INTEGRATING TRANSFORMATIVE SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND LITERACY WITH READ ALOUDS: A DESIGN BASED STUDY

By

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Curriculum, Instruction, and Teacher Education – Doctor of Philosophy

2025

ABSTRACT

This dissertation presents a design-based research study that utilized qualitative data analysis to investigate justice-oriented approaches to integrate transformative social-emotional learning (TSEL) with interactive read-alouds to simultaneously support elementary students' social-emotional and literacy development. In this study, I collaborated with a fifth-grade teacher during the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years to iteratively design, enact, and revise an approach we are calling Read Alouds for Social Emotional Learning (RASEL) across two rounds of implementation. More specifically, the goals of my study were (1) to explore in what ways (if any) fifth-grade students demonstrate changes in components of social-emotional learning and narrative reading comprehension before and after participation in the instructional sequence and (2) to determine the aspects of RASEL instruction that enhance or inhibit the integration of students' SEL and literacy development based on the experiences of one fifth-grade teacher and a group of anchor students.

Across three iterative and flexible phases within the DBR process (analysis and exploration, design and construction, and evaluation and reflection), we developed RASEL, which includes a series of interactive read-alouds using high-quality culturally relevant text sets focused on corresponding social-emotional themes such as self-awareness and social awareness. To answer my research questions, I analyzed my data set (student interviews and artifacts, teacher interviews and surveys, video observations, and researcher notes and memos) through an interpretivist approach. After participating in RASEL, students shifted in overlapping components of TSEL and narrative reading comprehension which include: exploring more complex emotion vocabulary, inferring emotions with evidence that highlights characters' cultural experiences, embracing the interrelated nature of their personal and social identities,

recognizing injustices and acknowledging harm, and identifying themes from the text that advocate social justice. Additionally, my analysis highlighted three aspects of RASEL (feel wheel, identity silhouettes, and the text set) that enhanced the integration of SEL and literacy development and two aspects of RASEL (identity mapping and character perspective-taking) that inhibited the integration of SEL and literacy development.

This study advances the field's understanding of the reciprocal relationship between social-emotional and literacy development. It also builds the growing body of TSEL research by offering actionable steps to teach against traditional notions of SEL with more authentic, humanizing, and culturally responsive TSEL integration. It highlights teacher expertise and student voices that contributed to the RASEL design, which shows promise as a framework for fostering social-emotional growth in ways that embrace culture, complexity, and justice.

This dissertation is dedicated to Anna and Cora.
May you always chase your dreams with courage and curiosity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the unwavering support, encouragement, and guidance of so many throughout this dissertation process. I am thankful to my advisors and dissertation committee members, the teacher and students in this study, and my family and friends who have shaped my work and encouraged me throughout this process.

First, I want to thank my advisors and dissertation committee members. Dr. Anne-Lise Halvorsen and Dr. Laura Tortorelli, I cannot imagine navigating this journey without you both. Dr. Anne-Lise Halvorsen, thank you for your insightful feedback and thoughtful questions that pushed me to think more deeply about my work. Your mentorship has not only shaped this dissertation, but also the scholar and educator I strive to be. Dr. Laura Tortorelli, thank you for your guidance throughout this study, from conceptualization to providing detailed feedback that enhanced and refined my work. Your encouragement and enthusiasm have strengthened my confidence and helped me cultivate my scholarly voice. Dr. Patricia Edwards, thank you for your invaluable advice in navigating graduate school, my dissertation, and the job market. I am deeply grateful for your mentorship, generosity, and support of my family and me in countless ways throughout this journey. Dr. Joanne Marciano, thank you for always challenging me to refine my thinking in ways that were pivotal in strengthening this study. Your insights and guidance, especially ways to highlight the voices of teachers and students, were a source of inspiration and deeply influenced my approach to research.

To Liz and all the fifth graders at Billings Elementary, thank you for welcoming me into your classroom community and sharing your time, insights, and experiences. Your voices are the heart of this work, and I am honored to have had the opportunity to learn from you. I also want to thank my administrators, teacher colleagues, and former students and families at Billings for

their support, both during my time as an elementary teacher and now as an academic researcher. The experiences and relationships I built while teaching at Billings continue to inspire the work I do today.

A huge thank you to my family and friends for their endless support, patience, and encouragement. Aaron, your love and unwavering belief in me made this journey possible. Your grounded perspectives have been an important reminder of what truly matters, helping me maintain balance in my work. To my daughters, Anna and Cora, you are my greatest inspirations and my loudest cheerleaders. I hope this dissertation serves as a reminder that you can do hard things, and your dreams are worth pursuing. I am deeply grateful to my parents (Mary Ruth and Dan), sister (Jacqueline) as well as my in-laws and extended family for their support. Your encouragement has been a source of strength throughout this process. Thank you to my friends and colleagues who have been by my side throughout this journey. Dr. Lori Bruner, your friendship, advice, and laughter have been a bright light throughout this process, helping me navigate challenges with a sense of perspective and joy.

Finally, I want to express my gratitude for the opportunity to attend Michigan State University to earn this degree. Completing this dissertation has been one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of my career. I have learned so much from this journey that I will always carry with me.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In today's elementary classrooms, teachers face the immense task of supporting their students' academic, social, and emotional development amidst the repercussions of a global pandemic, the alarming rate of school shootings, ongoing racial injustices, and increasing concerns about children's mental health and well-being. Since the onset of the pandemic, educators and scholars have expressed gaps in students' social-emotional development, an increase in emotional distress among their students, and a need for increased social-emotional learning (SEL) in a post pandemic world (McGraw Hill, 2021; Skoog-Hoffman et al., 2024) According to McGraw Hill (2021), teachers and administrators expressed concerns that students seemed disengaged from learning and showed signs of depression, loneliness, lack of connection, and academic loss following the pandemic.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL n.d.) defines SEL as "the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions" (p. n.d.). The overarching definition of SEL is enhanced by *The CASEL 5*, five interrelated areas of SEL competence, which are: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, n.d.).

While traditional goals of prioritizing SEL instruction in classrooms are valuable, a growing number of educators and scholars argue that "traditional SEL can fall short, and even be harmful, if not implemented through a culturally sustaining, equity lens" (Soutter et al., 2025, p.

20). Moreover, if we don't apply a justice-oriented lens, SEL "faces the risk of becoming White supremacy with a hug" (Simmons, 2021). Towards this end, more recently SEL has been situated as a way to "help address various forms of inequity and empower young people and adults to co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities" (CASEL, n.d.). Jagers et al. (2019) designated this approach as *transformative* SEL (TSEL), which views SEL and social justice as inextricably linked and aims to support children's social-emotional development in ways that are asset-based and culturally responsive (Soutter et al., 2025). While TSEL alone will not solve the inequities that exist in the education system, it provides a starting point to continue to work towards supporting students' SEL in ways that cultivating the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to critically examine and collaboratively address the underlying causes of these inequities (Jagers et al., 2019).

Literacy practices involving children's literature and text-based discussions, such as interactive read-alouds, offer a rich context for teaching against traditional notions of SEL (Clark et al., 2021) and provide opportunities to simultaneously support students' academic and social-emotional education goals (Britt et al., 2016; Doyle & Bramwell, 2006; Fettig et al., 2018; McTigue et al., 2015; Venegas, 2019). Research has found children's literature to be an ideal vehicle for integrating TSEL and literacy because when students explore a character's motivation and perspectives to better comprehend a narrative text, they can connect the character's perspective to their own feelings and emotions (McTigue et al., 2015). However, research suggests that although children's literature is commonly used throughout literacy instruction, it is often overlooked as a vehicle for supporting students' SEL (Boyles, 2018; Garner & Parker, 2018; Heath et al., 2017; Nikolajeva, 2013; Pysarenko, 2020; Regan & Page, 2008; Sanacore, 2012). Additionally, while there is an evidence base that advocates for the reciprocal relationship

between social emotional and literacy development (Boyles, 2018; Britt et al., 2016; McTigue et al., 2015), collaborative research is needed to operationalize the evidence with justice-oriented approaches to simultaneously support students' TSEL and narrative reading comprehension in elementary classrooms.

The purpose of my design-based study was to investigate a culturally responsive, humanizing, and authentic approach to integrate TSEL with interactive read-alouds to simultaneously support students' social-emotional and literacy development. More specifically, I collaborated with a fifth-grade teacher during the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years to iteratively design, enact, and revise an approach we are calling Read Alouds for Social Emotional Learning (RASEL) across two rounds of implementation. RASEL includes a series of interactive read-alouds using high-quality culturally relevant text sets focused on corresponding social-emotional themes such as self-awareness and social awareness. This study focused on the second round of RASEL implementation and expanded upon my previous research involving initial investigations of patterns between teacher moves and student interactions during the first implementation of RASEL. This dissertation answers two research questions:

1. In what ways (if any) do fifth-grade students demonstrate changes in components of TSEL and narrative reading comprehension after participation in Read Alouds for Social-emotional Learning?
2. What aspects of Read Alouds for Social-emotional Learning instruction enhanced or inhibited the integration of students' social-emotional and literacy development?

In this dissertation, I answer these research questions through Design-based Research (Bradley & Reinking, 2011) and qualitative analysis (Miles et al., 2020). DBR is a pragmatic approach for creating and testing processes with the potential to transform practice, support new

forms of learning, and promote more equitable outcomes for students (Campanella & Penuel, 2021). The iterative DBR process aligned with the goals of my study by highlighting teachers' knowledge and expertise to collaboratively identify factors that inhibit or enhance the effectiveness of instruction to develop realistic adaptations to the instructional sequence (Bradley & Reinking, 2011).

In Chapter 2, I review the theoretical and empirical perspectives relative to the integration of TSEL and literacy with culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP). First, I present the theoretical perspectives, models, and frameworks that shaped my study. Next, I review the relevant literature focused on components of TSEL, misconceptions associated with TSEL instruction in elementary classrooms, and advantages for integrating TSEL and literacy with interactive read-alouds. Finally, I explain how I conceptualized TSEL throughout my study and incorporated it into the design of RASEL.

In Chapter 3, I outline the methods of my design-based study including the setting, participants, methodologies, proposed data collection, and analytic procedures for answering both of my research questions. To investigate ways fifth-grade students demonstrated changes in components of TSEL and narrative reading comprehension after participating in RASEL, I qualitatively analyzed the whole class pre- and post-activities and anchor student semi-structured pre- and post-interviews. My qualitative analysis included multiple cycles of coding that involved a deep reflection and interpretation of the data (Miles et al., 2020). More specifically, I used descriptive codes to assign labels that summarize the basic topic of the portions of data (Miles et al., 2020), and evaluation codes to assign judgment about the merit of the data (Miles et al., 2020) to support shifts in students' TSEL and reading comprehension. To explore aspects of RASEL instruction that enhanced or inhibited the integration of TSEL and literacy development,

I drew upon components of retrospective analysis (Gravemeijer & Cobb, 2006) to qualitatively analyze my data set across both rounds of RASEL implementation with an emphasis on triangulating my findings based on the experiences of the teacher (Liz), the eight anchor students, and me as the researcher. I conducted three cycles of qualitative coding (Miles et al., 2020) influenced by the categorization and comparison of summaries across data sources to establish themes (Gravemeijer & Cobb, 2006).

In Chapter 4, I outline my collaborative and iterative DBR process of creating, testing, and revising RASEL that took place over the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years. In this unit design chapter, I review the pedagogical goal being investigated, detail the design of the instructional sequence to achieve the pedagogical goal, explain the iterative adaptations that were made to the instructional sequence after the first implementation of RASEL, and share the updated RASEL framework that resulted from this study.

In Chapter 5, I describe the findings in response to my first research question. I explain the simultaneous shifts in students TSEL and narrative reading comprehension after participating in RASEL that I categorized into three groups: (1) emotion, (2) identity, and (3) social justice. Across each category, students' either demonstrated growth or remained stable, with no instances of regression. A variety of student shifts occurred within each category based on including (a) exploring more complex emotion vocabulary, (b) inferring emotions with evidence that highlights characters' cultural experiences, (c) embracing the interrelated nature of identities, (d) recognizing injustices and acknowledging harm, and (e) identifying themes that advocate social justice. These student shifts support RASEL as a promising justice-oriented approach to simultaneously support components of TSEL (self-awareness and social awareness) and

narrative reading comprehension (character perspective-taking, drawing inferences, identifying themes, motivation and engagement with the text, and vocabulary development).

In Chapter 6, I describe the findings in response to my second research question. Based on my analysis, I found aspects of RASEL instruction that enhanced or inhibited the integration of social-emotional and literacy development, which I categorized into emerging themes or pedagogical assertions (Colwell & Reinking, 2016) or suggestions to guide future iterations and evaluations of the instructional sequence. I found three aspects of RASEL (feel wheel, identity silhouettes, and the text set) that enhanced the integration of TSEL and literacy development and two aspects of RASEL (identity mapping and character perspective-taking) that inhibited the integration of TSEL and literacy development.

In Chapter 7, I discuss how the findings from both research questions are situated in scholarship and explain implications for teaching and teacher education, curriculum design, and educational policy. In this chapter I also describe the limitations and area for future research. I conclude my dissertation by highlighting the significance of collaborating with teachers to investigate opportunities to simultaneously support their students' social-emotional and literacy in ways that are humanizing, authentic, and culturally responsive.

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND

In this chapter, I describe the theoretical and empirical perspectives relative to the integration of transformative social-emotional learning (TSEL) and literacy with culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP) to simultaneously support students' social-emotional and literacy development. First, I present the theoretical perspectives, models, and frameworks that shaped my study. Next, I review the relevant literature focused on components of TSEL, misconceptions associated with TSEL instruction in elementary classrooms, and advantages for integrating TSEL and literacy with interactive read-alouds. Finally, I explain how I conceptualized TSEL throughout my study and incorporated it into the design of Read Alouds of Social Emotional Learning (RASEL).

Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory (Rosenblatt, 1983), models of the reading process that highlight the interactivity between the text and the reader (Kim, 2020; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002), and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014). Drawing upon these theoretical perspectives, this study is broadly situated within the connections that exist between students' social-emotional and literacy development during the reading process. According to sociocultural theories, reading goes beyond cognitive processes and is strongly influenced by social and cultural factors. For example, Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory suggests that reading involves the reader and the text acting upon one another (Rosenblatt, 1983). Sociocultural theories of reading align with the ideas that readers can use insights from the social and emotional experiences of story characters to better navigate the real world (McTigue et al., 2015) and develop social understanding,

emotional literacy, and empathy when exploring SEL content with children's literature (Clark et al., 2021).

Models of the Reading Process

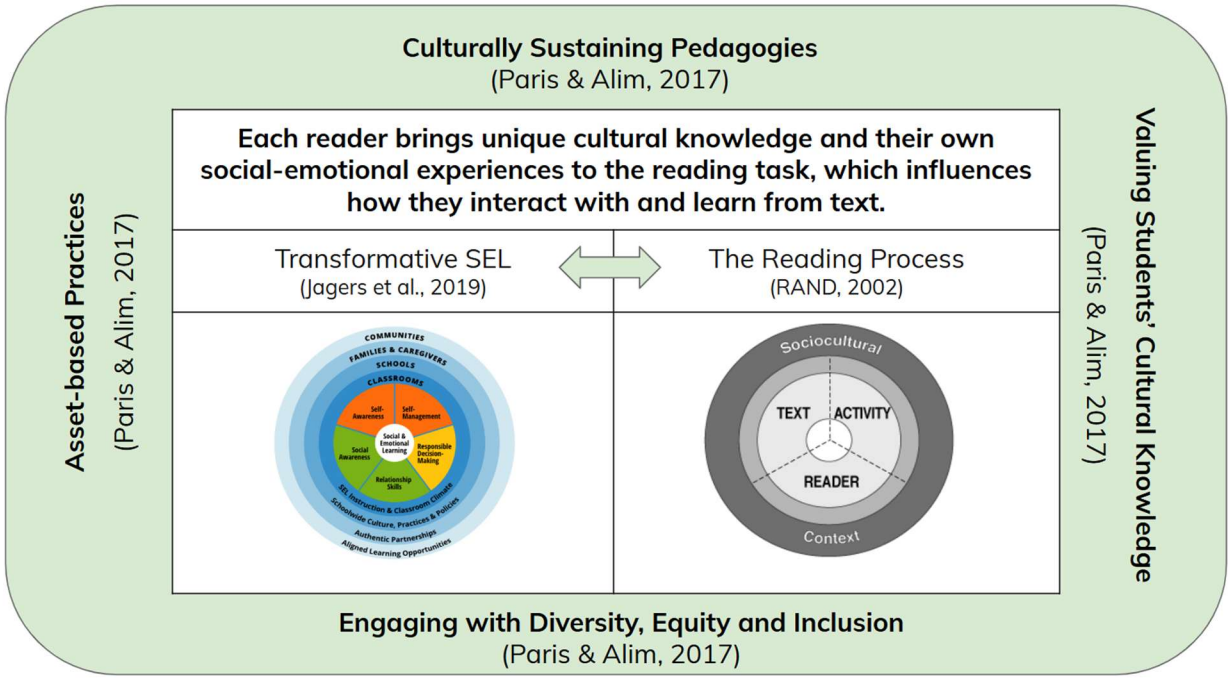
With sociocultural theories of reading in mind, this study was guided by models of the reading process that highlight the interactivity between the text and the reader such as the RAND Model (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002) and the Direct and Indirect Effects (DIER) model (Kim, 2020). The RAND Model stated that reading is the interaction between the text, the activity, the reader, and the broader sociocultural context in which they are situated (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). Likewise, the Direct and Indirect Effects (DIER) model of reading, which builds upon the RAND Model, supported the complex nature of the reading process (Kim, 2020). According to the DIER Model, the following skills and knowledge are involved in reading comprehension: word reading, listening comprehension, fluency, background knowledge, reading affect or socioemotions, higher order cognitions and regulations, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, phonology, morphology, orthography, and domain general conditions (Kim, 2020). While all of these skills are valuable in terms of reading comprehension, there are two specific components of the DIER Model that are necessary to consider in relation to this study: (1) a reader's background knowledge, which has shown to include socio emotions such as motivation, attitude, self-efficacy, and (2) higher order cognitions, such as perspective-taking (Kim, 2020). Because the DIER Model emphasized utilizing students' social and emotional background knowledge, prior life experiences, and cognitive approaches like perspective-taking, it indirectly supports elements of the instructional sequence being implemented in this study, which I discuss in the methods section. Overall, these models of reading highlight the interactivity between text and the reader in which each reader brings their own social-emotional

experiences and unique cultural knowledge to the reading task, which influences how they interact with and learn from text. Although considering how the reader's unique cultural knowledge and prior social-emotional experiences influence their interaction with and learning from text is only one part of the complex reading process, it was a crucial element that was drawn upon in the creation of this study.

While these theories and models highlight the importance of social-emotional experiences and cultures within the reading process, ways to integrate social-emotional learning into reading instruction are not specified. Therefore, I created a conceptual framework that acts as the driving force behind my study to center the integration of TSEL and literacy with CSP (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014) to teach against and critically examine traditional SEL and literacy practices that have the potential to reify norms of whiteness (Clark et al., 2021) (See Figure 1).

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



Social-emotional Perspectives: Traditional to Transformative

The conceptualization of SEL was influenced by Dr. Comer's work in supporting the *whole child* in 1968. The term "social and emotional learning" was first coined in 1994 by an interdisciplinary team of researchers, educators, practitioners, and child advocates whose mission was for schools to more effectively attend to children's social and emotional needs. Thus, the term social-emotional learning (SEL) and The Collaborative for Academic Social-emotional Learning (CASEL) were born. CASEL's (n.d.) SEL framework, including definitions and standards of SEL, was guided by Havighurst's Developmental Tasks Theory. Developmental Tasks Theory suggests that all individuals progress through a series of developmental stages, each made up of a series of developmental tasks which educators should consider throughout their instruction (Havighurst, 1972). With this theory in mind, CASEL (n.d.) focuses on how the components of SEL included at each developmental stage remain somewhat constant, yet the specific SEL skills within each component become more complex as children mature (Denham, 2018). For example, the SEL competency of social awareness (the ability to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts) is necessary to teach across developmental stages; however, the skills and instruction associated with social awareness will shift as children mature. While preschool students may focus on beginning to follow social rules, like taking turns, elementary-aged students may focus on more complex social challenges, like empathizing with others and understanding differing perspectives.

Within the past four years, national survey results have indicated that teachers, parents, and administrators see a need for increased SEL in a post pandemic world (McGraw Hill, 2021) and most states currently have policies in place that support SEL in schools (Skoog-Hoffman et

al., 2024). While traditional goals of prioritizing SEL competency areas such as such as self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills (CASEL, n.d.) in classrooms are valuable, if we don't apply a justice-oriented lens, SEL "faces the risk of becoming White supremacy with a hug" (Simmons, 2021). With the alarming rate of incidents of racial injustice, school shootings, and amidst the repercussions of a global pandemic it is imperative that we continue to support students' SEL but do it *better* (Philibert, 2021). In response to critiques of traditional SEL, the CASEL framework's definition of SEL was adapted to align with a more transformative lens to "emphasize the skills, knowledge, and mindset needed to examine prejudices and biases, evaluate social norms and systemic inequities, and promote community well-being" (Neimi, 2020). Jagers et al. (2021), who coined the term *transformative* SEL (TSEL) in 2019, suggested CASEL's revised definition "places greater emphasis on affirming the strengths, experiences, and identities of all students" and supports a more transformative conception of SEL, which "is necessary to meet the growing political, economic, and health challenges we face in the United States and around the world" (p. 13). Moreover, Soutter et al., (2025) view TSEL as a culturally responsive way of teaching that sees social-emotional learning and social justice as inextricably linked.

Transformative Social-emotional Learning and Beyond

While the shift towards TSEL is a positive step, it is essential that we continue to critically examine traditional SEL practices that have the potential to reify norms of whiteness (e.g., ignoring racism, ableism, and other oppressions) (Clark et al., 2021) and SEL standards that focus on managing or controlling behaviors (e.g., behavior management over exploring emotions) (Clark et al., 2022). Pushing back against CASEL's (n.d.) traditional notions of SEL is crucial to move towards justice-oriented approaches to integrate TSEL with CSP (Ladson-

Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014). Culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) promotes asset-based practices to support the needs of diverse students, provides opportunities to engage with questions of equity and justice, and acknowledges students' cultural knowledge and experiences (Paris & Alim, 2014). Furthermore, Paris and Alim (2017) conceptualized CSP as a way of learning that "critically enrich[es] strengths rather than replacing deficits" for students to remain whole, rather than be framed as "broken" (p. 1). Exploring justice-oriented approaches to TSEL aligned with CSP is a preliminary step towards fostering more equitable learning environments (Jagers et al., 2019; Soutter et al., 2025) that simultaneously support all students' social-emotional development and literacy development.

