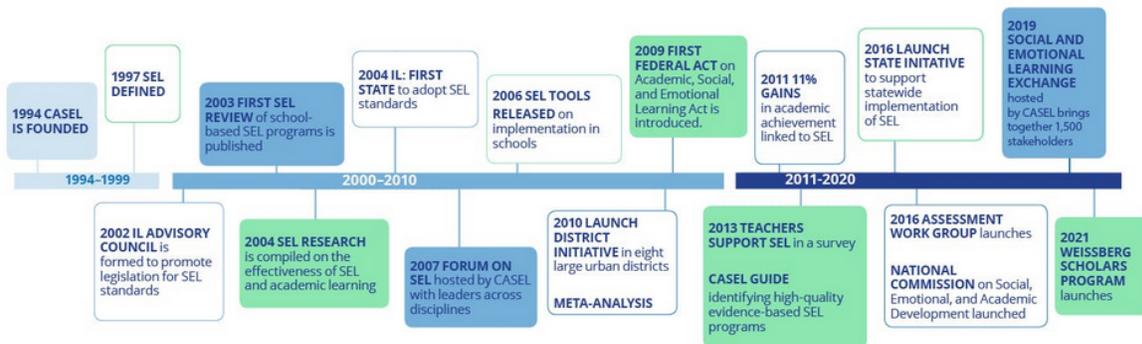


CASEL gives examples of each of the five parts as a way to identify behaviors that can be seen under each part. For example, under self-management, an individual who is exhibiting that behavior will show initiative.

Aside from defining SEL, CASEL has published a timeline to show the development of SEL and the organization over time. The following Figure TBD, taken from their website, shows a brief history of CASEL, the year SEL was defined, key dates, and the date a scholars program was launched.

Figure TBD

*Timeline of CASEL and SEL*



Social emotional learning (SEL) has various components that can help have an impact on the environment. Using the components in conjunction with the components from transformational leadership can help us address needs of students. In this study, I am focused on the needs of minority students, as that is currently the educational setting with which I am most familiar. The needs of minority students will be discussed in the next chapter of this document. These needs come from a focused review of the literature. The review has currently uncovered an opportunity to contribute to the literature in terms of studying the impact of transformational leadership in the classroom.

The anticipated impact of this research might be found in teacher training programs, or pre-service programs, as well as on-going teacher professional development. During my preservice, I was instructed on techniques related to classroom management and setting up a friendly and welcoming environment, but I was not taught hands-on practical knowledge on how to lead a class. For example, I have not had the opportunity to learn from different leadership styles as they are implemented in the class. In addition, I have not been coached on leadership skills, just classroom management skills. Bass (2008) distinguished between transformational

leadership and transactional leadership, whereas the former looks at impacting someone and the latter looks at task completion.