In my study, I explore the integration of TSEL and literacy with interactive read-alouds as an initial step towards providing a group of predominately White students the multicultural perspectives needed to develop the skills, knowledge, and mindset to examine biases and evaluate social norms. While integrating TSEL and literacy alone will not solve the inequities that exist in the education system, it can be a small step towards cultivating the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to critically examine and collaboratively address the underlying causes of these inequities (Jagers et al., 2019).

With the aim of teaching against traditional SEL practices, I drew upon frameworks in the development of my study that center CSP (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014) and aim to support more equitable school environments such as the Social Justice Standards (Learning for Justice, 2022) and the Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework (CR-S) (New York State Education Department, 2018). The Social Justice Standards are a set of anchor standards that promote anti-bias K-12 education by providing educators with common language to guide curriculum development. These standards work to support equitable school

environments by promoting instruction focused on four domains: identity, diversity, justice, and action. The CR-S Framework was developed by the New York State Education Department to support educators in fostering student-centered learning environments with culturally sustaining pedagogies based on four principles: welcoming and affirming environment, high expectations and rigorous instruction, inclusive curriculum and assessment, and ongoing professional learning.

Keeping the Social Justice Standards and the CR-S Framework at the forefront of my study was crucial in my efforts to push back against traditional SEL and design a more justice-oriented approach to integrate TSEL and literacy with interactive read-alouds. For example, one aspect of the RASEL approach integrates SEL and literacy by providing opportunities for students to practice empathizing and feeling compassion by making inferences about the character's emotions in the story. To do so in a way that is aligned with CSP, RASEL focuses on making inferences about character's emotions to learn "more about other people's lives and experiences" and asking "questions respectfully and listen carefully and non-judgmentally" (Learning for Justice, 2022) as well as "maintain awareness that everyone reactions to situations differently based on their own experiences, backgrounds and perspectives" (New York State Education Department, 2018). In addition to drawing upon frameworks that aim to support more equitable school environments in the development of study, both the Social Justice Standards and the CR-S Framework will also guide my analytic process, which I discuss in my methods chapter.

Overall, the understanding of how students' cultural knowledge and social-emotional experiences influence their interactions with and learning from the text guided the collaborative design and implementation of RASEL. This study, therefore, was driven by theoretical and

empirical perspectives aligned with the integration of TSEL and literacy, with the commitment to work towards more culturally responsive, humanizing, and authentic ways to simultaneously support all students social-emotional and literacy development.

Literature Review

With the theoretical framework in mind, in the following subsections I provide a synthesis of the relevant literature that framed this study: (1) components of TSEL, (2) misconceptions associated with TSEL instruction, and (3) advantages for integrating TSEL and literacy with interactive read-alouds. I conclude by explaining how I conceptualized TSEL throughout my study and incorporated it into the design of RASEL.

Components of Transformative Social-emotional Learning

As previously mentioned, while traditional SEL goals of considering the whole child and prioritizing social and emotional development in classrooms is substantial, if we don't apply a justice-oriented lens, SEL "faces the risk of becoming White supremacy with a hug" (Simmons, 2021). To move towards more transformative approaches, it is essential that we critically examine traditional SEL practices that have the potential to reify norms of whiteness (Clark et al., 2021). For example, Clark et al. (2021) cautions against traditional SEL materials that may dodge culture and complexity or utilize a deficit-frame of SEL instruction to "fix broken kids." TSEL actively seeks to understand, honor, and build upon students' cultures, challenges traditional SEL practice that reinforce norms of whiteness, and centers equity and justice-oriented pedagogies (Soutter et al., 2025) with long terms goals of supporting students in cultivating the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to critically examine and collaboratively address the underlying causes of systemic inequities (Jagers et al., 2019). While shifting from traditional SEL to TSEL is valuable, it is only an initial step towards enacting culturally

responsive, humanizing, and authentic TSEL instruction in classrooms (Camangian & Cariaga, 2021; Simmons, 2021).

TSEL Competency Areas

The overarching definition of TSEL is enhanced by *The CASEL 5*, five areas of SEL competence, which are: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These competencies are interrelated and can work collaboratively towards the development of justice-oriented citizens (Jagers et al., 2021). The CASEL framework defines and provides examples for each competency, and Jagers et al. (2019) enhanced each domain with what he referred to as "equity elaborations" (See Table 1). The CASEL examples and equity elaborations are similar in content but shift the focus from traditional to TSEL by utilizing more asset-based language and making space for critical dialogue (Clark et al., 2021). For example, the CASEL framework suggested self-awareness should include "having a growth mindset," while Jagers et al.'s (2019) equity elaboration included "having positive mind-sets." In this way, Jagers et al. (2019) suggested that rather than all students having the same collective mindset focused on growth, students can develop a variety of positive mindsets based on their unique experiences. Overall, CASEL (n.d.) and Jagers et al., (2019) viewed TSEL as a vital part of education and human development by helping to establish learning environments that feature trusting relationships, meaningful learning experiences, and ongoing evaluations to promote educational equity. On the other hand, Camangian and Cariaga (2022) argued that even the well-intentioned goals of TSEL fall short of humanizing practices focused on knowledge (and love) of self, solidarity, and self-determination. Overall, a more transformative approach to SEL is a positive step, but working towards justice-oriented approaches to SEL requires us as educators and scholars to continue critically

examining traditional SEL practices that have the potential to reinforce norms of whiteness (Clark et al., 2022).

Table 1

SEL Competency Areas: Traditional to Transformative

SEL Competency Area CASEL (n.d.) Definition	CASEL (n.d.) Examples	Jagers et al. (2019) Equity Elaborations
Self-awareness: the ability to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts	Integrating personal and social identities	Understanding the link between one's personal and collective history and identities
	Identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets	Accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations
	Identifying one's emotions	Recognizing how thoughts, feelings, and actions are interconnected in and across diverse contexts
	Linking feelings, values, and thoughts	
	Demonstrating honesty and integrity	
	Examining prejudices and biases	Recognizing one's own biases
	Experiencing self-efficacy	Having a well-grounded sense of self-efficacy and optimism
	Having a growth mindset	Having positive mind-sets

Table 1 (cont'd)

SEL Competency Area CASEL (n.d.) Definition	CASEL (n.d.) Examples	Jagers et al. (2019) Equity Elaborations
Self-management: the ability to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations	Managing one's emotions	Appropriate expressiveness
	Identifying and using stress management strategies	Ability to delay gratification, manage stress, and control impulses through problem-focused coping
	Exhibiting self-discipline and self-motivation	
	Using planning and organizational skills	Perseverance
	Showing the courage to take initiative	
	Setting personal and collective goals Demonstrating personal and collective agency	Being agentic in addressing personal and group-level challenges to achieve self- and collectively defined goals and objectives

Table 1 (cont'd)

SEL Competency Area CASEL (n.d.) Definition	CASEL (n.d.) Examples	Jagers et al. (2019) Equity Elaborations
Social Awareness: The ability to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts	Taking others' perspectives	Taking the perspective of those with the same and different backgrounds and cultures
	Recognizing strengths in others	
	Demonstrating empathy and compassion	Appropriately empathizing and feeling compassion
	Showing concern for feelings of others	
	Understanding and expressing gratitude	
	Recognizing situational demands and opportunities	Recognizing family, school, and community resources and supports for personal and collective well-being.
	Understanding the influences of organizations and systems on behavior	Understanding social norms for constructive behavior in diverse interpersonal and institutional settings
	Identifying diverse social norms including unjust ones	

Table 1 (cont'd)

SEL Competency Area CASEL (n.d.) Definition	CASEL (n.d.) Examples	Jagers et al. (2019) Equity Elaborations
Relationship skills: The ability to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups	Communicating effectively	Communicating clearly Listening actively
	Developing positive relationships	Establish and maintain rewarding relationships
	Demonstrating cultural competency	Effectively navigate settings with differing social and cultural norms and demands
	Practicing teamwork and collaborative problem solving	Working collaboratively whenever possible
	Resolving conflicts constructively	Negotiating conflict constructively
	Standing up for the rights of other	
	Resisting negative and social pressure	Resisting selfishness and inappropriate social pressure
	Showing leadership in groups Seeking or offering help when needed	Seeking help and offering leadership when it is needed

Table 1 (cont'd)

SEL Competency Area CASEL (n.d.) Definition	CASEL (n.d.) Examples	Jagers et al. (2019) Equity Elaborations
Responsible decision -making: The ability to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations	Demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness	Critically examining ethical standards, safety concerns, and behavioral norms for risky behavior
	Evaluating personal, interpersonal, community, and institutional impacts	
	Learning how to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, and facts	Making realistic evaluations of benefits and consequences of various interpersonal and institutional relationships and actions
	Identifying solutions for social and personal problems	
	Anticipating and evaluating the consequences of one's actions	
	Recognizing how critical thinking skills are useful both inside and outside of school	Making caring, constructive choices about personal and group behavior in social interactions within and across diverse institutional settings
	Reflecting on one's role to promote personal, family, and community well-being	Always making primary collective health and well-being

Misconceptions Associated with Transformative Social-emotional Learning

In this section, I explore the current misconceptions associated with TSEL and how literature counteracts these misconceptions to support the positive impact of TSEL instruction in elementary classrooms. In recent discussions among parents and community members, a controversial issue has been: should TSEL be taught in schools? (Arundell, 2022). Arundel (2022) suggested that this opposition to TSEL may be coming from a small subset of White parents and community members that have yet to grapple with the ongoing issues of racism in the U.S. Some have argued that it does not belong in schools because they have conflated TSEL with critical race theory, which allows for a critique of the systems in place that continue to reinforce racial inequities which impact students' lived experiences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Similar arguments have been made that TSEL is being taught to control the social-emotional health of students (Arundel, 2022). From these extreme perspectives, TSEL has been negatively viewed as a vehicle for conversations around race and gender identity in schools. These misconceptions could also be stemming from CASEL's updated definition of SEL which emphasized transformative and anti-racism lenses. Overall, because TSEL provides all children with the opportunity to "advance social justice and combat educational, social, and economic inequities created by historical and persistent racialized cultural oppression," some believe it doesn't belong in schools (Mayes et al., 2022, p.179).

In contrast, empirical scholarship supports TSEL instruction in schools and integrating it into current classroom practices. Karen Neimi, the former CEO and president of CASEL, advocated for TSEL instruction in schools as a way to provide opportunities for students to use their voice to examine social problems, work alongside adults to co-create solutions, and help cultivate change in their communities. Neimi (2020) argued that TSEL can help foster a sense of

belonging and work towards creating a more inclusive learning community. Additionally, McGraw Hill (2021) surveyed teachers, administrators, and parents about the importance of SEL instruction as many students returned to in-person learning after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2020-2021 school year. While this survey report did not specify between transformative and traditional SEL, the survey report utilized CASEL's (n.d.) updated definition which emphasized anti-racism lenses. The results of this survey indicate that while COVID-19 affected groups of students in different ways based on resources, modality, etc., educators have seen an overall increase in emotional distress among their students. Even though misconceptions do exist, parental knowledge and advocacy for TSEL has grown, and 62% percent of the parents who were surveyed now feel supporting children's social and emotional development in schools is important, compared to 55% in 2018. Overall, results indicated that teachers, parents, and administrators saw a need for increased TSEL in a post pandemic world (McGraw Hill, 2021). According to the 2024 report on SEL in schools conducted by Skoog-Hoffman and colleagues, a greater portion of schools across the U.S. are incorporating SEL into educational experiences, and most states currently have policies that support SEL in schools (Skoog-Hoffman et al., 2024).

Support for TSEL instruction in classrooms is also grounded in a growing body of research. One of the most compelling pieces of literature on SEL instruction is Durlak et al.'s (2011) meta-analysis of school based SEL interventions. This study investigated the impacts of SEL programs being taught in schools by analyzing 213 school-based SEL programs, involving 270,034 K-12 students. The results of this study suggested that students who received SEL instruction demonstrated not only improved social-emotional skills, but also positive outcomes in terms of attitudes, behaviors, and academic performance (Durlak et al., 2011). The researchers

found improved positive attitudes towards self, others, and school, based on student self-reports. Additionally, while SEL is not a "behavior management system," the researchers found an increase in positive social behavior as well as decrease in behavior challenges (disruptive classroom behavior, noncompliance, aggression, bullying, and school suspensions) and a decrease in emotional distress (anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal). Finally, the results of this study reflected an 11% increase in academic achievement for the students who received SEL instruction when compared to the control group, which indicated the interpersonal support provided by SEL instruction led to better school performance (Durlak et al., 2011). Overall, the findings of this study suggested that "schools have an important role to play in raising healthy children by fostering not only their cognitive development but also their social and emotional development" and "efforts to promote SEL represent a promising approach to enhance children's success in school and life" (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 406).

Likewise, in a follow-up study to Durlak et al. (2011), Taylor et al. (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of 82 SEL school-based programs with 97,406 K-12 students and found that students positively benefited in terms of attitudes, behaviors, and academic performance up to three years following program participation. It is also important to note that these benefits were consistent across students' socioeconomic background, race, and school location (Taylor et al., 2017). While the literature discussed above provides evidence for the positive benefits of SEL instruction across K-12, Jones et al. (2015) supported the need for SEL instruction in elementary schools due to the statistically significant associations that exist between measured SEL skills in kindergarten and young adult outcomes, which included: graduating from high school, completing a college degree, and obtaining stable employment in early adulthood.

In reviewing the relevant literature on teaching TSEL in elementary schools, I underscore that TSEL is *not* a way to "fix broken kids." Rather, teaching social-emotional skills should be transformative in nature and utilize asset-based approaches that support students' academic, social and emotional growth. It is also noteworthy that the components of TSEL may overlap with the components of trauma-informed instructional practices, which support students that have been exposed to adverse childhood experiences (ACE) to manage their feelings to cope with emotional stress and be mentally prepared to learn (Price & Ellis, 2018). While trauma-informed instructional practices are valuable in elementary classrooms, the current study focuses on how teachers can more broadly support the TSEL of all students in their class, rather than only focusing on the traumatic experiences of specific students.

Advantages for Integrating Transformative SEL with Literacy

In this section, I describe the advantages for integrating TSEL with literacy practices that include children's literature and text-based discussions. The CASEL framework encourages the integration of TSEL with explicit instruction within current classroom practices, such as literacy. In alignment with the recommendations, Durlak et al. (2011) also suggested that teachers can support their students' social and emotional development by integrating SEL and current instructional practices. Likewise, when investigating shared reading strategies to support students' SEL and literacy development, Fettig et al. (2018) and Doyle and Bramwell (2006) suggested that academic and emotional goals can support one another.

The relevant literature supports the integration of TSEL and literacy in a variety of ways that include children's literature and text-based discussions such as discussing social-emotional themes within literature circles (Venegas, 2019), reflecting on characters' perspectives using graphic organizers (McTigue et al., 2015), engaging in dialogic reading practices with social-

emotional themed texts (Doyle & Bramwell, 2006; Fettig et al., 2018), and conducting interactive read-alouds focused on SEL (Britt et al., 2016). While the literacy practices mentioned above share similar advantages, in the current study I purposefully selected interactive read-alouds as a vehicle for TSEL integration because they have been suggested as an important and joyful daily practice that can be implemented across grade levels (Wright, 2019). Likewise, Lysaker and Sedberry (2015) suggested that conducting read-alouds with children's literature provided a shared context for exploring social, political, and personal insights that may not otherwise be available to students in their own real-world experiences.

The concept of *bibliotherapy*, which was first developed in the 1930's, aligns with the integration of TSEL and literacy. More recently, *bibliotherapy* can be defined as using children's books to address typical social-emotional challenges (e.g., friendship, conflict with peers, bullying, etc.) (Heath et al., 2017). While the current study is not focused on bibliotherapeutic techniques specifically, this framework provided support for the idea that children's literature, while not a solution for "fixing" SEL, can be a springboard for teachers to facilitate justice-oriented discussions during their interactive read-alouds to support their students social-emotional and literacy development.

In the subsections that follow, I discuss specific advantages interactive read-alouds provide as a vehicle for integration including opportunities for teachers to simultaneously support their students' TSEL and literacy development, promoting student engagement and authentic learning experiences, and empowering students with a call towards social action in their own lives and communities. I also discuss the practical suggestions based on relevant literature to shift these ideas from research to practice.

Simultaneously Supporting Social Emotional Learning and Literacy

One major benefit highlighted by the literature was that literacy practices, such as interactive read-alouds are one way to simultaneously support children's academic and social-emotional education goals (Britt et al., 2016; Doyle & Bramwell, 2006; Dresser, 2013; Fettig et al., 2018; McTigue et al., 2015; Petrich, 2015; Venegas, 2019). While supporting TSEL with interactive read-alouds alone is insufficient to meet all of children's social-emotional needs, it offers promise towards extending more justice-oriented approaches to TSEL throughout the school day while also enhancing elementary teacher's literacy instruction.

Research has found children's literature to be an ideal vehicle for integrating TSEL and literacy because when students explore a character's motivation and perspectives to better comprehend a narrative text, they can connect the character's perspective to their own feelings and emotions (McTigue et al., 2015). The researchers went on to say that readers can navigate the real world using their understanding of characters in the fictional world. Likewise, Clark et al. (2021) suggested that "literary fiction has the power to develop social understanding, emotional literacy, and empathy in readers, making it an excellent potential context for exploring TSEL content in classrooms beyond didactic, pre-packaged materials" (p. 249). Additionally, researchers found that providing opportunities for students to interact with texts with social-emotional themes could simultaneously impact their social-emotional and academic growth (Britt et al., 2016; Burroughs & Barkauskas, 2017). Also in support of integrating TESEL with interactive read-alouds of children's literature, Soutter et al., (2025) described how "discussing the experiences and feelings of storybook characters can offer valuable chances for children to experience with seeing the world through another person's perspective, broaden their emotion

vocabulary, and figure out how they might handle particular situations without the risk of actually living them" (p. 35).

In addition to the relevant literature that supports interactive read-alouds as a vehicle for TSEL integration, my own previous research suggested affordances for using interactive read-alouds to simultaneously support students' social-emotional and literacy development. After the first implementation of RASEL in 2022, I conducted a discourse analysis (Waring, 2017) of a video observation of the teacher's implementation of a RASEL lesson. In my discourse analysis, I engaged in two cycles of qualitative coding (Miles et al., 2020) to explore the patterns between the instructional moves used by the teacher to integrate TSEL and literacy and how students interacted with the text, activity, and themselves as readers. The observed patterns from my analysis supported RASEL as a valuable instructional sequence that can simultaneously support students' SEL (self-awareness and social-awareness) and literacy development (vocabulary, reading comprehension, constructing meaning from the text, and cultivating student engagement) within current classroom practices (interactive read-alouds) (Phillippe, 2024). The relevant literature and my own previous research suggest that literacy practices, such as interactive read-alouds, provide opportunities to integrate TSEL into the regular school day to simultaneously support children's social-emotional and literacy development.

Promoting Student Engagement and Social Action

Integrating TSEL with current literacy practices is also advantageous because it can be incorporated into daily classroom routines that have already been established (Boyles, 2018) and can be more engaging for students than supporting SEL in isolation (Pysarenko, 2020). The integration of TSEL into current classroom practices is a way to create authentic learning experiences for students. When recounting her own teaching experiences in a "voices from the

classroom" article, Jessica Pysarenko, a fifth-grade teacher felt that when TSEL was taught in isolation, students were not as engaged (Pysarenko, 2020). Once she began supporting TSEL with children's literature, the practitioner noticed students participating in deeper and more authentic discussions as well as an increase in her students' willingness to collaborate with one another. Similarly, in my previous work, the teacher with whom I collaboratively designed and implemented RASEL highlighted in her follow-up interview that integrating TSEL with interactive read-alouds "had a lot more engagement" than past TSEL instruction because her "students were engaged in a variety of texts and could draw at least one thematic connection to their own self-awareness based on the different experiences and emotions that the characters had in those books." However, it is important to note that to reap these social-emotional benefits, literacy practices need to be planned and purposeful (Venegas, 2019) as well as consistently implemented within literacy instruction over time (Dresser, 2013).

Additionally, integrating TSEL and literacy is one way to provide crucial opportunities to develop students' social skills, and forward positive social change (Clark et al., 2021). While a transformative approach to SEL is encouraging, it is only a preliminary step because if the goal is supporting students to thrive academically, emotionally, and socially, then we must value and affirm how a students' culture impacts their experiences (Mayes et al., 2022). In alignment with this literature, after the first implementation of RASEL, the teacher with whom I collaborated also mentioned in her follow-up interview that she felt the instructional sequence provided students opportunities to be able to connect this learning "to other aspects of their life" based on their own cultural experiences.

By integrating TSEL into current literacy practices involving children's literature, like interactive read-alouds, teachers can provide students with authentic and engaging activities that

can not only support TSEL and literacy development but can be a small steppingstone towards equipping students with the tools they need to impact positive social change.

Shifting from Research to Practice: Researching RASEL

Moving forward, there is a strong evidence base that advocates for integrating TSEL with literacy practices, such as interactive read-alouds (Boyles, 2018; Britt et al., 2016; McTigue et al., 2015), yet collaborative research is needed to operationalize the reciprocal relationship between social-emotional and literacy development in elementary classrooms. While literature supporting the connections between TSEL and literacy development informed my study, I also utilized frameworks that center CSP such as the Social Justice Standards (Learning for Justice, 2022) and the Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework (CR-S) (New York State Education Department, 2018) when designing and investigating RASEL. In this way, RASEL was intended as a justice-oriented approach to push back against CASEL's (n.d.) traditional notions of SEL and towards culturally sustaining pedagogies when integrating TSEL and literacy with interactive read-alouds. Therefore, across this study, I conceptualize TSEL as the ongoing work of teaching against traditional SEL practices that reinforce norms of whiteness with culturally sustaining, humanizing, and authentic practices that center equity and justice when supporting students' social and emotional development across the school day (Camangian & Cariaga, 2021; Clark et al., 2021, 2022; Simmons, 2019, 2021; Soutter et al., 2025).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

This study examined the reciprocal relationship between social-emotional and literacy development in elementary classrooms and investigated opportunities for teachers to center culture, complexity, and justice when integrating transformative SEL (TSEL) in elementary classrooms. I aimed to highlight the teacher's expertise and student voices as well as build upon preliminary investigations of the observed patterns between teacher moves and student interactions during the first round of Read Alouds for Social Emotional Learning (RASEL) implementation (Phillippe, 2024). Aligned with these overarching goals, the following research questions framed my study focused on the second round of RASEL implementation:

1. In what ways (if any) do fifth-grade students demonstrate changes in components of TSEL and narrative reading comprehension after participation in Read Alouds for Social-emotional Learning?
2. What aspects of Read Alouds for Social-emotional Learning instruction enhanced or inhibited the integration of students' social-emotional and literacy development?

In the first research question, the components of TSEL to which I am referring are self-awareness and social awareness. More specifically, self-awareness includes (a) identifying one's emotions and recognizing how thoughts, feelings, and actions are interconnected in and across diverse contexts, (b) identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets by accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations, and (c) integrating personal and social identities. In terms of social awareness, I am referring to (a) appropriately empathizing and feeling compassion and (b) taking the perspectives of those with the same and different backgrounds and cultures. The components of narrative reading comprehension include character perspective-taking, drawing

inferences, identifying themes, motivation and engagement with the text, and vocabulary development.

Study Design

The methodology guiding this study was design-based research (DBR). DBR is a pragmatic approach for creating and testing processes with the potential to transform practice, support new forms of learning, and promote more equitable outcomes for students (Campanella & Penuel, 2021). The iterative process of DBR highlights teachers' knowledge and expertise to collaboratively identify factors that inhibit or enhance the effectiveness of instruction to develop realistic adaptations to the instructional sequence (Bradley & Reinking, 2011). Similarly, Ivey (2021) considered DBR to be an iterative and multifaceted relationship between theory and practice, which can empower practitioners to reflect on and enhance their own learning opportunities (McCarty et al., 2021). The specifics of my DBR process enacted across multiple rounds analysis, design, and reflection will be detailed in the subsequent unit design chapter of this manuscript.

As a methodology, DBR supported the primary goals of my study. First, the collaborative nature of DBR allowed me to highlight teacher and student voices that are often not considered, which will support more culturally responsive instruction (Paris & Alim, 2014). To do so, I centered the teacher's and students' perspectives when designing, implementing, and describing RASEL. My study valued the teacher's expertise and was contingent upon the teacher's active role in the iterative design of the instructional sequence. In this way, DBR's pragmatic approach of examining and transforming instructional practices in authentic settings (Philippakos & MacArthur, 2021) will support my aim to illustrate and operationalize the evidence for integrating TSEL and literacy. Second, DBR is a deeply pragmatic approach in that it is not

limited to one single method for analyzing data (Campanella & Penuel, 2021), which supports my incorporation of a range of qualitative data analysis methods across my study (Miles et al., 2020).

Researcher Positionality

My motivation for conducting this study and collaboratively designing RASEL stems from my experiences during my adolescence and those as an elementary teacher. Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop (1990) famously asserted that books can act as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors for students. While I wholeheartedly agree, I also believe that books can be steppingstones, anchors, springboards, warm blankets, quiet corners, and flying carpets (Snider, 2018). During my adolescence, I tragically lost my dad to a sudden heart attack. All children grieve in different ways, but as a 13-year-old I found it helpful to transport myself into a fictional world by reading and writing stories about characters who were coping with similar experiences to my own.

I believe that these impactful experiences with children's literature in my youth translated to passion for literacy in both my personal and professional life. In reflecting upon my experiences teaching third and fourth grade, I often knew *what* the best teaching practices were, but not necessarily *how* to enact them. For example, I often had children's literature in my classroom library that could act as mirrors and windows for my students, but I wasn't fully equipped with the tools to utilize these texts to enact justice-oriented instruction to simultaneously support students' social-emotional and literacy development. Likewise, I knew it was imperative to teach with culturally sustaining pedagogies, and I was passionate about fostering positive relationships with my students, facilitating a classroom environment where students feel a sense of belonging, and providing opportunities for students to engage in authentic and empowering learning experiences. However, as a teacher I felt that I needed more support to guide me in enacting this work.

As a White, cisgender, straight woman who benefits from many aspects of privilege, I aim to engage in collaborative research that critically examines traditional practices that have the potential to reify norms of whiteness and center children with transformative and culturally sustaining practices. I believe one's identity shapes how one conducts research, and I am committed to reflect upon and work to mitigate the biases I bring to my work. My positionality and prior experiences support the overarching goal of my study, which was to investigate a transformative approach to integrating SEL and literacy with interactive read-alouds in a way that highlights teacher and student voices with the long-term goal of providing actionable steps for teachers to replicate and expand on this approach in a variety of contexts.

School Context

This study was conducted in a fifth-grade classroom in an elementary school, Billings Elementary (pseudonym), in Western Michigan. I taught fourth grade at Billings Elementary from 2015 until 2020 and am still connected to many of the teachers and administrators. I purposefully selected Billings as the setting for this study because of these pre-established trusting relationships. Even with these existing relationships, I prioritized building and maintaining trusting relationships with Liz and her students so that they felt comfortable sharing their experiences openly, which strengthened the study's authenticity and validity (McCarty et al., 2021). To do so, I aimed to become an active member of the classroom community, worked collaboratively with the teacher, and valued teacher and student insights.

The student population of the elementary school is 2% Asian, 1% Black, 14% Hispanic/Latino(a), 10% Two or more races, and 73% White, with 46% of the students qualifying for free-and-reduced lunch (MI School Data, 2024). Additionally, the percentage of students that scored at or above proficiency levels as designated by state testing in Michigan in

2023 was 66% in math and 64% in reading (MI School Data, 2024). Participating in RASEL will provide this group of predominantly White students the opportunity to engage with the multicultural perspectives needed to develop the skills, knowledge, and mindset to examine biases, evaluate social norms, and promote community well-being. Billings Elementary is a K-6 building at the intersection of two busy crossroads and adjacent to a single-family residential neighborhood. Billings Elementary is one of six elementary schools in the district and houses the district's autism spectrum disorder (ASD) special education programs.

Teacher Participant

This study allowed me the privilege of collaborating with Ms. Liz Klein (all names are pseudonyms), who identifies as a White female and has four years of teaching experience in a fifth-grade classroom. She has taught exclusively at the school where this study was conducted. During the first round of this study in the fall of 2022, I spent approximately 80 hours in Liz's classroom, and during the second round in the spring of 2024 I spent approximately 95 hours in her classroom. Over this span of time, I observed that she was a dedicated teacher who was motivated to enhance her instructional practices. One of Liz's strengths was her ability to build and maintain positive relationships with her students. During my time in her classroom, I observed Liz holding morning meetings to start each school day, spending her lunch hour inviting students to come eat with her, differentiating her instruction to meet her students' needs, and being an active listener when students came to her with a problem. These examples and more are how Liz worked to strengthen her relationships with her students.

Based on my conversations with her, Liz is dedicated to promoting equity and justice in her own classroom as well as sharing this mindset with other educators by co-presenting with me at justice-oriented conferences like the 2024 Michigan Council of Teachers of English (MCTE)

conference. Additionally, Liz and I had shared goals of enhancing traditional SEL instruction with a more transformative SEL approach focused culturally sustaining pedagogies.

Student Participants

In the fall of 2022, we collaboratively designed and implemented the first iteration of RASEL with Liz's class of 13 fifth-grade students who identified as Black (15%), Hispanic/Latino(a) (15%), and White (70%). There were seven boys (54%) and six girls (46%). No students were learning English as an additional language. Based on the findings and suggestions from the first implementation, we implemented the second iteration of RASEL with Liz's fifth-grade students during the spring of the 2023-2024 school year.

Whole Class

During the second RASEL implementation, Liz had 25 fifth graders in her class, 17 of whom were participants in this study. Eight students were not included in the data set for a variety of reasons. One of the students and their family chose "not to participate" via their assent and consent forms. Four of the students were in Billing's ASD program, which meant they were a part of Liz's homeroom for certain content areas (specials, science, and social studies) and social components (lunch, recess), while they received the remainder of their instruction (math, reading, SEL, etc.) from their ASD teacher in a self-contained classroom. Because these students were not in Liz's classroom during the RASEL instruction, they were not included in our data set. Finally, there were three students who were not present for all RASEL instruction or did not complete the pre- or post-activities in their entirety for a variety of reasons including: being absent from school, being pulled by an instructional interventionist for additional phonics support or being pulled by the school social worker for small group behavioral interventions.

The 17 student participants identified as Asian (7%), Hispanic/Latino(a) (11%), Multiracial (11%), White (64%), and 7% preferred not to respond. There were nine boys (53%) and eight girls (47%). No students were learning English as an additional language. These 17 fifth graders were video recorded participating in RASEL instruction and completed the RASEL pre- and post-activities. See Table 2 for student participants' demographics.

Table 2

Student Participant's Demographics

Student Name (Pseudonym)	Self-identified Gender	Self-identified Race	Age (at the time of data collection
Lindsey	Girl	White	11
Sophia	Girl	Multiracial	10
Taylor	Girl	White	11
Tara	Girl	Hispanic/Latina	10
Izzy	Girl	White	11
Cara	Girl	White	11
Brittany	Girl	Asian	11
Brooke	Girl	Prefer not to respond	10
Bruno	Boy	Hispanic/Latino	10
Edward	Boy	White	10
Henry	Boy	White	11
Finn	Boy	White	10
Carson	Boy	White	11
Brody	Boy	White	11
Marco	Boy	Multiracial	10
Xavier	Boy	White	11
Dillian	Boy	White	11

Note. Anchor students in bold.

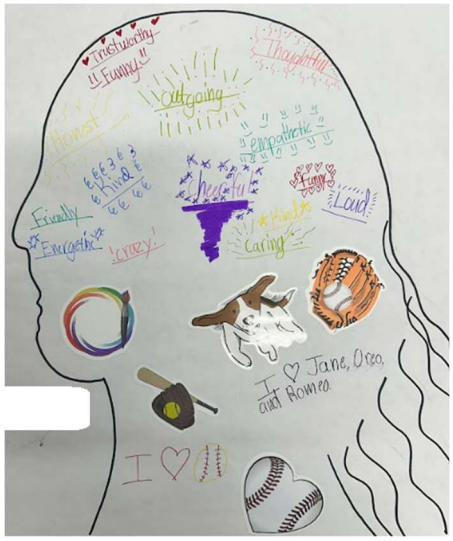
Anchor Students

While including whole class data supported broad patterns of change in students' TSEL and narrative reading comprehension after participating in RASEL, I also selected eight anchor students to focus on across the study (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). Doing so strengthened my findings by allowing for richer descriptions of the anchor student's shifts and gave a voice to the students' experiences by sharing which components of RASEL they felt may have enhanced or inhibited these changes. While the number of anchor students remained fluid throughout data collection in case of unforeseen complications (e.g., consent forms not being returned, student absences from school on days of RASEL instruction), all eight anchor students are represented in the data set. Liz and I collaboratively selected the anchor students for this study to represent students of multiple races, both biological sexes, and a range of academic and behavioral needs. The following subsections act as an introduction to each anchor student (Lindsey, Sophia, Taylor, Tara, Bruno, Edward, Henry, and Finn) who are featured across this study. The introductions below are based on my interactions with and observations of the students, their identity silhouettes which they created during RASEL's culminating activity, and adjectives provided by their classmates during a team building experience that occurred outside of RASEL.

Lindsey. Lindsey was an 11-year-old White girl who often acted shy during class or around new people but was energetic and bubbly on the playground with her friends. Lindsey was not afraid to speak her mind and confidently advocated for herself and her friends. Her classmates described her as "trustworthy," "caring," "honest," and "reliable." See Figure 2 for Lindsey's Identity Silhouette.

Figure 2

Lindsey's Identity Silhouette



Sophia. Sophia was a 10-year-old Multiracial girl with Asian, Black, and White heritage. Sophia showed pride in her kind nature and her ability to bring joy and laughter to others. She also loved playing volleyball, drawing, and spending time with her mom. Sophia's classmates described her as "supportive," "kind," "sweet," and "thoughtful." See Figure 3 for Sophia's Identity Silhouette.

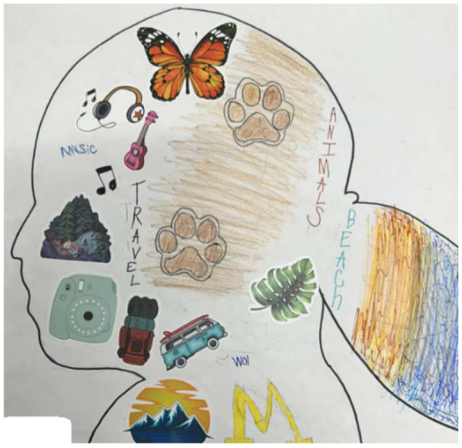
Figure 3

Sophia's Identity Silhouette

Taylor. Taylor was an 11-year-old White girl who was passionate about softball and dedicated time outside of school to work towards her goal of becoming the starting pitcher for her team. Taylor didn't often raise her hand to verbally participate in class discussions, but when she did her words were powerful and insightful. Her classmates described her as "outgoing," "strong," "brave," and "hardworking." See Figure 4 for Taylor's Identity Silhouette.

Figure 4

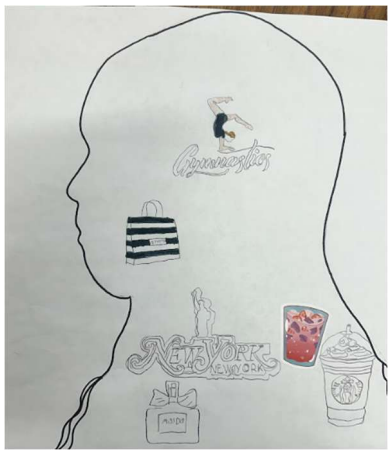
Taylor's Identity Silhouette



Tara. Tara was a 10-year-old Latina girl who enjoys drawing and gymnastics. Tara also had a strong entrepreneurial spirit, as one of the founders of a booming fifth-grade slime-making business. She and her friends would make different variations of sparkly or colorful slime that they would sell or trade with their classmates before and after school and/or during recess. Tara's classmates described her as "friendly," "imaginative," "creative," and "patient." See Figure 5 for Tara's Identity Silhouette.

Figure 5

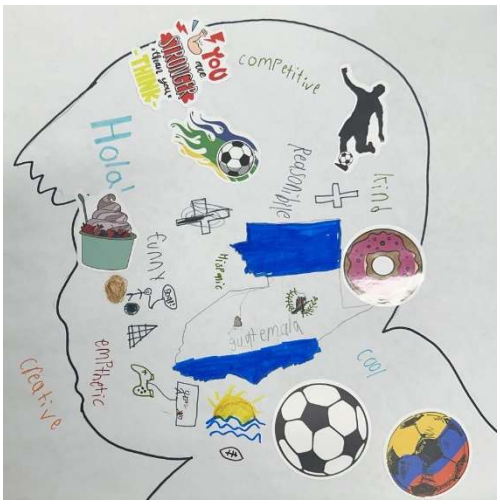
Tara's Identity Silhouette



Bruno. Bruno was a 10-year-old Latino boy with evident pride for his Guatemalan heritage. During his interviews, Bruno shared how his parents were born in Guatemala and how his "culture is cool with different foods and languages" and he is proud that he can "speak two languages to communicate with a lot of people." Bruno's classmates described him as "empathetic," "kind," "funny," and "creative." See Figure 6 for Bruno's Identity Silhouette.

Figure 6

Bruno's Identity Silhouette



Edward. Edward was a 10-year-old White boy who could often be found using his artistic talents to draw, doodle, or sketch whenever he could. Edward was an active member of Billings Elementary's Peer-to-Peer program, which was designed to support students with autism by pairing them with typically developing peers who act as mentors, friends, and role models. During his interviews, Edward tended to use self-deprecating language to describe himself, specifically his appearance. Edwards's classmates described him as "friendly," "generous," "artistic," and "kind to all." See Figure 7 for Edwards's Identity Silhouette.

Figure 7

Edward's Identity Silhouette

Henry. Henry was an 11-year-old White boy who was an avid Detroit Lions fan and loved anything sports related. Henry brought joy to the classroom with his outgoing and humorous personality. He also was very caring towards and protective of his younger brother, who Henry often high-fived or fist-bumped when they passed one another in the hallways at school. Henry's classmates described him as "athletic," "energetic," "courageous," and "hardworking." See Figure 8 for Henry's Identity Silhouette.

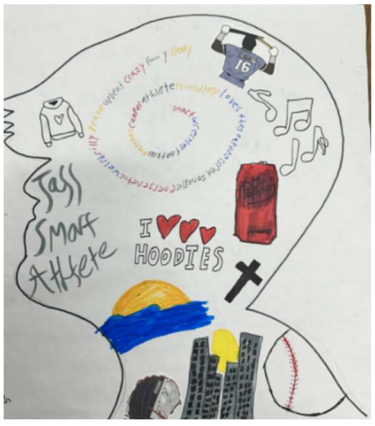
Figure 8

Henry's Identity Silhouette

Finn. Finn was a 10-year-old White boy who was passionate about hoodies, hats, and music. Finn was taller than many of his fifth-grade peers, and in his interview, he described how others that don't know him always think he's older than he really is. Finn showed a lot of maturity and insightfulness in that he had a strong sense of how his life benefits from many aspects of White privilege. His classmates described him as "smart," "friendly," "brave," and "helpful." See Figure 9 for Finn's Identity Silhouette.

Figure 9

Finn's Identity Silhouette



Data Collection

The data sources across both years of my design-based study included: student pre- and post-activities (N = 17), anchor student semi-structured pre- and post-interviews (n = *8*), semi-structured teacher follow-up interviews (n = 2), post-instruction teacher reflection surveys (n = 6), video observations of RASEL lessons (n = 14), collaborative planning sessions notes, and observational data from the classroom. The data collected from year two was used to examine in what ways (if any) students demonstrate changes in components of SEL and narrative reading comprehension after participation in RASEL and what aspects of RASEL instruction enhanced or inhibited this shift. The following subsections detail each data source and corresponding data collection procedure.

Student Pre- and Post-activities

All the student participants (N = 17) completed a two-part activity focused on TSEL and narrative reading comprehension before and after participating in RASEL. These pre- and post-activities were completed over two sessions during Liz's interactive read-aloud block, each lasting approximately 20 minutes. Based on my conversations with Liz about a paper vs. digital format for these activities, we decided to utilize an interactive PDF that was shared with students using Liz' google classroom because this was a format and platform her students had previous experience with. Prior to Liz's fifth graders completing the pre-activity, I obtained consent and assent forms from all participants and piloted the pre-activity with five fourth graders at Billings. Based on feedback from the pilot students, I did not change the content of the activities but made small modifications to the directions and the formatting to make them more user-friendly. For example, I increased the font size across interactive PDF that provided directions because it was too small for the pilot students to read when using their Chromebook devices.

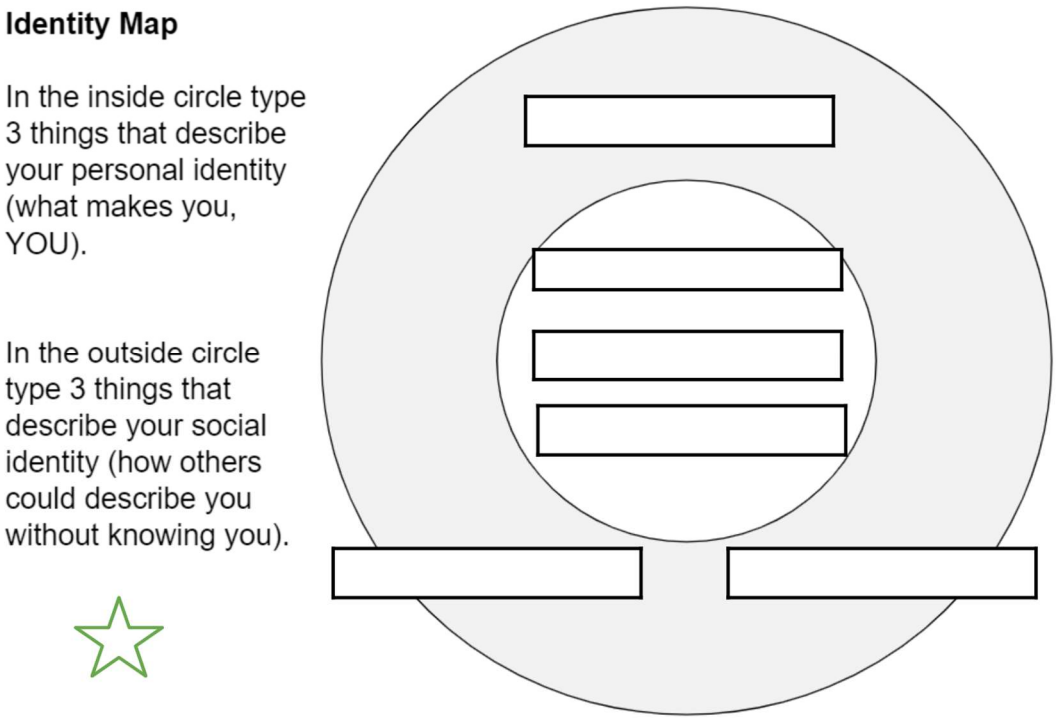
The pre- and post-activities focused on overlapping components between TSEL and narrative reading comprehension. Due to the broad nature of both TSEL and narrative reading comprehension, I focused the pre- and post-activities on specific aspects of each aligned with the RASEL design. In terms of transformative SEL, I focused on components of self-awareness (identifying one's emotions and recognizing how thoughts, feelings, and actions are interconnected in and across diverse contexts; integrating personal and social identities and working to understand the link between one's personal and collective history and identities) and social awareness (appropriately empathizing and feeling compassion; taking perspectives of those with the same and different backgrounds and cultures) (Jagers et al., 2021). In terms of narrative reading comprehension, the pre- and post-activities required students to identify emotion vocabulary (Doyle & Bramwell, 2006), engage in character perspective-taking (McTigue et al., 2015), considering the character's cultural experiences when determining themes from the text (Guthrie, 2007).

Pre- and Post-activity: Part One

In part one, students filled out an identity map, which required them to consider the integration of their personal and social identities (See Figure 10).

Figure 10

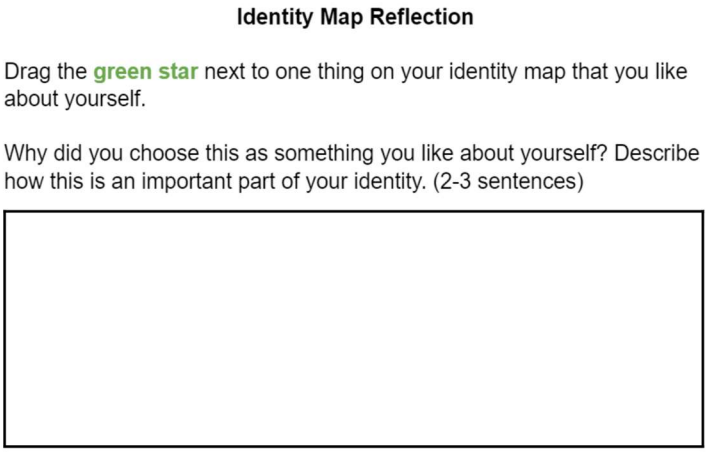
Pre- and Post-activity: Identity Map



Following the completion of the identity map, students were asked to "drag and drop a screen star" icon to indicate one characteristic from their identity map that they like most about themselves. Then students were asked to describe their reasoning for their selection and how they felt this is an important part of who they are. In doing so, students were demonstrating their understanding of their personal, cultural, and linguistic assets (See Figure 11).

Figure 11

Pre- and Post-Activity: Identity Map Reflection



Alongside each question in part one, students were asked to rate the level of difficulty they felt when answering each question using an emoji Likert scale to determine if they felt more confident completing the activity after participating in RASEL (See Figure 12).

Figure 12

Pre- and Post-activity: Emoji Likert Scale

Pre- and Post-activity: Part Two

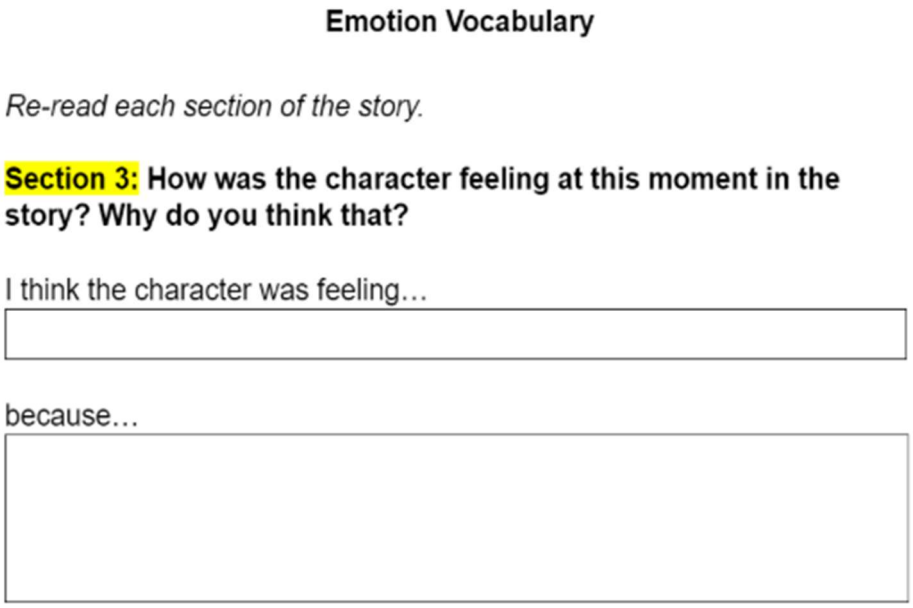
During Part two of this activity, students listened and followed along as I read aloud a narrative reading comprehension passages from the Actively Learn ELA website (Actively Learn, n.d.). A different passage was used during the pre- and post-activity. See Appendix A for the narrative reading comprehension passages. Both passages were within a similar Lexile level (L 510-570) and were similar in length (between 700-900 words). Both passages fell within the third through fifth grade band according to the Actively Learn ELA website but were slightly below the Common Core State Standards Lexile bands for fourth and fifth grade (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). I adapted both passages to remove specific emotion vocabulary words from the text, which required students to use context clues from the text and their SEL skills of empathy to infer emotions. For example, I removed text that specifically stated how the character was feeling (e.g., "Mali was frustrated").

Notably, these passages both contain examples of a cultural injustice (a character being told she can't play in the basketball game wearing her hijab and a character getting laughed at because of her Thai food in her lunchbox). Utilizing these passages strengthened the study because it provided opportunities for a predominantly White group of students to engage with texts that can act as windows (Bishop, 1990). However, I worked with Liz to ensure we provided students with background knowledge required to meaningfully engage with each passage. For example, prior to reading *Swoosh*, we provided students with the definition of the term hijab, shared a video in which a young Muslim girl explained the cultural importance of her hijab, and provided students with an opportunity to ask questions. Following the initial read of the passage, students could refer to their copy of the passage to independently answer a series of

comprehension questions focused on overlapping components of transformative SEL and literacy. First students were asked to infer how the character was feeling at two different moments using evidence from the text (See Figure 13).

Figure 13

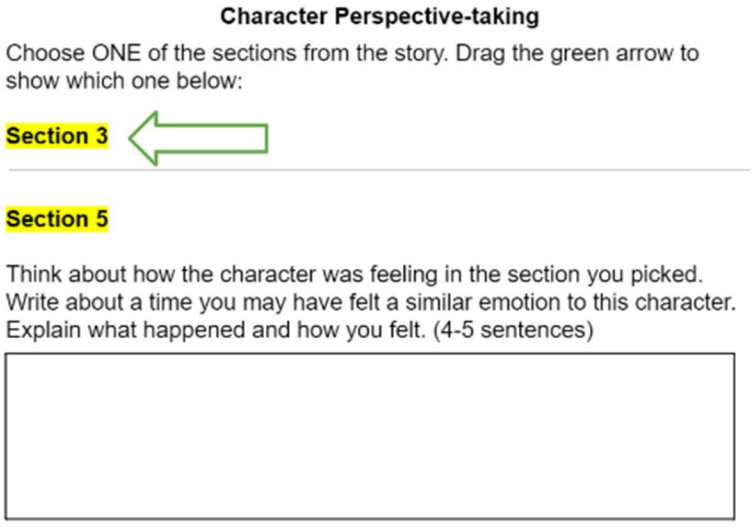
Pre- and Post-activity: Inferring Emotion Vocabulary



After identifying emotion vocabulary and inferring the character's emotions in two different sections of the passage, students were asked to select one section and indicate their choice using the interactive green arrow in the digital document. Then students were asked to consider the perspective of the character in that moment and write about a time when they may have experienced a similar feeling or emotion (See Figure 14).

Figure 14

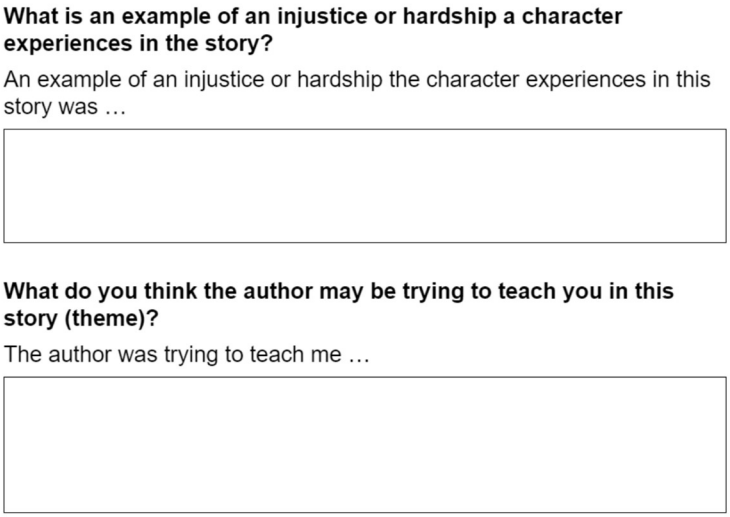
Pre- and Post-activity: Character Perspective-taking



Finally, students were asked to describe an example of an injustice the character may have faced and identify a possible theme from the passage (See Figure 15).

Figure 15

Pre- and Post-activity: Identifying Injustices and Themes from the Text



Student Interviews

The data collected from the whole class pre- and post-activities was supplemented by semi-structured student pre- and post-interviews with the eight anchor students. The purpose of these interviews was twofold: (1) a follow-up to the pre- and post-student activities to support a more in-depth understanding of how these specific students may have demonstrated changes in components of their TSEL and narrative reading comprehension and (2) an opportunity to highlight students' voices about what aspects of RASEL instruction they felt enhanced or inhibited the integration of their own SEL and literacy development. See Appendix B for the list of student interview questions.

I conducted and audio recorded these interviews in a conference room down the hall from Liz's classroom before and after the implementation of RASEL. The semi-structured interviews began by briefly reviewing the students' own work from the pre- and post- activities that were completed in the whole group setting. Next, students were asked to share their rationale and provide additional details to support their responses in the activities. Utilizing the interview data alongside the student artifact data allowed me to conduct more in-depth analyses and include richer descriptions of how these anchor students demonstrated changes in components of their TSEL and narrative reading comprehension. Additionally, I asked students about their experiences participating in RASEL. Including questions about the students' experiences provided opportunities for them to share aspects of the instruction they liked and disliked as well as potential changes they would make, which allowed students' voices to be highlighted in my analysis.

Teacher Interviews

During the first implementation of RASEL in the fall of 2022, Liz participated in a semi-structured follow-up interview after collaboratively designing and enacting the first iteration of RASEL. This interview focused on Liz's experiences implementing RASEL, the aspects of instruction she felt enhanced or inhibited the instructional sequence, and her suggestions for the second iteration of RASEL. Similarly, the follow-up interview from the current study focused on the aspects of RASEL instruction Liz felt were affordances or challenges. In addition, the interview questions after the second implementation focused more specifically on which aspects of RASEL instruction enhanced or inhibited the integration of students' SEL and literacy development. See Appendix C for the list of teacher follow-up interview questions from year one and year two.

Teacher Reflections

During the first implementation of RASEL, Liz reflected on her instruction after each set of RASEL lessons by completing a survey (google form). These reflections guided our collaborative planning conversations and the iterative process of revising aspects of the instructional sequence along the way. The survey prompts included questions about Liz's overall feelings about her instruction and at least one affordance and one challenge from her experience at that point. During the second implementation, Liz also completed these brief post-instructional surveys after each set of RASEL lessons to continue to guide our collaborative planning sessions. Additionally, these reflection surveys also supported the investigation of which specific aspects of RASEL instruction enhanced or inhibited the students' SEL and literacy development. See Appendix D for the list of survey prompts from year one and year two.

Video Recordings of RASEL Lessons

During the first implementation all seven RASEL lessons were video recorded, and I analyzed three lessons for patterns between teacher moves and student interactions. During the second implementation, all RASEL lessons were also video recorded. I utilized these observational videos as additional data sources to further support the investigation of both research questions. For example, analyzing sections of video when the anchor students engaged with aspects of the lessons that they mentioned in their interviews allowed me to further understand ways in which components of students' transformative SEL and narrative reading comprehension may have changed after participating in RASEL. Additionally, the video recordings allowed me to provide descriptive examples during the implementation of RASEL that illustrated aspects of instruction that enhanced or inhibited students' TSEL and literacy development.

Collaborative Planning Sessions Notes and Observational Data

My final data source included my research memos and jottings from my collaborative planning sessions with Liz and observations from my time spent in the classroom. Most of my data sources allowed me to center the teacher's and students' experiences, which is one of the driving forces behind my study. However, due to the collaborative nature of DBR, I drew upon my own notes and observational data to include my own experiences and perspectives alongside those of the teacher and students.

Data Analysis

With DBR as the methodology guiding my study, I analyzed my data set through an interpretivist approach (Miles et al., 2020). According to Miles et al. 2020, the coding process involves a deep reflection, and therefore a deep interpretation of the data, which suggests "coding *is* analysis" (p. 63). Codes are "labels that we assign symbolic meaning to the

descriptive information that we compile during our study" (Milles et al., 2020, p. 62). The following subsections outline my coding and analytic processes for each of my research questions.

Research Question 1

To investigate ways fifth-grade students demonstrated changes in components of TSEL and narrative reading comprehension after participating in RASEL, I qualitatively analyzed the whole class pre- and post-activities and anchor student semi-structured pre- and post-interviews. My qualitative analysis included multiple cycles of coding that involved a deep reflection and interpretation of the data (Miles et al., 2020). More specifically, I used descriptive codes to assign labels that summarize the basic topic of the portions of data (Miles et al., 2020), and evaluation codes to assign judgment about the merit of the data (Miles et al., 2020) to support broad shifts in students' TSEL and reading comprehension. The three cycles of my coding process included: (1) summarizing units from my data with descriptive a priori codes, (2) inductively determining evaluation codes based on the initial descriptive codes to support broad patterns of change, and (3) grouping my evaluation codes from the second cycle into categories or themes. See Table 3 for my list of descriptive codes and subcodes used in my first cycle of coding. See Figure 16 for my evaluation coding protocol used during my second cycle of coding. In addition to coding the whole class pre- and post-activities and the anchor student pre- and post-interviews, the video observations of RASEL instruction and my observational notes informed further interpretation of my data and illustrative examples across my findings

Table 3

Descriptive Codes and Subcodes: Components of TSEL and Narrative Reading Comprehension

Codes	Subcodes	Description	Student Examples
Emotions	Emotion Vocabulary	Students identify (Learning for Justice, 2022) and think deeply about (Jagers et al., 2021) emotions of people who share their identities and those who have other identities (Learning for Justice, 2022).	"The character was happy and excited"
	Drawing Inferences	Students recognize how emotions and actions are interconnected (Jagers, 2021) by providing evidence (actions from the story) that suggests everyone reacts to situations differently based on their own experiences, cultural backgrounds, and perspectives (New York State Education Department, 2018).	"I think the character felt accepted because her friends stood up for her"
Identity	Integrating Personal and Social Identities	Students demonstrate an understanding that all parts of their identities make up who they are (Jagers et al., 2021) and recognize that multiple identities interact to create unique and complex individuals (Learning for Justice, 2022)	"They [personal and social identity] mix together because they describe who I am"
Social Justice	Recognizing Injustices	Students can give examples when people are treated unfairly based on their identities and understand that this causes real harm (Learning for Justice, 2022).	"The character experienced injustice when she couldn't play because of her hijab. This was unfair because her hijab is an important part of who she is"
	Exploring Themes	Students explore themes about how people (including themselves) are treated and how to treat others the way they want to be treated (Learning for Justice, 2022).	"A theme from the story is never compromise for your culture or what makes you, you"

Figure 16

Evaluation Codes: Shifts in TSEL and Narrative Reading Comprehension

Exploring Complex Emotion Vocabulary *(self-awareness, social awareness, and vocabulary development)*		
Beginning	**Developing**	**Advancing**
Identifying basic emotion(s) (e.g., mad, sad, happy) of the character	Identifying a combination of basic and complex emotions (e.g., mad and annoyed) of the character	Identifying complex emotion(s) (e.g., frustrated, proud) of the character

Inferring Emotions with Evidence that Highlights Character's Cultural Experiences *(self-awareness, social awareness, and reading comprehension)*		
Beginning	**Developing**	**Advancing**
Supporting inference with evidence from the text that does not consider the character's cultural experiences, backgrounds or perspectives (e.g., the character was embarrassed because kids were being mean)	Supporting inference with evidence from the text that **broadly alludes to** the character's cultural experiences, backgrounds, or perspectives. (e.g., mentions the character's food or clothing, but does not draw the connection to how this connects to the character's culture)	Supporting inference with evidence from the text that **draws upon or highlights** the character's cultural experience, backgrounds, or perspectives (e.g., specifically mentions how the character's food or clothing is connected to their culture)

Embracing the Interrelated Nature of Identities *(self-awareness and cultivating literacy motivation/engagement)*		
Beginning	**Developing**	**Advancing**
Viewing personal and social identities as separate (e.g., how I am at home vs. at school)	Alluding to the connection between personal and social identities (e.g., verbalizing or noticing similar words on the inside and outside of their identity map but doesn't explain how they are connected)	Viewing personal and social identities as interrelated and working together to make up who they are (e.g., they kind of work together; you can put stuff on the inside and outside, like I could have put funny on both)

Figure 16 (cont'd)

Recognizing Injustices and Acknowledging Harm (*social awareness and reading comprehension)*		
Beginning	**Developing**	**Advancing**
Providing examples that indicate an unclear understanding of injustice and no mention that harm is occurring (e.g., the character's mom packed her the wrong lunch)	Providing examples that indicate an understanding that something harmful occurred and attributed (or alluded to) the harm as occurring because of someone's identity (e.g., race, gender, culture, ethnicity), but did not reference this example as being unjust or unfair	Providing examples that indicate an understanding that an injustice occurred, attributed the injustice as occurring because of someone's identity (e.g., race, gender, culture, ethnicity), and refers to this example as unjust or unfair

Identifying Themes that Advocate for Social Justice *(social awareness and reading comprehension)*		
Beginning	**Developing**	**Advancing**
Identifies a theme that does not allude to social justice **OR** cannot identify an accurate theme without support (e.g., the character ate Thai food)	Identifies a theme that broadly alludes to social justice (e.g., be kind)	Identifies a theme that is connected to social justice (e.g., show kindness to all people and all cultures)

While I utilized common evaluation codes across the whole class pre- and post-activities and anchor student pre- and post- interviews to determine patterns in how students shifted in components of TSEL and narrative reading comprehension, my analytic processes for each data source varied slightly which I outline in the following subsections.

Student Pre- and Post-activities

First, I compiled copies of the 17 student pre- and post-activities into a digital folder. Next, I organized student responses for each question into an excel spreadsheet and summarized units of data with descriptive codes. My unit of analysis included students' responses to each question across the pre- and post-activities. After engaging in the first round of descriptive

coding, I assigned evaluation codes to investigate possible changes in components of the anchor students' TSEL and narrative reading comprehension. My evaluation codes (beginning, developing, and advancing) were formulated based on the descriptive codes from the first cycle of coding and were aligned to relevant literature around each RASEL component. These general evaluation codes (beginning, developing, and advancing) were used across the students' written responses from the pre- and post-activity, but the criteria for responses varied slightly for each question. For example, the "advancing" code for questions about emotion vocabulary was focused on the complexity of emotions students identified whereas the "advancing" code for the identity map portion of the pre- and post-activity was focused on students' understanding of the interrelated nature of their identities.

Anchor Student Interviews

The coding process for the student pre- and post- activities provided a broad view of whole class shifts in TSEL and narrative reading comprehension before and after participation in RASEL. The purpose of the one-on-one semi-structured interviews with anchor students was to provide an in-depth narrative and additional data source to further support the shifts that were evident from the whole class pre- and post-activities. During the interviews, I showed the anchor students their responses from the pre- and post-activities and asked them to provide narratives that explained their rationale for their thinking or to provide more detail to their answers if needed.

To analyze the eight anchor student interviews, I transcribed each interview using Otter.ai, an online transcription program that automatically transcribes speech from video or audio recordings to text. Next, I finalized and organized each transcript into an excel spreadsheet with my unit of analysis determined by the change in turns between researcher and students. Like

my analytic process with the student pre- and post-activities, I used descriptive codes following by evaluation codes based on student dialogue as they narrate examples or explain situations in how they were thinking about the questions where changes in components of SEL and narrative reading comprehension may have occurred. See Figure 17 for an example of my coding process with an excerpt from an anchor student post-interview.

Figure 17

Example of Coding Anchor Student Post-Interview

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Speaker	**Discourse**	**Descriptive Code**	**Evaluation Code**	**Descriptive Code**	**Evaluation Code**	**Descriptive Code**	**Evaluation Code**
Researcher	In your activity, you said the chracter was **frustrated**. So walk me through that and then we're going to ask you kind of how you came up						
Student	Um, So like, in the story, she like, you could like she said she want to like cry and she was **mad** at her mom and **sad** because she packed Thai food again. But then she realized her mama she did nothing wrong. She was just **frustrated** because her classmates are judging her for her food.	Emotion Vocabulary	Developing	Drawing Inferences	Advancing	Identifying Injustices	Developing

Video Observations and Observational Notes

Sections of the RASEL video observations and my observational notes were also used to investigate if students demonstrate changes in their SEL and narrative reading comprehension after participating in RASEL. I video recorded all of Liz's RASEL instruction and created memos to track which sections of video the anchor students were observed responding to a question, sharing an insight, or engaging in the content of the lesson. These instances of Liz's RASEL instruction were utilized to support the instructional context and illustrative examples to support each finding, which I explore in my Findings Chapter of this manuscript. Overall, the triangulation of data across the student artifacts, student interviews, and observational video recordings helped me gain a deeper understanding of student shifts in components SEL and narrative reading comprehension after participating in RASEL.

Research Question 2

To explore aspects of RASEL instruction that enhanced or inhibited the integration of TSEL and literacy development, I drew upon components of retrospective analysis to qualitatively analyze my data set across both rounds of RASEL implementation with an emphasis on triangulating my findings based on the experiences of the teacher (Liz), the eight anchor students, and myself as the researcher. Retrospective analysis is the holistic "studying of the data set to contribute to the development or improvement of a framework" (Gravemeijer & Cobb, 2006, p. 153). Across both rounds of RASEL implementation, my data set included: teacher semi-structured follow-up interviews, teacher post-instruction surveys, video observations of whole group RASEL lessons, my collaborative planning session notes and observational data from the classroom, and the anchor student semi-structured post-interviews from year two.

While I did not engage in the entire retrospective analysis process, I conducted three cycles of qualitative coding (Miles et al., 2020) influenced by the categorization of summaries across data sources to compare the established categories and establish themes (Gravemeijer & Cobb, 2006). My three cycles of coding included: (1) initially summarizing units from my data set, (2) grouping summaries from the first cycle into descriptive codes, and (3) comparing the descriptive codes across data sources to establish emerging themes or pedagogical assertions.

Drawing upon components of retrospective analysis into my qualitative coding process allowed me to conduct a more holistic analysis of the teacher, student, and researcher experiences across my data set. The intent of this analysis was not to develop a finalized version of RASEL, but rather to describe emerging themes (pedagogical assertions) based aspects of RASEL instruction in Liz's classroom that enhanced or inhibited the integration of SEL and literacy development (Colwell and Reinking, 2016). These pedagogical assertions can function

as a framework for future implementations and ongoing adaptations to RASEL in a variety of classroom contexts (Gravemeijer & Cobb, 2006). While my three coding cycles remained consistent across the data set, the following subsections detail my analytic procedures and final lists of codes, which were used to compare the experiences of the teacher, anchor students, and researcher to establish emerging themes or pedagogical assertions.

Teacher Experiences

To explore Liz's experiences, I utilized her follow-up interviews and post-instruction surveys from both rounds of RASEL implementation. I transcribed her follow-up interviews with the help of Otter.ai, an online transcription program. My unit of analysis consisted of talk turns alternating between the teacher and the researcher. I organized Liz's year one and year two interview transcripts into separate tabs within an excel spreadsheet along with a tab including Liz's survey responses across both rounds of RASEL implementation.

When coding Liz's interview and survey data, I initially summarized each of her talk turns and survey responses as she described her experiences and narrated examples of RASEL instruction that she perceived as enhancing or inhibiting the integration of students' SEL and literacy development. Next, I grouped the summaries from the first cycle into descriptive codes (e.g., enhance, inhibit) and subcodes (e.g., feel wheel, perspective-taking, identity silhouette) (See Table 4). Finally, I compared the teacher codes with the anchor student codes to establish pedagogical assertions, which I discuss in the findings chapter.

Table 4

Descriptive Codes: Teacher Experience

Codes	Subcodes	Description	Examples
Enhance	Texts	Teacher references texts, interactive read-alouds, or books as an aspect of RASEL that enhanced the integration of SEL and literacy development	"It was helpful to read the texts aloud to discuss higher level concepts, like theme"
	Feel Wheel	Teacher references the feel wheel or emotion vocabulary as an aspect of RASEL that enhanced the integration of SEL and literacy development	"The feel wheel helped to narrow it down to a more specific emotion vocab word"
	Identity Silhouette	Teacher references the identity silhouette as an aspect of RASEL that enhanced the integration of SEL and literacy development	"The identity silhouette was an engaging way to connect everything together"
	Justice-oriented conversations	Teacher references justice-oriented conversations as an aspect of RASEL that enhanced the integration of SEL and literacy development	"We had an in-depth class discussion about why this injustice may have occurred and our own roles in this type of situation"
Inhibit	Character perspective-taking	Teacher references character perspective-taking as an aspect of RASEL that inhibited the integration of SEL and literacy development	"The connections to emotions they were making were good, but it would have been better if they could push it a step further and take the perspective of the character"
	Identity Mapping	Teacher references character perspective-taking as an aspect of RASEL that inhibited the integration of SEL and literacy development	"The identity map was a bit confusing and many took them longer to get there"

Anchor Students Experiences

In addition to supporting a more in-depth understanding of possible ways in which students demonstrate changes in components SEL and narrative reading comprehension, the last four questions of the anchor student post-interviews align with my second research question by asking students to explain their own learning process as well as their favorite and least favorite aspects of RASEL instruction. This portion of the anchor students' post-interviews highlighted students' voices about what aspects of RASEL instruction they felt supported the integration of their own SEL and literacy development.

I transcribed the eight anchor student follow-up interviews with the help of Otter.ai, and my unit of analysis consisted of talk turns alternating between the student and the researcher. I organized each anchor student interview transcript into separate tabs within an excel spreadsheet. When coding the anchor student follow-up interviews, I initially summarized each student's talk turns as they narrated examples and described their RASEL experiences that they perceived as enhancing or inhibiting their own SEL or literacy development. Similarly to the teacher interviews, I grouped the summaries from the first cycle into descriptive codes and subcodes (See Table 5). Finally, I compared the student codes with the teacher codes to establish pedagogical assertions, which I share in the findings chapter

Table 5

Descriptive Codes: Anchor Student Experiences

Codes	Subcodes	Description	Examples
Enhance	Texts	Student references texts, interactive read-alouds, or books as an aspect of RASEL that enhanced the integration of SEL and literacy development.	"I feel like using the books helped a lot because it helped me understand identity"
	Feel Wheel	Student references the feel wheel or emotion vocabulary as an aspect of RASEL that enhanced the integration of SEL and literacy development	"I liked having access to all those different feeling words on the wheel"
	Identity Silhouette	Student references the identity silhouette as an aspect of RASEL that enhanced the integration of SEL and literacy development	"It [the identity silhouette] made me go beyond just talking about it with the characters"
	Justice-oriented conversations	Student references justice-oriented conversations as an aspect of RASEL that enhanced the integration of SEL and literacy development.	"It was interesting to see another culture's point of view."
Inhibit	Character perspective-taking	Student references character perspective-taking as an aspect of RASEL that inhibited the integration of SEL and literacy development.	"I needed more help with the character perspective-taking part. It felt confusing."
	Identity Mapping	Student references character perspective-taking as an aspect of RASEL that inhibited the integration of SEL and literacy development.	"It was kind of hard to represent your whole identity in this way [with the map]"

Researcher Experiences

In addition to highlighting the teacher and students' experiences, I utilized my memos and jottings from my collaborative planning sessions with Liz and observations from my time spent in the classroom to support my findings. While centering teacher and student experiences was one of the driving forces behind my study, I utilized my own notes and observational data about the aspects of RASEL that enhance or inhibit the integration of SEL and literacy development to provide my own experiences and perspectives alongside those of the teacher and students. This triangulation of the data across the teacher, student, and researcher experiences also aligns with the goals of retrospective analysis, which was drawn upon in the analysis for this research question. To do so, I organized my memos and jottings across the study into a journal format. Rather than engaging in formal cycles of coding with my own memos and jottings, I used my observations to further support the findings from my coding and analysis of the teacher and student data.

CHAPTER FOUR

UNIT DESIGN

In this chapter, I outline the collaborative and iterative Design-based Research (DBR) process of creating, testing, and revising Read Alouds for Social Emotional Learning (RASEL) that took place over the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years. According to Bradley and Reinking (2011), design-based research (DBR) addresses the following questions: (1) what is the pedagogical goal to be investigated and why is that goal valued and important? (2) what instructional sequence, consistent with a guiding theory, has the potential to achieve the pedagogical goal and why? (3) how can the instructional sequence be adapted to achieve the pedagogical goal more effectively? In response to these guiding questions, I review the pedagogical goal being investigated, detail the design of the instructional sequence to achieve the pedagogical goal, explain the iterative adaptations that were made to the instructional sequence after the first implementation of RASEL, and share the updated RASEL framework that resulted from this study.

Pedagogical Goal

The pedagogical goal I investigated in my study is the integration of transformative SEL (TSEL) and literacy with a series of interactive read-alouds of children's literature. The body of literature discussed in the background chapter highlights this as a valuable pedagogical goal because of the reciprocal relationship between children's social-emotional and literacy development. Additionally, this pedagogical goal is substantial because it provides opportunities for teachers to teach against traditional notions of SEL and center culture, complexity, and justice when integrating TSEL in elementary classrooms.

Designing the Instructional Sequence

In response to Bradley and Reinking's (2011) second guiding question, an instructional sequence that has the potential to achieve the pedagogical goal involves a series of interactive read-alouds using high-quality culturally relevant text sets focused on corresponding social-emotional themes such as self-awareness and social-awareness, RASEL. To explain the iterative and collaborative design of RASEL, I begin by providing a broad overview of the design process across two years, followed by a more detailed narrative describing the essential steps that lead to the current version of the RASEL framework.

Overview of the RASEL Design Process

My DBR study took place over two years or two rounds across the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years. Both rounds of implementation included three iterative and flexible phases within the DBR process as suggested by McKenney and Reeves (2021): (1) analysis and exploration, (2) design and construction, and (3) evaluation and reflection (See Figure 18). The following subsections provide a broad overview of the DBR process across both years.

Figure 18

Overview of DBR Phases Across Two Rounds of RASEL Implementation

First Round **Fall 2022-Spring 2023**	Initial exploration of the pedagogical goal	Collaborative design and construction of RASEL First implementation of RASEL (with iterative revisions after each set of lessons) Data collection (video observations, teacher follow-up interview and reflection surveys)	Qualitative Data Analysis Evaluation and reflection of RASEL based on teacher feedback
Second Round **Fall 2023-Spring 2024**	Revisions to RASEL design based on teacher feedback and classroom observations from first implementation	Second implementation of RASEL (with iterative revisions as needed after each set of lessons) Data collection (video observations, teacher follow-up interview and reflection surveys, student pre- and post- activities, anchor student pre- and post-interviews)	Qualitative Data Analysis Evaluation and reflection of RASEL based on student and teacher feedback Looking Ahead → RASEL Framework to try with new teachers / different grade levels

This study began during the 2022-2023 school year with the analysis and exploration phase, which involved my initial exploration of the pedagogical goal (integration of TSEL and literacy). During this phase, I worked to create an outline for a possible instructional sequence aligned with the relevant literature around the connections between social-emotional and literacy development. The design and construction phase during round one focused on co-designing RASEL based on my outline in collaboration with the teacher. This second phase also included the first implementation of RASEL with iterative adaptations after each set of lessons in a fifth-grade classroom, and the first round of data collection (teacher follow-up interview and reflection surveys and video classroom observations) to investigate (1) the observed patterns between teacher moves and student interactions during RASEL lessons and (2) the challenges, affordances, and suggestions to inform future RASEL implementations. Finally, the evaluation and reflection phase during the first round included data analysis, which influenced larger

RASEL revisions based on the teacher's feedback and experiences. This first round of data analysis included a discourse analysis of one of the RASEL lessons focused on teacher moves and student interactions and qualitative analysis of Liz's reflections and follow-up interview after implementation. While Liz and I engaged in a reflective and iterative process after each set of lessons during round one, continued research was needed to revisit the design phase and conduct an additional round of implementation with the results from year one in mind (McKenney & Reeves, 2021).

The current study is situated within the second round of RASEL implementation, which took place during the 2023-2024 school year. The second round began with revisiting the analysis and exploration phase and the redesign of the RASEL framework based on the findings from round one. In the spring of 2024, during the design and construction phase, we conducted the second implementation of RASEL and the second round of data collection (student pre- and post-activities, anchor student semi-structured pre- and post-interviews, semi-structured teacher follow-up interviews, post-instruction teacher reflection surveys, video observations of RASEL lessons, collaborative planning sessions notes, and observational data from the classroom). The final evaluation and reflection phase included qualitative data analysis, determining findings, and discussion findings in relation to research and practice, which is included in subsequent chapters of this manuscript.

Essential Steps of the RASEL Design Process

With the overview of my DBR process in mind, the essential steps in the design process that lead to the current version of RASEL involved determining TSEL focus area, analyzing and selecting texts, lesson planning, and iterative reflections and revisions. The following subsections outline each step in this process.

Determining the SEL Focus Area. RASEL utilized a text set of children's literature focused on social-emotional themes aligned with one of the five areas of SEL competency: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, n.d.). While all components of TSEL are valuable and should be taught as part of SEL instruction, in this study Liz and I reviewed Jagers et al.'s (2021) equity elaborations of the CASEL framework to assist us in collaboratively selecting self-awareness as our focus area based on the broad SEL needs that were currently the highest priority in her classroom. According to Jagers et al. (2021) self-awareness includes understanding the link between one's personal and social identities, assessing one's strengths and limitations, recognizing how thoughts, feelings, and actions are interconnected in and across diverse contexts, recognizing one's own biases, having a well-grounded self of self-efficacy, and having positive mindsets. Based on her previous experiences with her students, Liz felt that initially focusing on self-awareness would be beneficial to support her students' abilities to better understand their own strengths and celebrate their personal and social identities. Ideally future instruction, beyond this study, could support the remaining competency areas, each with their own text set.

Based on Liz's experiences and the findings from the first implementation, I found that while we designed RASEL to mainly focus on specific components of self-awareness, it inadvertently supported some of the overlapping components of social awareness as well. Because these competencies are interrelated and can work collaboratively towards the development of justice-oriented citizens (Jagers et al., 2021), Liz and I decided that the second iteration of RASEL would continue to focus on self-awareness as well as corresponding elements of social awareness. See Table 6 for RASEL's TSEL competency areas and components of focus.

Table 6

SEL Competency Areas of Focus in RASEL

TSEL Competency Areas of Focus	Components of Focus within Each Competency Areas with Equity Elaborations (CASEL, n.d.; Jagers et al., 2019)
Self-awareness	Identifying one's emotions and recognizing how thoughts, feelings, and actions are interconnected in and across diverse contexts
	Integrating personal and social identities and working to understand the link between one's personal and collective history and identities
Social awareness	Appropriately empathizing and feeling compassion
	Taking the perspectives of those with the same and different backgrounds and cultures

Analyzing and Selecting Texts. During the first implementation, once we established the initial SEL focus area, Liz and I co-selected texts with social-emotional themes of self-awareness and/or social awareness. The decision to incorporate three pieces of children's literature, rather than a stand-alone text, was purposeful because text sets (collections of related texts organized around a theme or concept) can provide readers with multiple opportunities to make connections and create complex layers of understanding (Short, 2011). In addition to analyzing each text based on its alignment with TSEL, it was imperative for the texts to be culturally relevant. For instruction to be considered culturally relevant, Souto-Manning et al. (2018) urged teachers to put children at the center of teaching practices by utilizing culturally relevant texts that allow students to "see themselves, their cultures, their families, and their communities reflected in the materials and resources" used in the classroom (p. 15).

To determine if a text met these criteria, we analyzed texts using Adam and Harper's (2016) checklist for selecting and evaluating multicultural storybooks and Clark et al.'s (2021)

anchor questions for using picture books to teach with and against SEL. When analyzing the characters across the text set, we considered the representation of diverse cultural groups and varied experiences for student reflection and discussion (Adam & Harper, 2016). Utilizing this checklist as a guide, we worked to select a variety of texts that provided character representation for students of color in Liz's class as well as multicultural experiences for all students to develop the skills, knowledge, and mindset to examine biases, evaluate social norms, and promote community well-being (Jagers et al., 2019). In addition to considering representation in the texts, we also reflected upon the following anchor questions from Clark et al.'s (2021) framework: (1) Does the book leave space for different representations of how people experience emotions through images and text? (2) Does the book demonstrate a range of emotions and ways of dealing with them? (3) Does the book value different ways of experiencing and processing emotions? (4) Does the book simplify structural barriers that may impact a person's emotional experience?

Because there were many factors to consider for text selection and due to time constraints of Liz's schedule, I independently analyzed nine texts utilizing the frameworks presented above. To take Liz's preferences into consideration, I shared my analysis process with Liz, and we collaboratively selected three texts. The texts chosen for this study during the first implementation of RASEL included *The Year of the Dog* by Grace Lin, *Flying High (The Story of Gymnastics Champion Simone Biles)* by Michelle Meadows, and *The Year We Learned to Fly* by Jacqueline Woodson. Notably, during the first implementation, Liz had previously read aloud *The Year of the Dog* to her class, so during RASEL she re-read *Chapter 16* to her students. During future implementations of RASEL with students that may not have previously read this

book, *Chapter 16* could be read aloud as a stand-alone text if the teacher provides sufficient background knowledge about the story.

This text set included representation of diverse cultural groups and varied experiences of how characters experience emotions, and did not simplify structural barriers that may impact a character's emotional experience. All three texts also had common themes connected to self-awareness in that characters utilized positive mindsets, explored their own strengths, and celebrated what makes them who they are. For example, in Chapter 16 of *The Year of the Dog* the main character, Grace, shows perseverance towards her audition for the role of Dorothy in her class play of *The Wizard of Oz*, despite experiencing harm when a classmate tells her she can't try out for the part of Dorothy because Dorothy is not Chinese. Additionally, in *Flying High,* Simone navigates positive mindsets throughout her life experiences and gymnastics journey. Finally, *The Year We Learned to Fly* celebrates the power within each of us to "dare to dream, and then make it happen."

While analyzing and selecting texts for the first implementation of RASEL, I rarely found texts that were exemplary in all categories across both frameworks. We included texts that did not meet all the criteria because often the other texts in the set filled in any gaps. For example, while *Flying High (the Story of Gymnastics Champion Simone Biles)* left space for different representations of how people experience emotions through images and text (Clark et al., 2021), it simplified structural barriers that may impact a person's emotional experiences by glossing over Simone's time spent in foster care. Similarly, while *The Year of the Dog* emphasized structural barriers by describing a microaggression Grace experienced, it did not demonstrate a range of emotions and ways of dealing with them (Clark et al., 2021). In this way, pairing these

texts together in a text set provided opportunities for students to interact with texts that met most of these criteria.

Based on Liz's experiences and the findings from the first implementation, we decided to change one of the texts for the second implementation. While we felt positively about all three texts from the first implementation, upon further reflection, we realized that all three texts included female protagonists. Because more than 50% of the students in Liz's class identified as male, we felt that it was important to include a text that highlighted a male character. Similarly, due to the higher number of students on the autism spectrum at Billings Elementary (pseudonym), we also felt it would be beneficial to include a text that depicts hardships related to student learning and speech/language. Therefore, the text set that will be utilized during the second implementation of RASEL included *The Year of the Dog (Chapter 16)* by Grace Lin, *Flying High (The Story of Gymnastics Champion Simone Biles)* by Michelle Meadows, and *I Talk Like a River* by Jordan Scott. Table 7 provides an overview of our rationale for each text and how the text connects to TSEL, specifically self-awareness and social awareness.

Table 7

Rationale for Text Selection

Text	Rationale	Connection to TSEL
The Year of the Dog By: Grace Lin	This text was one that Liz was familiar with and was already planning to use as part of her literacy instruction	The main character, Grace, shows perseverance towards her audition for the role of Dorothy in her class play of *The Wizard of Oz* This chapter also includes an injustice when a classmate tells Grace that she can't try out for the part of Dorothy because Dorothy is not Chinese
Flying High: The Story of Gymnastics Champion Simone Biles By: Michelle Meadows	This text was of high interest to many students in the class because of the sports connection	In this lyrical picture book, Simone shows perseverance throughout her life: during her childhood (foster care, adoption) and gymnastics journey (missing the national team by one spot and coming back to make the Olympic team to become one of the greatest gymnasts of all time)
I Talk Like a River By: Jordan Scott	This text includes a male protagonist and depicts a hardship related to learning difficulties	A primary theme in this picture book is how children navigate feeling lost, lonely, and unable to fit in This book is powerful and uplifting in that it beautifully captures the story of a child who learns to navigate having a stutter and embracing his identity

Designing RASEL Lessons. During the first implementation, after the text set had been established, Liz and I co-planned two lessons for each text (six lessons total) as well as a culminating lesson. Each pair of lessons included multiple instructional components aligned with TSEL and literacy research. After the first implementation, I revisited the design phase and updated RASEL based on my analyses and Liz's suggestions. The following paragraphs outline the updated RASEL lessons that were used during the second implementation in the current

study, while I detail the specific adaptations between the first and second implementation in a subsequent section of this chapter.

Lesson One. The first lesson for each text included an interactive read-aloud, with opportunities to discuss the experiences and feelings of the characters, which can offer valuable experiences for children to broaden their emotion vocabulary (Soutter et al., 2025). *Emotion vocabulary* refers to the words individuals use to name and describe feelings and is an overlapping area between SEL and vocabulary development (Doyle & Bramwell, 2006). Rather than naming emotions for the purpose of managing or controlling them, the first lesson involved students identifying the feelings a character may be experiencing throughout the story (e.g., the character is feeling frustrated), discussing the meaning of the *emotion vocabulary* in the context of the story (e.g., the word frustrated means that the character is feeling upset when they are encountering and navigating challenges), and making connections to a time students may have felt this emotion in their own lives (e.g., feeling frustrated when your team loses a soccer match).

Interactive read-alouds, which are an effective method for supporting children's literacy learning, involve adults reading a text to children and facilitating a discussion of the text (Wright, 2019). In this study, the interactive read-alouds were purposeful and planned to reap both the social-emotional (Venegas, 2019) and literacy (Wright, 2019) benefits. To plan a rich discussion of the text before, during, and after reading focused on *emotion vocabulary*, we included a variety of question types including locate and recall, integrate and interpret, and critique and evaluate (Shanahan et al., 2010). For example, during RASEL students were asked to interpret how the characters were feeling in the text and to evaluate possible themes related to social justice in the text. Liz also skillfully implemented techniques to scaffold discussion participation such as: sentence stems, turn and talks, and prompting students to write/draw their

ideas on sticky notes. Doing so allowed Liz to facilitate effective interactive read-alouds and text-based discussion that not only built narrative reading comprehension but also supported TSEL.

During a planning session during the first implementation, Liz suggested providing students with a *feel wheel* to assist them in identifying and discussing *emotion vocabulary.* A *feel wheel* is a circular model that shows emotions that are more easily identified at the core, and more complex emotions on the outer edge. See Figure 19 for the original version of *The Feelings Wheel* (Wilcox, 1982) that is divided into several sections of emotions. See Figure 20 for the child-friendly version of the feel wheel we selected to use in this study as it was geared towards children ages 5-12 by including two tiers of emotions with visual representations (iMOM, n.d.).

Figure 19

The Feelings Wheel

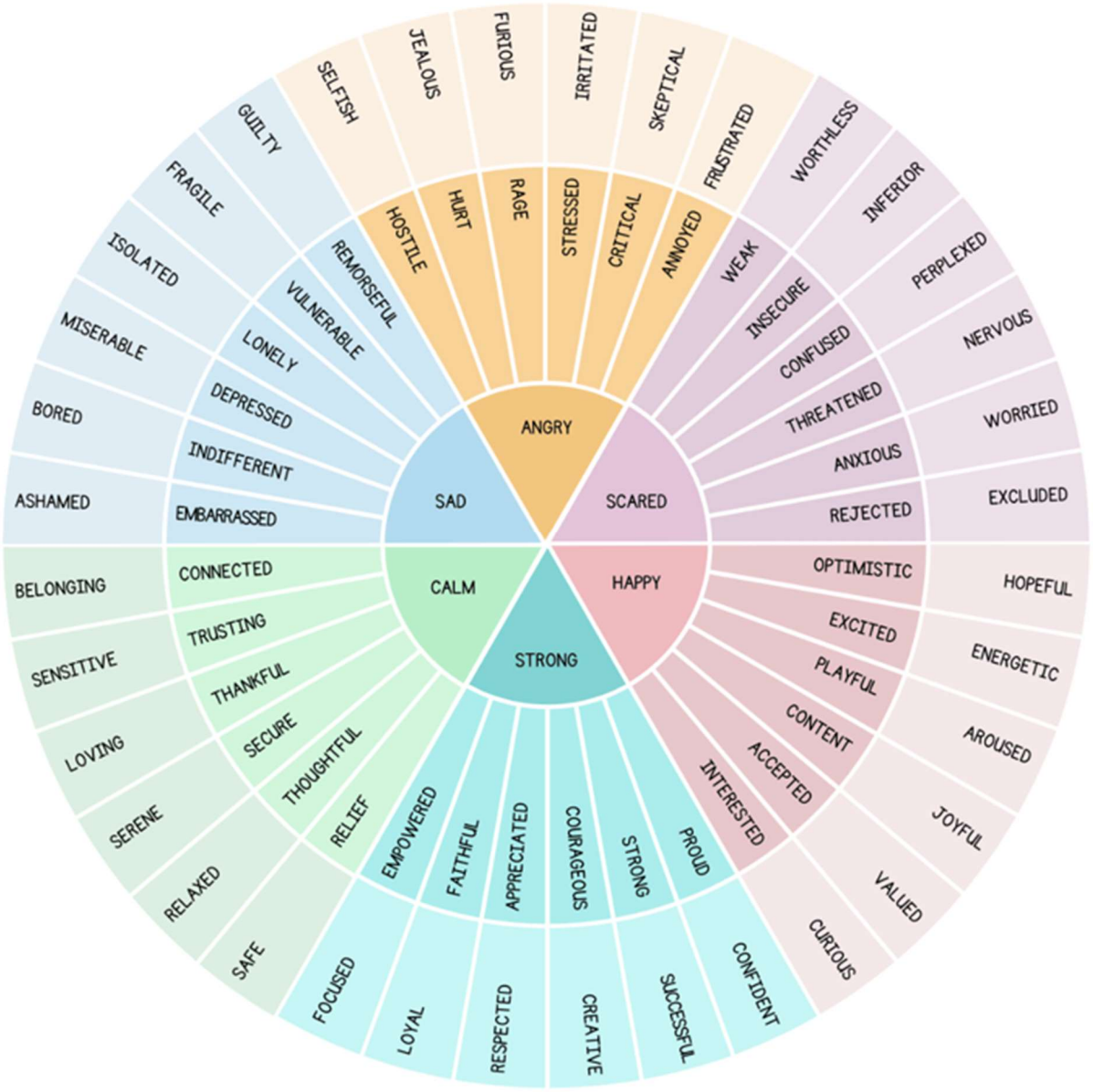
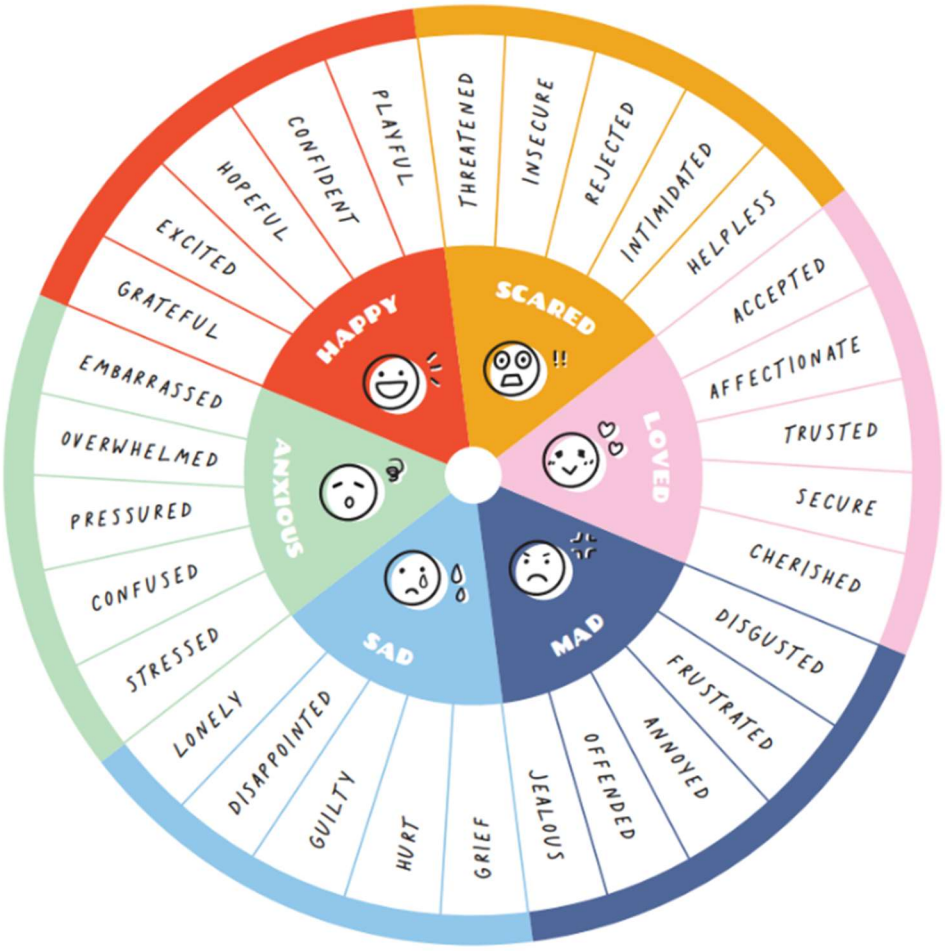


Figure 20

Version of the Feel Wheel Utilized in RASEL

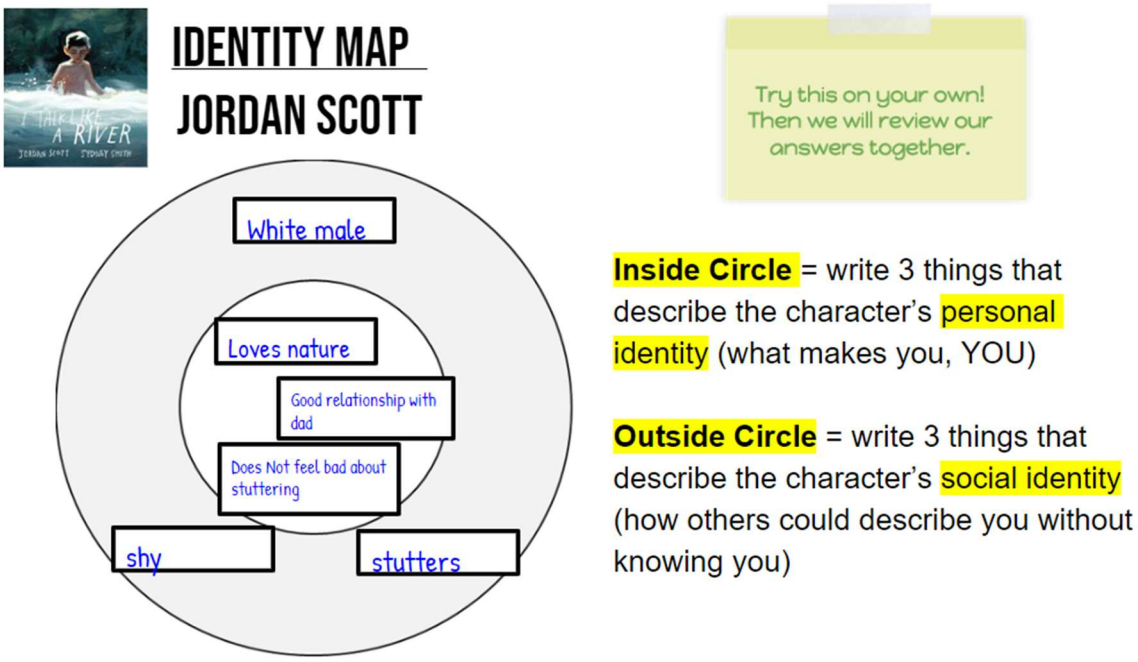


During the first implementation, we found that utilizing the *feel wheel* during instruction was beneficial for student engagement during the read-aloud and allowed students to be more specific in inferring characters' emotions. For example, when identifying the character was feeling *mad*, students could utilize the outer edge of the feel wheel to explore more specific and complex emotions the character was feeling such as *frustrated*, *annoyed*, or *offended*. Following the interactive read-aloud with discussion focused on *emotion vocabulary*, students engaged in a brief identity mapping activity where they utilized their knowledge of the character's experiences

and emotions to practice self-awareness by identifying personal, cultural, or linguistic assets and integrating personal and social identities. (See Figure 21).

Figure 21

Student Identity Map for Jordan: I Talk Like a River



Lesson Two. The second lesson for each text focused on re-reading portions of the text and referring to the *emotion vocabulary* (Doyle & Bramwell, 2006) from the first lesson to provide opportunities for students to see the world through another person's perspective (Soutter et al., 2025) by engaging in *character perspective-taking* practices (McTigue et al., 2015). *Character perspective-taking* is the process of considering the viewpoints of the characters' thoughts, emotions, motivations, (Lysaker & Sedberry, 2015) which can support both SEL and reading comprehension of narrative texts (McTigue et al., 2015). The second lesson with each text involved intentionally selected moments in the story when the character experienced strong emotions. With this portion of the text in mind, students engaged in a brief activity in which they

practiced *character perspective-taking* by imagining themselves in the characters shoes and exploring a time they may have experienced a similar emotion. For example, we asked students to reflect about what emotions the character may have been experiencing in the story and respond in writing to the following prompts: "try putting yourself in the character's shoes and describe what this experience may have felt like" and "describe a time when you may have felt a similar emotion to the character and why you felt that way."

During the first implementation, we discovered that without prior knowledge or experiences with *character perspective-taking*, students required more explicit explaining, modeling and guiding to engage with this practice. Likewise, Jagers et al. (2019) encouraged scaffolding and explicit TSEL instruction that builds on students' prior knowledge and experiences. Therefore, during the second implementation, we included more gradual release across the text set to support students in this complex work. For example, Liz explained and modeled this process with the first text, guided students to practice with partners with the second text, and provided opportunities for independent practice with the third text. These activities provided students with an opportunity to practice self-awareness by appropriately empathizing and feeling compassion and taking the perspectives of those with the same and different backgrounds and cultures (Jagers et al., 2021). In addition to character perspective-taking practices, the second lesson also touched on determining and analyzing possible themes from the text related to how the character responded to injustice, which can also support students' social awareness by providing opportunities for students to consider questions of fairness, justice, and equity (Soutter et al., 2025).

Culminating RASEL Activity. The final RASEL lesson involved a culminating activity, which encouraged students to connect and extend their learning from all three texts to their own

lives and communities (Jagers et al., 2019). This activity took place after teaching all six lessons that focus on the three pieces of children's literature in the text set. During the first implementation, this culminating lesson included a discussion of the definition for self-awareness in connection with the text set. Next, Liz modeled how to use our own experiences to identify personal strengths of the characters from *The Year of the Dog* and *The Year We Learned to Fly*. Liz also guided students to practice identifying Simone's strengths in *Flying High* with a partner. Following teacher modeling and guided practice, Liz provided students with the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences to identify personal strengths and write self-affirmations to include in a class *Blooket*, which is a gamified learning platform often used for formative assessments. When students created and played the class *Blooket* centered around self-awareness, it provided an opportunity to foster student motivation and engagement while empowering students with a call towards strengthening their own classroom community.

Similar to the first implementation, the culminating activity during the second implementation worked to enhance students' self-awareness and social awareness across the text set and provided opportunities for students to authentically apply their learning from all three texts. However, based on my analyses and Liz's suggestions from the first implementation, we worked to enhance this activity by shifting the focus from simply writing self-affirmations, to a more transformative approach of allowing students to write and reflect on their self-awareness and social awareness by creating their own identity silhouette, which is a representative portrait of the students' silhouettes that represents components of their identities (Johnson, n.d.). Liz and I based our identity silhouettes on a similar activity Liz had done in previous years in her classroom, and we adapted resources for our identity silhouettes from online educator blogs (Johnson, n.d.; The Artsy Fartsy Art Room, 2014). One modification we made was providing

students with a range of art materials (crayons, markers, stickers, paper, etc.) rather than just using one specific medium.

Creating an identity silhouette provided students with an opportunity to extend their learning from their explorations of the characters' identities during RASEL and to practice self-awareness by creatively reflecting on their own multifaceted identities. After students designed and created their silhouettes, Liz and I facilitated a gallery walk for students to highlight the diverse identities of their peers that positively contribute to their classroom and school community. See Figures 4 through 9 for examples of the anchor students' identity silhouettes and Figure 22 for a class photo that was taken following the gallery walk.

Figure 22

Class Photo after the Gallery Walk

Adapting the Instructional Sequence

Bradley and Reinking's (2011) third question addresses how the instructional sequence can be adapted to more effectively achieve the pedagogical goal. The following paragraphs provide a description of the adaptations that were made to RASEL during and after the first implementation.

During the first implementation of RASEL, Liz and I made iterative adaptations to the instructional sequence after teaching each set of lessons based on Liz's reflection surveys and our collaborative conversations. These adaptations included: creating instructional slides, including the *feel wheel*, and implementing more turn and talks. Table 8 shows a complete list and description of the adaptations that were made during the first implementation of RASEL. In conjunction with qualitative descriptions of these adaptations, based on her reflection survey data from the first implementation, Liz felt that 75% of the implementation was successful, with hardly any (0-1) components to revise and 25% of the implementation was somewhat successful, with some (1-2) components requiring revisions.

Table 8

RASEL Adaptations During the First Implementation

Timeline	Description of the Adaptions
Initial Planning Conversations between researcher and teacher	Utilizing instructional slides in addition to the lesson plan Including the feel wheel as a resource when discussing emotion vocabulary
After Teaching Lessons 1&2	Eliminating repetitive questions. Utilizing stopping points during reading to promote student engagement and active thinking about the text Including more child-friendly language or definitions in slides Listing emotion vocabulary for students to refer back to during conversation Planning for what students can do if they finish with their writing Completing writing prompts digitally on google classroom to support student engagement
After Teaching Lessons 3&4	Utilizing more turn and talks Having students come to the carpet just for the read-aloud to eliminate distractions. [The teacher made the decision to keep students at tables but reminded them to put away other materials] Using similar writing prompts for the next book to eliminate confusion and build upon skills Front loading the discussion before and after the book, and have all students jot their thinking to promote engagement
After Teaching Lessons 5&6	Including more modeling/guided practice in the gradual release cycle for the character perspective-taking writing prompt
After Teaching Lesson 7	Including a final discussion after the activity to reiterate the SEL connections across all three texts were explicitly shared with students

After the first implementation of RASEL, I conducted a discourse analysis of one of the RASEL lessons focused on teacher moves and student interactions and a qualitative analysis of Liz's reflections and follow-up interview after implementation. While Liz and I engaged in a reflective and iterative process that guided revisions across the instructional sequence during the first implementation, continued research was needed to revisit the design phase and conduct an additional implementation with the results from year one in mind (Halvorsen et al., 2012; McKenney and Reeves, 2021). Therefore, I modified several components of RASEL based on the findings and suggestions from the first implementation including more explicit gradual release models, more emphasis on TSEL, and modifying the text set. Table 9 shows a complete description of the major adaptations that were made based on the suggestions from the first implementation of RASEL to create the updated instructional sequence that will be enacted during the second implementation.

Table 9

RASEL Adaptations After the First Implementation

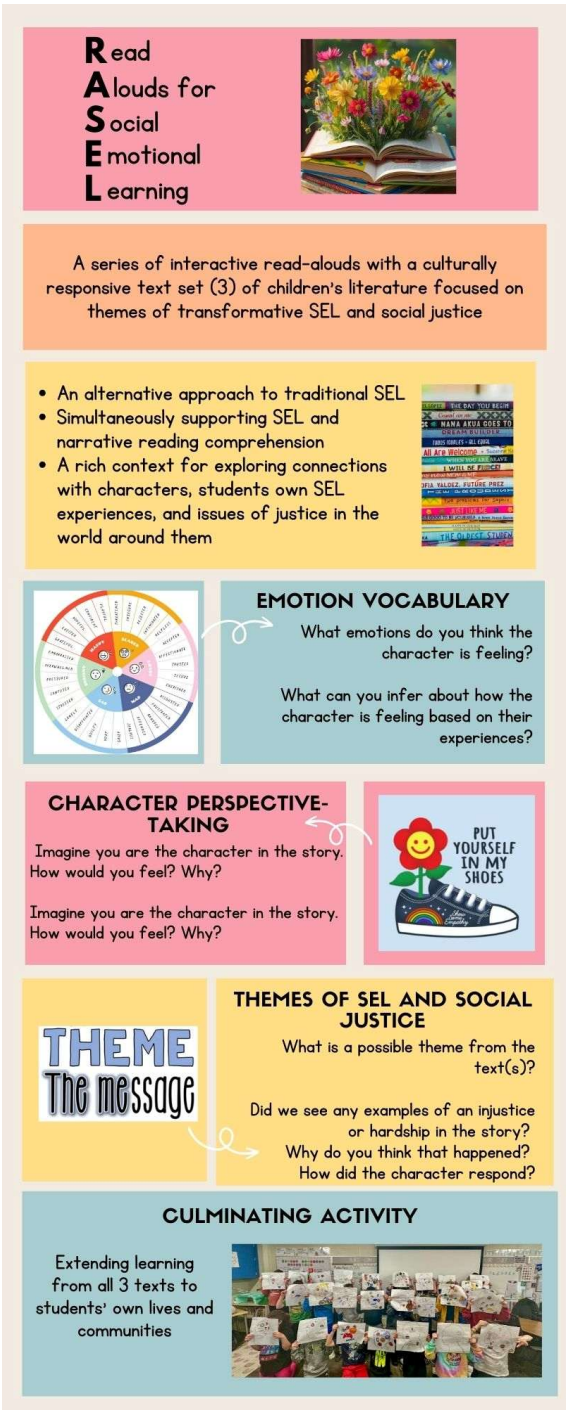
Suggestion from First Implementation	Description of the Adaptations for the Second Implementation
More Explicit Gradual Release Model	Restructuring RASEL to include explicit explaining, modeling and guiding across the sequence
	Including opportunities for the teacher to explain and model the character perspective-taking process with the first text, guide students to practice with partners with the second text and allow opportunities for independent practice with the third text
More Emphasis on Transformative SEL	Updating the language and learning opportunities across RASEL to emphasize Jagers et al.'s (2021) equity elaborations of self-awareness and/or social awareness
	Enhancing RASEL activities to emphasize more transformative and justice-oriented practices aligned with Clark et al.'s (2021) framework that aims to guide teachers in critically evaluating texts that may be used to teach with transformative SEL
Streamlining Content of Lessons	Streamlining each set of lessons to all focus similar amounts of time on the aspects of self-awareness, social-awareness, and narrative reading comprehension being taught and assessed
Modifying the Text Set	Replacing *The Year We Learned to Fly* by Jacqueline Woodson with *I Talk Like A River* by Jordan Scott to include a text in the set that features a male protagonist and depicts possible hardships related to student learning and speech/language
Enhancing Culminating Activity	Updating the culminating RASEL lesson to include opportunities for students to brainstorm, design, and create their own identity silhouette, which will allow students to utilize their learning from the instructional sequence to identify their own personal, cultural, and linguistic assets, develop a well-grounded sense of self-efficacy, and integrate their own personal and social identities

Updated RASEL Framework

Based on the iterative design process and qualitative analyses focused on student shifts, the experiences of the teacher and students and aspects of instruction across two rounds of RASEL implementation, I provide a RASEL framework (See Figure 23) with the intent of informing future implementations and ongoing adaptations to RASEL in a variety of classroom contexts. In addition to informing future implementations, this initial RASEL framework provides teachers with suggestions to integrate TSEL with interactive read-alouds to simultaneously support their students' social-emotional and literacy development. In addition to the RASEL framework, see Appendix E for the RASEL lesson plans and links to the slides that were enacted during the second implementation.

Figure 23

RASEL Framework



CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS – RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

In this chapter, I report on findings from my first research question: *In what ways (if any) do fifth-grade students demonstrate changes in components of transformative social-emotional learning (TSEL) and narrative reading comprehension after participating in Read Alouds for Social Emotional Learning (RASEL)?* To answer this question, I report findings from the whole class pre- and post-activities, anchor student pre- and post-interviews, video observations of RASEL instruction, and my observational notes. In the pre- and post-activity students were asked to self-identify components of their personal and social identities. Then, after listening to a passage of narrative text, students were asked to identify emotion vocabulary, infer emotions with evidence from the text, engage in perspective-taking practices, determine possible themes, and identify injustices or hardships experienced by the character.

After students participated in RASEL, I found simultaneous shifts in students TSEL and narrative reading comprehension that I categorized into three groups: (1) emotion, (2) identity, and (3) social justice. Across each category, students' either demonstrated growth or remained stable, with no instances of regression. A variety of student shifts occurred within each category based on my evaluation codes (beginning, developing, advancing) including (a) exploring more complex emotion vocabulary, (b) inferring emotions with evidence that highlights characters' cultural experiences, (c) embracing the interrelated nature of identities, (d) recognizing injustices and acknowledge harm, and (e) identifying themes that advocate social justice. See Table 10 for the number of students who shifted within each category.

Table 10

Number and Type of Student Shifts in Emotion, Identity, and Social Justice

		Emotion		Identity	Social Justice	
Pre	**Post**	**Emotion Vocabulary** Whole Class (*N* = 17)	**Inferring Emotions** Whole Class (*N* = 17)	**Interrelated Nature of Identities** Anchor Students (*n* = 8)	**Recognizing Injustices** Whole Class (*N* = 17)	**Identifying Themes** Whole Class (*N* = 17)
Demonstrated Shifts		***n* = 9**	***n* = 10**	***n* = 8**	***n* = 12**	**n = 10**
N/A	Beginning	1	1	0	0	0
Beginning	Developing	5	0	2	3	1
Developing	Advancing	3	9	4	9	9
Beginning	Advancing	0	0	2	0	0
Remained Constant		***n* = 8**	***n = 7***	***n = 0***	***n = 5***	***n = 7***
Beginning	Beginning	0	0	0	0	1
Developing	Developing	0	6	0	5	4
Advancing	Advancing	8	1	0	0	2

To explore these shifts in the following subsections, I begin with an overview of each finding as it pertains to the relevant literature. Next, I describe the instructional context in which the finding is situated as well as opportunities for future RASEL instruction. Then I share how students demonstrated changes in components of their TSEL and narrative reading comprehension using illustrative examples from my data set and conclude with a brief narrative of how students perceived these shifts in their own learning.

Emotion Shifts

Emotion vocabulary is a key component in the reciprocal role between children's social-emotional and literacy development because readers can infer the emotions of the characters in the text while making connections to their own emotional experiences. More specifically, when teachers provide opportunities for students to explore emotion vocabulary and infer the emotions of characters with evidence from the text, they can support components of TSEL (self-awareness) and narrative reading comprehension (drawing inferences, vocabulary development). Focusing on emotion vocabulary during interactive read-alouds provides opportunities for students to consider how emotions and actions are interconnected (Jagers et al., 2021) and to use a range of words to describe emotions (Learning for Justice, 2022), rather than identifying one's emotions for the purpose of managing or controlling them (Clark et al., 2021). Furthermore, when students are using new vocabulary in a meaningful context (Elleman et al., 2009) and drawing inferences during high-quality text-based discussions (Baker et al., 2013) they are building their reading comprehension (Shanahan et al., 2010). The two major emotion shifts among students that occurred after participating in RASEL include: (a) exploring more complex emotion vocabulary and (b) inferring emotions with evidence that highlights the character's cultural experiences.

Exploring Complex Emotion Vocabulary

After participating in RASEL, the fifth graders in Liz's class showed a shift towards exploring more complex emotion vocabulary, the words individuals use to name and describe feelings (Doyle & Bramwell, 2006). Moving beyond identifying broad emotion vocabulary at the center of the feel wheel (e.g., happy, sad) towards more complex emotion vocabulary from the outer circle (e.g., grateful, lonely) suggests a more nuanced understanding of students' own emotions (Neff, 2022). Likewise, identifying more complex emotion vocabulary suggests shifts in TSEL because students were thinking deeply about emotions (Jagers et al., 2021) of people who share their identities and those who have other identities (Learning for Justice, 2022). In terms of reading comprehension, encouraging students to use new emotion vocabulary words in a meaningful context (Elleman et al., 2009) supports their vocabulary development and understanding of connected text (Shanahan et al., 2010). See Figure 19 for the original version of *The Feelings Wheel* (Wilcox, 1982) that is divided into several sections of emotions that become more specific as you move towards the outer edge. See Figure 20 for the child-friendly version of the feel wheel we selected to use in this study as it was geared towards children ages 5-12 by including two tiers of emotions with visual representations (iMOM, n.d.).

Instructional Context

During the interactive read-alouds across RASEL, Liz encouraged her students to use their feel wheels to identify emotion vocabulary to describe the characters' feelings followed by turn and talks and whole group discussions to share their thinking. For example, in the Lesson 1 during the interactive read-aloud of *The Year of the Dog* (Chapter 16), Liz prompted students "while I read, I want you to use your feel wheel to name the emotion vocabulary Grace [the main character] might be feeling in this chapter." I observed students looking at and pointing to their

feel wheels while Liz was reading. Following the read-aloud, Liz asked students to "share with a partner some feel wheel emotion vocabulary that you noticed." After turning and talking, Liz invited students to share their thoughts with the whole group. For example, Carson shared that he thought Grace was feeling "happy at the beginning of the chapter, but then sad at the end." After confirming this response by saying "yes, happy then sad," Liz prompted students to build on these broad emotions by asking "what other words on our feel wheel can we use [when Grace was feeling happy]" to which other students responded "hopeful" and "excited."

In this example and across the RASEL lessons, Liz provided opportunities for students to enhance their thinking by identifying more complex emotion vocabulary from the feel wheel. While students were able to explore more complex emotions (Jagers et al., 2021), in future implementations of RASEL, teachers could utilize different variations of the feel wheel based on the student's grade level or reading ability to differentiate their instruction.

Shifts in Exploring Complex Emotion Vocabulary

In the pre- and post-activity, all 17 students were asked to identify emotion vocabulary words to describe how the character was feeling in specific sections of the reading passage using their feel wheel as a resource. The evaluation codes I used to analyze student responses included beginning, developing, and advancing. See Figure 24 for the description of my evaluation codes in relation to this finding.

Figure 24

Evaluation Coding Protocol: Emotion Vocabulary

Exploring Complex Emotion Vocabulary *(self-awareness, social awareness, and vocabulary development)*		
Beginning	**Developing**	**Advancing**
Identifying broad emotion(s) (e.g., mad, sad, happy) of the character	Identifying a combination of broad and complex emotions (e.g., mad and annoyed) of the character	Identifying complex emotion(s) (e.g., frustrated, proud) of the character

Overall, my analysis of the pre- and post-activities revealed 9 out of 17 students shifted towards identifying more complex emotion vocabulary after participating in RASEL (See Table 11). Among the 9 out of 17 students who shifted towards identifying more complex emotion vocabulary, there were a variety of ways students showed shifts in their identification of emotions that I grouped into three categories: (1) shifting from no emotion vocabulary to broad emotions (n = 1), (2) shifting from broad to a combination of broad and complex emotions (n = 5), and (3) shifting from a combination of broad and complex to only complex emotions (n = 3). Notably, none of the students shifted downward, and 8 out of 17 students who remained constant were able to identify at least one complex emotion vocabulary word before participating in RASEL, which left little room for growth. In the following subsections, I provide descriptions and illustrative examples of each category from the anchor students in my data set.

Table 11

Shifts in Emotion Vocabulary

Category	Student	Pre-Activity Emotion Vocab	Post-Activity Emotion Vocab
N/A to Beginning	Xavier	N/A	sad
Beginning to Developing	Cara	Sad, happy	Sad, disappointed, happy
	Carson	Mad, happy	Mad, frustrated, disappointed, happy, excited
	Edward	Sad, mad, happy	Sad, hurt, happy, surprised
	Lindsey	Sad, happy	Scared, upset, happy, encouraged
	Taylor	Sad, mad, happy	Frustrated, upset, annoyed, happy
Developing to Advancing	**Bruno**	Annoyed, mad, proud, happy	Disappointed, accepted
	Brittany	Sad, embarrassed, mad, glad, happy, proud	Rejected, accepted
	Sophia	Upset, embarrassed, happy, hopeful	Rejected, upset, accepted
Advancing before and after RASEL	**Tara**	Disappointed, glad	Annoyed, mad, sad, happy
	Brody	Sad, excited	Embarrassed, unaccepted, happy, accepted
	Brooke	Nervous, happy	Surprised, overwhelmed, happy
	Marco	Upset, angry, happy, interested	Confused, upset, happy, excited
	Dillan	Annoyed, frustrated, accomplished, happy	Sad, disappointed, grateful, excited
	Izzy	Frustrated, excited	Pressured, anxious, grateful, hopeful
	Finn	Frustrated, proud	Alone, scared, respected, confident
	Henry	Mistreated, surprised	Offended, supported

Note. Anchor students in bold.

No Emotions to Beginning. One student, Xavier, shifted from identifying no emotion vocabulary words to providing an easily identified emotion vocabulary word. In this pre-activity, Xavier found the task challenging and was unable to name any emotions of the character, yet in the post activity, he was able to identify that Hani was "sad."

Beginning to Developing. Five out of 17 students (Cara, Carson, Edward, Lindsey, and Taylor) shifted from using easily identified emotion vocabulary in the pre-activity to a combination of easily identified/complex or all complex words to describe the character's feelings in the post-activity. For example, in the pre-activity when asked to describe how the character Mali was feeling in specific sections of the passage, *Something Different*, (McGraw Hill, n.d.), Taylor shared that Mali was feeling "sad, mad, and happy." After participating in RASEL, during the post-activity when asked to describe how Hani was feeling in specific sections of the passage, *Swoosh* (Actively Learn, n.d.), Taylor indicated that Hani was feeling "frustrated, upset, annoyed, and happy." Similarly, in the pre-activity Lindsey shared that Mali was feeling "sad and happy." Lindsey showed a shift towards more complex emotion vocabulary in her post-activity by identifying that Hani was feeling "scared, upset, happy, and encouraged." Taylor and Lindsey's responses in the post-activity and post-interview are examples that illustrate students' ability to identify more complex emotion vocabulary after participating in RASEL.

Developing to Advancing. Three out of 17 students (Sophia, Brittany, and Bruno) shifted from identifying a combination of broad and complex emotion vocabulary in the pre-activity to only complex emotions in the post-activity. For example, when describing how Mali was feeling in the pre-activity, Sophia identified a combination of broad and complex emotion vocabulary including "upset, embarrassed, happy, and hopeful." Sophia shifted from a combination to only complex emotions by saying Hani felt "rejected, upset, and accepted" in her post-activity. Similarly, in his pre-activity and pre-interview, Bruno said Mali was "annoyed and mad" at the beginning of the passage and was feeling "more happy and stuff" at the end. In his post-activity and post-interview, Bruno shared Hani felt "disappointed." Sophia and Bruno's

responses are examples that portray a shift in students' thinking about emotions as more complex because they identified only complex emotions to describe the characters' feelings after participating in RASEL rather than a combination of complex and broad emotion vocabulary.

Student Insights

In his post-interview, Bruno described this shift in emotion vocabulary as "my words were more descriptive this time because the last one, it was more generic and stuff and then this was like more specific and how she felt." In this way, Bruno was describing how he recognized that before participating in RASEL, he used more broad and generic emotion vocabulary to describe character's feeling (e.g., sad, mad, happy) and after RASEL he noticed his word choice became more complex and descriptive (e.g., lonely, annoyed, grateful). Bruno's experience underscores that when the fifth graders in Liz's class were able identify more complex emotions of characters, they were able to practice identifying their own emotions.

Inferring Emotions with Evidence that Highlights Characters' Cultural Experiences

After participating in RASEL, the students in Liz's fifth-grade class showed a shift in their ability to support their inferences of the character's emotions (using emotion vocabulary) with evidence from the text that draws upon or highlights the characters' cultural experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives. Drawing inferences about character's emotions during text-based discussions provided opportunities for students to build their reading comprehension (Baker et al, 2013; Shanahan et al., 2010). Supporting their inferences with text evidence connected to the character's culture suggests that students recognized how everyone reacts to situations differently (New York State Education Department, 2018) and how emotions and actions are interconnected (Jagers et al, 2021).

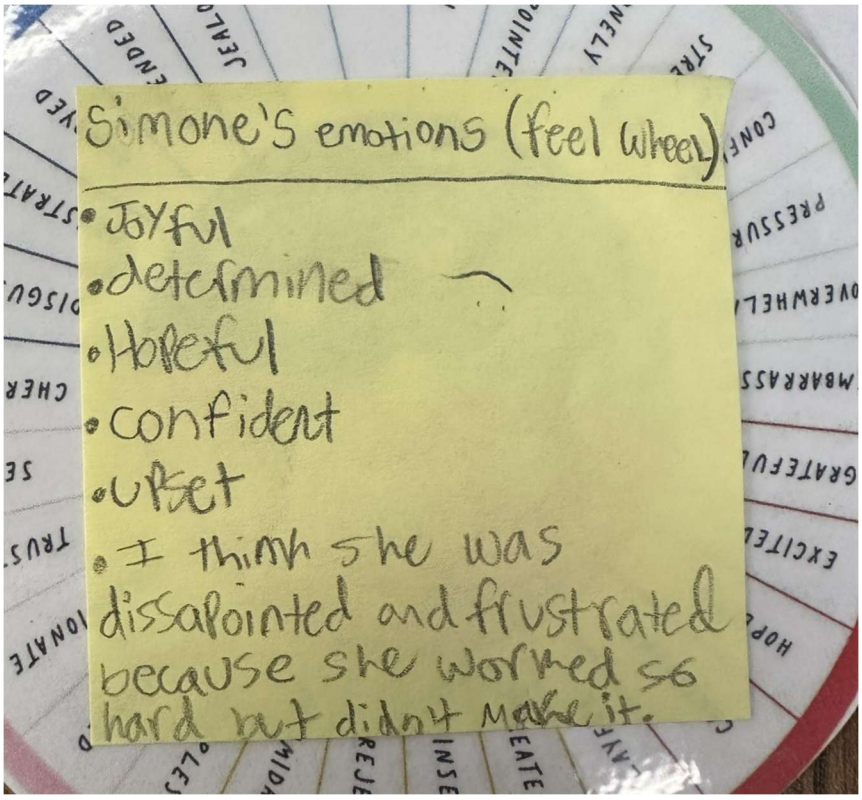
Instructional Context

Across the RASEL lessons, Liz prompted students to support their inferences of the character's emotions with evidence from the text. For example, during Lesson 3 with the interactive read-aloud of *Flying High*, Liz prompted students to stop and jot emotion vocabulary Simone may have been feeling on sticky notes. While listening to the read-aloud, Sophia jotted a range of emotions on her sticky note such as "hopeful" when Simone "was placed in a foster home with warm meals to eat and a yard to roam," "upset" when Simone was "crushed by defeat and loses her spark," and "confident" when Simone was "the best in the world, three years in a row" (See Figure 25). Following the read-aloud, Liz prompted students to think back to a specific moment in the text when Simone "comes so close in the fourteenth slot, missing the team by only one spot." Liz encouraged students to either circle an emotion vocabulary word already written on their sticky note that may capture Simone's feelings or add an emotion that Simone might have been feeling at this moment. Liz reminded students that the "story isn't going to come out and tell us how she is feeling, we have to, what?" to which a few students responded "infer." For students to practice supporting their inferences with evidence from the text, Liz had students turn and talk to share an inferred emotion and reasoning with a partner. While students were talking, I observed them using evidence from the text, being active listeners, and using nonverbal hand gestures (e.g., the connection symbol) to indicate when their own ideas connected to those of their partner. Following the turn and talk, Liz called on several students to share their thoughts from their partner conversations. During this whole group discussion, Sophia shared her stop and jot that read "Simone was disappointed and frustrated because in the story she worked so hard, but didn't make it." In this way, Sophia supported her inference of Simone feeling disappointment and frustration when she missed the national team by only one spot

because in the text it stated how Simone had “harder routines and more practice time” and “made sacrifices on the path ahead.” Moreover, Sophia supported her inference using evidence that drew upon the character’s lived experiences as she worked hard to navigate challenges both in her gymnastics career and in her life.

Figure 25

Sophia’s Stop and Jot: Inferring Simone’s Emotions



While Liz prompted students to support their inferences with evidence from the text, future implementations of RASEL could include more opportunities for teachers to provide explicit instruction around the connections between a character’s emotions, actions, and cultural experiences. For example, after Sophia shared her inference, Liz could have extended the conversation by prompting students to consider how Simone’s childhood experiences of growing

up in the foster-care system, her focus on her mental health, or her identity as a Black woman may be connected to the emotions she experiences.

Shifts in Inferring Emotions with Evidence that Highlights Character's Cultural Experiences

In the pre- and post-activity, all 17 students were asked to provide evidence for their inferred emotion vocabulary from specific sections of the reading passage. The evaluation codes I used to analyze student responses included beginning, developing, and advancing. See Figure 26 for the description of my evaluation codes in relation to this finding.

Figure 26

Evaluation Coding Protocol: Inferring Emotions

Inferring Emotions with Evidence that Highlights Character's Cultural Experiences *(self-awareness, social awareness, and reading comprehension)*		
Beginning	**Developing**	**Advancing**
Supporting inference with evidence from the text that does not consider the character's cultural experiences, backgrounds or perspectives (e.g., the character was embarrassed because kids were being mean).	Supporting inference with evidence from the text that **broadly alludes to** the character's cultural experiences, backgrounds or perspectives. (e.g., mentions the character's food or clothing, but does not draw the connection to how this connects to the character's culture)	Supporting inference with evidence from the text that **draws upon or highlights** the character's cultural experience, backgrounds or perspectives (e.g., specifically mentions how the character's food or clothing is connected to their culture)

Overall, my analysis revealed 10 out of 17 students shifted towards drawing upon or highlighting the characters' cultural perspectives when providing evidence to support their inference (See Table 12). Among these 10 students, I identified two categories in my analysis of ways students showed shifts in their thinking: (1) shifting from no inferences to supporting inferences with evidence that broadly alludes to the character's cultural perspectives (n = 1) and (2) shifting from supporting inferences with evidence that broadly alludes to the character's

cultural perspectives to drawing upon or highlighting them ($n = 9$). The remaining 7 out of 17 students who did not show a shift were able to support their inferences with evidence that either broadly alluded to or highlighted the character's experiences, backgrounds, or perspectives before participating in RASEL, which means their ability to shift their thinking even further was less likely. In the following subsections, I provide descriptions and illustrative examples of each category.

Table 12

Shifts in Inferring Emotions with Evidence that Highlights Cultural Perspectives

Category	Student
No inferences to Beginning	Xavier
Developing to Advancing	**Sophia** **Taylor** **Lindsey** **Henry** **Bruno** Carson Izzy Brittany Marco
Developing before and after RASEL	**Tara** Edward Cara Brody Brooke Dillian
Advancing before and after RASEL	**Finn**

Note. Anchor students in bold.

No inferences to Beginning. Similar to his response with emotion vocabulary in the previous finding, when inferring about the character's emotions, Xavier shifted from feeling unsure about how to infer emotion vocabulary in the pre-activity to inferring that the character

may have felt “sad” in the post-activity. In the post-activity, Xavier supported his inference with evidence that broadly alluded to the character’s cultural experiences in saying “she was sad because she couldn’t wear her hijab in the game.”

Developing to Advancing. 9 out of 17 students (Sophia, Taylor, Lindsey, Henry, Bruno, Carson, Izzy, Brittany, and Marco) shifted from broadly alluding to the character’s cultural experiences in the pre-activity to drawing upon or highlighting them in the post-activity. In the pre-activity when these nine students provided evidence for their inferred emotion vocabulary about Mali (the main character in the passage) they broadly mentioned the character’s Thai food or cultural background when providing evidence to support their inference but did not specifically highlight how these parts of her identity are connected to her cultural experiences. In their post-activities, these nine students’ responses included more specific language and examples connected to Hani’s (the main character in the passage) cultural experiences and perspectives as a Muslim girl.

For example, in the pre-activity Sophia responded that the character was “feeling embarrassed because everyone was like ‘your food is gross.’” In her pre-interview, Sophia expanded on her written response by explaining Mali “was feeling embarrassed because she was so excited because she thought her mom packed her something different, but she opened it as was like ‘oh’ and then everybody was like ‘oh your food is so gross’ which is why she felt embarrassed.” In the post-activity, Sophia responded that the character was feeling “rejected and upset because her hijab was a respect for her culture” and “she didn’t know what to do.” In her post-interview, Sophia described how the character felt upset because she was torn between following the rules and following what she knew was right. Sophia explained how Hani “just

didn't know what to do because it [her hijab] was respect for her culture and she didn't want to like disrespect it [her culture]."

Similarly, in the pre-activity Bruno indicated that Mali was feeling "annoyed and mad" because "she didn't get the food she was hoping for." In his pre-interview Bruno added that "other kids were gonna make fun of her" because of her food. In the post-activity, Bruno shared that Hani was feeling "disappointed because she couldn't wear her hijab and couldn't play" and provided the following insight during his post-interview: "I feel like she's disappointed because it's [her hijab] a big part of her culture." In this way, before participating in RASEL Sophia and Bruno broadly alluded to the fact that Mali's emotions were related to her classmates making fun of her food, but did not make a direct connection between her food being a part of her cultural background and experiences with her family. After participating in RASEL, Sophia and Bruno supported their inferences with evidence that shifted from broadly alluding to the character's cultural perspectives to drawing upon the fact that the character's feelings were directly impacted by the unjust actions of others and highlighting that Hani's hijab is an important part of her culture.

The following are other notable student examples that illustrate this shift from broadly alluding to highlighting the character's cultural experiences. In the pre-activity, Brittany shared that the character was "upset because everyone thought her food was gross" and in the post-activity shared that the character felt "rejected" because "the headscarf was a symbol of respect and devotion for Muslim girls, so she didn't want to take it off." Henry indicated in the pre-activity that the character felt "surprised" because "she didn't think anyone would like her type of food" and in the post-activity that the character felt "offended" because "people were disrespecting her, and people should take culture more seriously." Lindsey inferred that Mali was

feeling “sad” in the pre-activity because “everyone was laughing at her because her food was different than everyone else’s” and Hani felt “accepted and encouraged” in the post-activity because at the end of the passage “she could wear it [her hijab] and be a part of her culture” and “her teammates stood up for her and what she believed in, like something she was proud of like wearing her hijab.”

Overall, these illustrative examples depict the shift in how students were making more nuanced connections between emotions and actions while also exploring how everyone reacts to situations differently based on our experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives. Furthermore, after participating in RASEL, these students showed respect and care when engaging in these critical conversations about privilege and discrimination in our society.

Student Insights

In her post-interview, Taylor alluded to this shift by explaining how she felt like now she understands “people go through a lot of different things that can be really hard.” Sophia mentioned how she learned “to really go deep into what characters and feeling, and like, visualize how they’re feeling.” Taylor and Sophia were both verbalizing how, after participating in RASEL, they understood the importance of extending conversations about emotions to include how and why someone is feeling a certain way based on their cultural experiences, backgrounds and perspectives.

Identity Shifts

When teachers create space for students to engage in character perspective-taking practices to consider the viewpoints and identities of characters (Lysaker & Sedberry, 2015; McTigue et al., 2015), they can practice valuing how all parts of their identities make up who they are (Jagers et al., 2021) and recognizing that multiple identities interact to make them unique and complex individuals (Learning for Justice, 2022). Encouraging students to put

themselves in the character's shoes can also increase students' motivation and engagement with the text (Guthrie et al., 2007). In this way, teachers can simultaneously support components of TSEL (self-awareness) and narrative reading comprehension (character perspective-taking, motivation and engagement with the text). The subsection that follows outlines the main shift in student thinking that occurred after participating in RASEL.

Embracing the Interrelated Nature of Identities

After participating in RASEL, all eight anchor students from Liz's class demonstrated a shift from viewing their personal and social identities as separate (e.g., they are not connected) or alluding to a connection (e.g., they are kind of the same and different) to an enhanced understanding that all parts of their identity are interrelated (e.g., they work together to make me, me).

Instructional Context

Across RASEL, Liz modeled and encouraged students to put themselves in the character's shoes to identify attributes that contributed to the personal and social identities of those characters. For example, in Lesson 5 following the interactive read-aloud of *I Talk Like a River*, Liz reminded students that "identity is what makes you, you" and then facilitated a class discussion during which students considered attributes of Jordan's (the main character) personal and social identities based on ideas from a digital anchor chart (See Figure 27). During this discussion, students shared components of Jordan's personal and social identity that they learned from the text such as "having a good relationship with his dad," "celebrates his stutter," "White male," "enjoys the outdoors." At this point in RASEL, students had prior experience with identity mapping during previous read-alouds with Grace from *Year of the Dog* (Chapter 16) and Simone from *Flying High*. Using the gradual release mode, Liz modeled how to fill out an

identity map (Learning for Justice, 2022) for Grace during the first read-aloud and guided students in completing an identity map for Simone alongside the second text. Because of their previous learning opportunities and because *I Talk Like a River* was the final text in the set, Liz had students complete an identity map for Jordan independently following the class discussion.

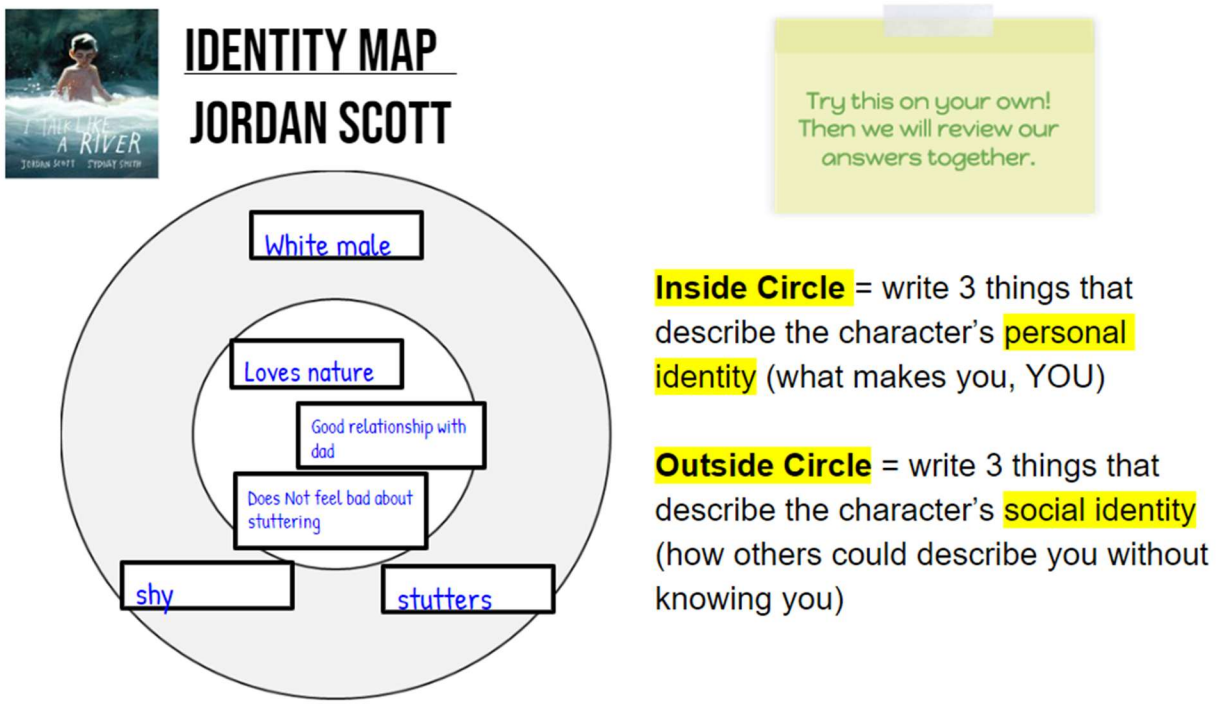
Figure 27

Digital Anchor Chart: Jordan's Identity

For example, when working independently, Bruno included "loves nature," good relationship with dad," "does not feel bad about stuttering" on the inside circle of the map as components of Jordan's personal identity and "White male," "shy," and "stutters" on the outside circle as components of Jordan's identity (See Figure 28).

Figure 28

Bruno's Identity Map for Jordan: I Talk Like a River



While students were working, Liz and I walked around and provided support for individual students. During the pre-activity and the first RASEL lesson, we noticed students tended to focus on the dichotomy between personal and social identities, rather than how identities are complex and work together to make up who you are. To support students in identity work across her RASEL instruction, Liz reinforced the idea that personal and social identities can overlap, and it is expected that a character may have similar traits on the inside and outside circles of the map. For example, in Bruno's identity map during Lesson 5, he included Jordan's stutter as an aspect of both Jordan's personal and social identities. While it was valuable to use the identity map to reinforce the connections between both personal and social identities (Jagers et al., 2021), future implementations of RASEL could take this a step further by providing more

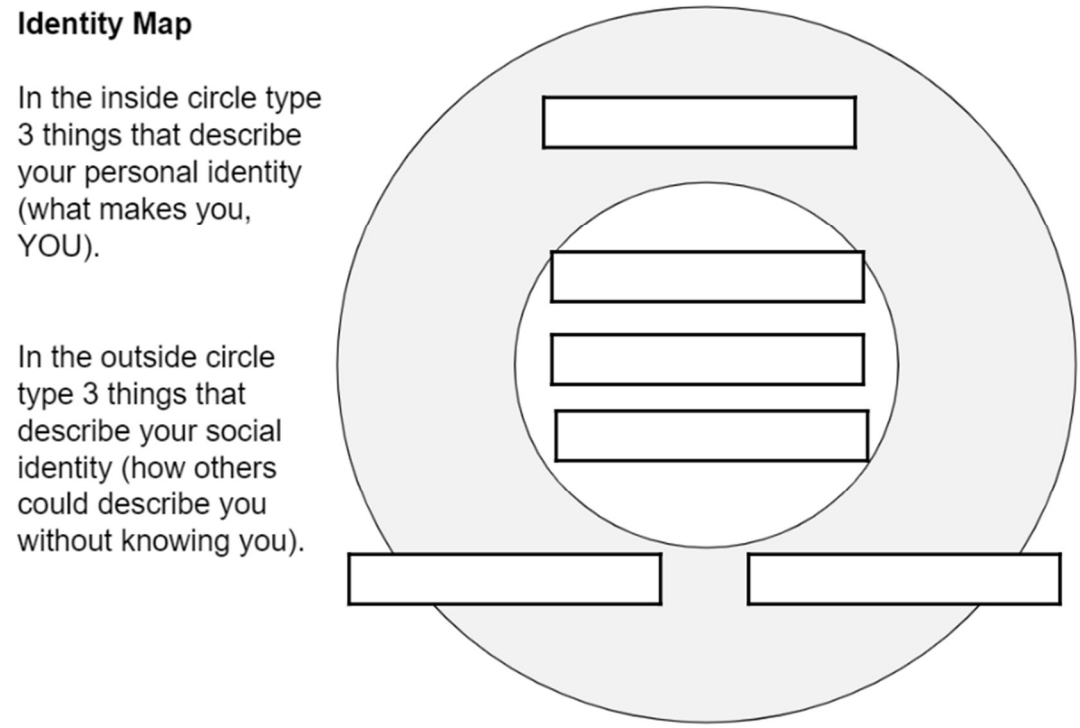
open-ended ways for students to practice authentically exploring how all parts of their identities make up who they are (Learning for Justice, 2022).

Shifts in Embracing the Interrelated Nature of Identities

In the pre- and post-activity all 17 students were asked to complete the identity map they used with the characters during RASEL to share components of their own personal (inner circle) and social identities (outer circle) (See Figure 29). In the pre- and post- interviews, I asked the eight anchor students to explain their thinking, specifically where and why they chose to include traits on their identity map, and if and how their personal and social identities are connected. Only the anchor students participated in the pre- and post-interviews, which is why I am not using whole class data to support this finding.

Figure 29

Identity Map Template (Pre- and Post-Activity)



The evaluation codes I used to analyze student responses included beginning, developing, and advancing. See Figure 30 for the description of my evaluation codes in relation to this finding.

Figure 30

Evaluation Coding Protocol: Interrelated Nature of Identities

Embracing the Interrelated Nature of Identities *(self-awareness and cultivating literacy motivation/engagement)*		
Beginning	**Developing**	**Advancing**
Viewing personal and social identities as separate (e.g., how I am at home vs. at school).	Alluding to the connection between personal and social identities (e.g., verbalizing or noticing similar words on the inside and outside of their identity map but doesn't explain how they are connected)	Viewing personal and social identities as interrelated and working together to make up who they are (e.g., they kind of work together; you can put stuff on the inside and outside, like I could have put funny on both)

Overall, my analysis of the pre- and post-interviews uncovered that all eight anchor students shifted towards viewing their personal and social identities as more interrelated (See Table 13). Among these eight students, I identified three categories in which students showed shifts in their thinking: (1) shifting from viewing identities as separate to alluding to the connections between personal and social identities (n = 2), (2) shifting from viewing identities as separate to viewing personal and social identities as interrelated (n = 2), and (3) shifting from alluding to the connections to viewing personal and social identities as interrelated (n = 4). In the following subsections, I explain and provide examples of each category.

Table 13

Shifts in Integrating Personal and Social Identities

Category	Student
Beginning to Developing	**Tara**
	Edward
Beginning to Advancing	**Finn**
	Taylor
Developing to Advancing	**Lindsey**
	Bruno
	Henry
	Sophia

Note. Anchor students in bold.

Beginning to Developing. Two out of eight students (Tara and Edward) shifted from viewing identities as separate in the pre-interview to alluding to the connections between personal and social identities in their post-interview. For example, in her identity map during the pre-activity, Tara included attributes of her personal identity as "likes gymnastics," "plays video games," and "outgoing" and her social identity as "joyful," "likes music," and "short." When I asked Tara to elaborate on any connections between her personal and social identities, she indicated that during the pre-activity she felt "kind of confused," and then discussed how her personal and social identities are separate because people would have to really know her well to know more about her personal identity. She mentioned "like a lot of my close friends know I like to play video games" but other people might not "know or get to see that" part of her.

In her post-activity, Tara included attributes of her personal identity as "likes gymnastics," "outgoing," and "organized" and her social identity as "Hispanic female," "friendly," and "confident." In her post-interview, when asked if or how her personal and social identities are connected, she explained that "in terms of sameness, like when I'm in gymnastics class people can tell I'm Hispanic" and "like some of these things match up on the inside and outside." In this way, Tara expanded her thinking from feeling unsure or viewing her identities

as separate to alluding to the idea that they are connected because she is verbalizing and noticing how she has similar words on the inside and outside of her map, yet she did not specifically mention how they are connected or how these aspects of her identity that make her who she is.

Beginning to Advancing. Two out of eight students (Finn and Taylor) shifted from viewing their personal and social identities as separate to viewing them as interrelated. For example, in his identity map during the pre-activity, Finn included attributes of his personal identity as "likes wrestling," "listens to music," and "wrestling" and his social identity as "tall" and "likes wearing fitted hats." During the pre-interview, when I asked Finn if he thought his personal and social identity were connected, he responded "I don't think they really work together." To clarify, I asked the follow up question: "so you are saying you feel like your social identity is different than your personal identity?" to which he responded "yes."

In his post-activity, Finn's identity map included "goofy," "smart," and "helpful" as attributes of his personal identity and "tall," "funny," and "White male" as attributes of his social identity. In his post-interview he explained that his identities were connected because "you can put stuff on the outside and the inside [of the identity map]" and it was "hard to just pick one thing." In the post-interview I also asked the follow up question "do you feel like your personal and social identity are connected?" to which Finn responded "yes." In this way, Finn shifted from viewing personal and social identities as separate to seeing them as interrelated.

Developing to Advancing. Four out of eight students (Lindsey, Bruno, Henry, and Sophia) shifted from broadly alluding to the connections between personal and social identities to viewing them as interrelated. For example, during his pre-activity, Bruno mentioned that aspects of his personal identity included "plays soccer," "Hispanic," and "likes video games" and his social identity included "funny," "Guatemalan," and "plays football at school." When asked

in the pre-interview about the connection between his personal and social identity, he mentioned "they are both kind of the same but kind of different." In this way Bruno alluded to but did not fully articulate if and how they are connected.

Bruno's identity map in the post activity included "Guatemalan," "decent at soccer," and "easy going" for his personal identity and "kind," "easy going," and "funny" for his social identity. During his post interview, he shifted from alluding to the connection to stating that "both [personal and social identities] can work together because they have connections and stuff, and no one can fully describe you." It is important to note that Bruno was the only student who mentioned and showed pride in his cultural identity before and after participating in RASEL. Bruno expressed his love for his Guatemalan heritage by sharing "My family is from Guatemala and my culture is cool with different foods and languages and it's not the same as other cultures" and "I like speaking two languages because I can communicate with a lot of people." Overall, these examples across the eight anchor students support the finding that after participating in RASEL students were able to demonstrate an understanding that multiple identities (personal and social) interact to make us unique and complex individuals.

Student Insights

In their post-interviews, anchor students perceived shifts in how they viewed identities as multifaceted and interrelated. For example, after participating in RASEL, Finn described "there is a lot more to your identity than six things." He also mentioned that "it's hard to represent your whole character and identity" in one chart. In this way, Finn described how after participating in RASEL he was able to understand not only how his personal and social identities are connected, but how our identities are complex and cannot be captured by an identity map alone. Finn concluded that while the identity map was helpful, the culminating RASEL lesson (identity

silhouette) allowed for an expanded and more accurate representation of his identity. See Figure 9 for Finn's identity silhouette. Henry expressed in his post-interview that he learned not to let other people determine who you are and acknowledged the importance of "making your own identity." Lindsey shared how she "learned more things about [herself]" after participating in RASEL.

These student reflections underscore that providing opportunities for students to use perspective-taking to explore characters' multifaceted identities in texts increased their motivation and engagement with the text, which in turn enhanced their narrative reading comprehension (Guthrie et al., 2007). Additionally, this practice allowed students to embrace how parts of their own identities are interrelated to make up who they are, while recognizing that no single aspect fully defines them (Learning for Justice, 2022).

Social Justice Shifts

When teachers provide opportunities to engage in thematic discussions across a text set that challenge power and privilege, identify injustices, and acknowledge harm (Learning for Justice, 2022), they are simultaneously supporting components of TSEL (social awareness) and narrative reading comprehension (identifying themes, motivation and engagement with the text). Establishing purposes for reading and discussing texts, such as identifying injustices and engaging in critical conversations, can cultivate student engagement (Duke et al., 2006). Additionally, asking students to examine possible themes across the text set allowed them to extract meaning and continue building their reading comprehension (Shanahan et al., 2010). Across my findings, I consider shifts in "social justice" to be ways in which student thinking aligns with culturally sustaining pedagogies (e.g., using asset-based language, valuing cultural perspectives and experiences, and engaging with care in critical conversations that challenge power and privilege) (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014). The two major social justice

shifts that occurred after participating in RASEL include: (a) recognizing injustice and acknowledging harm and (b) identifying themes from the text that advocate for social justice.

Recognizing Injustice and Acknowledging Harm

After participating in RASEL, the fifth graders in Liz's class showed shifts towards an initial understanding of how characters in the text were treated unfairly based on their identities and how this can cause real harm (e.g., it was unfair that she couldn't play because of her culture). In this way, students were provided opportunities to practice social awareness (Jagers et al., 2021) and Liz cultivated student engagement when she established an authentic purpose for reading and discussing texts (Duke et al., 2006), which was to identify examples of injustice and engaging in critical conversations that challenge power and privilege (New York State Education Department, 2018).

Instructional Context

Before teaching the first RASEL lesson, Liz and I designed and implemented an introductory lesson in response to the students' need for more scaffolding that became apparent while they were completing the pre-activity. When working to identify an injustice during the passage in the pre-activity, I observed many students feeling hesitant and unsure about the meaning of the term injustice. For example, during the pre-activity several students raised their hands to ask what injustice meant and others pointed to the word injustice and said "I don't know what this means" or "I don't get it." The purpose of this introductory lesson was to provide opportunities for students to build vocabulary and background knowledge to support their navigation of justice-oriented conversations across RASEL. In the design, I incorporated Liz's suggestion to connect the vocabulary terms "injustice" and "microaggression" to her daily instruction of Greek and Latin Roots in which students study how prefixes and suffixes can change the meaning of a root word. While teaching this lesson, Liz used google slides as visuals

(See Figure 31) and encouraged students to consider the prefixes “in” and “micro” alongside the roots “justice” and “aggression” when discussing the definitions of these terms.

Figure 31

RASEL Introductory Lesson Slides: Injustice and Microaggression

After engaging in a group discussion to build students’ vocabulary, Liz showed a video titled *Teenagers Discuss Microaggressions and Racism* (Hatch Kids, 2014) in which adolescents from marginalized groups define and provide examples of microaggressions they have

encountered, emphasizing the importance of awareness and open dialogue in combating these behaviors. We purposefully selected this video featuring adolescents, rather than adults, discussing issues of racism because we wanted to provide the fifth graders with relatable examples to foster conversations about how they contribute to or are affected by acts of racism in their own lives. The video begins by defining microaggressions as a form of unintentional discrimination, which can take the form of subtle offensive comments that can build up over time, and they make you feel bad and doubt yourself. In the video, several adolescents targeted by microaggression share examples of these harmful statements and their negative impacts. For example, a young Black girl shared that "because they are micro or small, you feel like maybe your overreacting" and then if you "feel offended and try to stand up for yourself, sometimes people respond with 'oh you can't take a joke' and try to minimize the situation." This video concludes with suggestions for adolescents to combat committing microaggressions and work to be allies of those who are microaggressed including "you need to be aware of what you're saying and how it can affect the person you're saying it to" and "when someone feels hurt by a microaggression, it shouldn't just be pushed to the side."

Overall, the purpose of this video and the introductory lesson focused on providing a group of predominantly White students with vocabulary and background knowledge to support their ability to recognize examples of injustice, acknowledging harm, and engage in critical conversations across the RASEL lessons that challenge power and privilege. While the lesson was effective in supporting students' initial understand of the harm caused by injustice, more time for self-reflection on their own contributions towards acts of racism would be necessary for students to begin the ongoing work of examining their own privilege and biases, which are crucial components of TSEL (Jagers et al., 2021; Soutter et al., 2025).

Across the RASEL lessons, Liz capitalized on teachable moments for students to practice recognizing examples of injustice in texts and engage in critical conversations that challenge power and privilege. For example, during the interactive read-aloud of *The Year of the Dog* (Chapter 16), Liz encouraged students to reflect on a specific moment in the chapter when Grace, who was Chinese American, experienced injustice. In the text a White girl named Becky told Grace she couldn't be Dorothy in the play *The Wizard of Oz* because Dorothy is not Chinese. When reflecting upon this moment in the chapter, Liz asked students to recall the definitions of injustice and microaggression they learned from the RASEL introductory lesson and asked students to turn and talk to a partner about "how is Grace experiencing a microaggression or injustice in this part of the story?" After the turn and talk, Liz had a few students share out, to which Dillian responded, "Becky was doing like a microaggression because she was discriminating against her, like how she [Grace] looked" and he questioned whether this was "intentional or unintentional" because he didn't "know if Becky meant it in a mean way, but either way she shouldn't have said it." Henry built on Dillian's idea by sharing how this "was an injustice because she [Becky] is basically telling her she can't do something because she's Chinese." Taylor added, "Becky was doing a microaggression, because she never said, 'just kidding,' she really meant it." Following the students' responses, Liz synthesized their ideas by clarifying "microaggressions can be complicated because they may or may not be intentional" but either way "they are hurtful." Liz stressed the importance of being "mindful of the things we say" and to "recognize when these types of injustices happen."

Following this discussion, Liz asked students to share which emotion vocabulary Grace may have been feeling in this moment using their feel wheels, to which multiple students responded "disappointed," "embarrassed," and "insignificant." Then Liz asked students "why do

you think she was feeling this way?" and Carson shared "somebody said she couldn't be that [Dorothy]." Liz prompted students to push their thinking further by saying "someone said Grace couldn't be Dorothy because why..." After pausing and giving students think time, multiple students shared "because she was Chinese." By examining this moment from the chapter, Liz supported her students to identify examples of when characters in texts are treated unfairly (Learning for Justice, 2022) and acknowledge the harmful impacts of Becky's racist statement towards Grace, regardless of her intention. In this example and across RASEL, Liz and I worked to incorporate the terms injustice and microaggression into discussions to encourage students to draw connections between the characters' experiences and their learning from the introductory lesson. However, when reflecting upon these instructional moments, Liz and I may have unintentionally caused students to consider injustices and microaggressions as interchangeable terms, rather than viewing a microaggression as a "small" type of injustice, which was our intent. In future RASEL iterations, I will work to counteract these misconceptions by providing more explicit instruction and clarification around injustices from the text that are microaggression and those that are racist statements to help students not conflate these terms and ideas.

Shifts in Recognizing Injustices and Acknowledging Harm

In the pre- and post-activity, after listening to the narrative reading passage all 17 students were asked to provide an example of an injustice or a hardship the character may have been facing. In addition, the eight anchor students were asked in their pre- and post-interviews to explain their reasoning and thought process when answering this question. The anchor student responses from the pre- and post-interviews are used as examples to support the whole class findings in this section. The evaluation codes I used to analyze student responses included

beginning, developing, and advancing. See Figure 32 for the description of my evaluation codes in relation to this finding.

Figure 32

Evaluation Coding Protocol: Recognizing Injustices and Acknowledging Harm

Recognizing Injustices and Acknowledging Harm (*social awareness and reading comprehension)*		
Beginning	**Developing**	**Advancing**
Providing examples that indicate an unclear understanding of injustice and no mention that harm is occurring (e.g., the character's mom packed her the wrong lunch)	Providing examples that indicate an understanding that something harmful occurred and attributed (or alluded to) the harm as occurring because of someone's identity (e.g., race, gender, culture, ethnicity), but did not reference this example as being unjust or unfair	Providing examples that indicate an understanding that an injustice occurred, attributed the injustice as occurring because of someone's identity (e.g., race, gender, culture, ethnicity), and refers to this example as unjust or unfair

Broadly, across my analysis I found before participating in RASEL when asked to provide an example of an injustice from the passage, students tended to use broad descriptions that focused on how the character was being "bullied," "made fun of," or "laughed at" whereas in the post-activity they tended to use more nuanced and justice-oriented language focused on how the character was "mistreated," "downgraded," the situation was "unfair," or the character was "being denied because of their race, culture, or gender." My analysis of the pre- and post-activities revealed 12 out of 17 students shifted towards an understanding of how characters in the narrative reading passages were treated unfairly based on their identities and how this can cause real harm (See Table 14). Among the 12 students who shifted in recognizing injustices and acknowledging harm, I identified two categories in which students showed changes in their thinking. Three students shifted from an unclear understanding of injustice to an understanding that something harmful occurred and attributed (or alluded to) the harm as occurring because of

the character's identity but did not reference their example from the text as being unjust or unfair. Nine of the students shifted from understanding something harmful occurred and attributed (or alluded to) the harm as occurring because of the character's identity to an understanding that injustice occurred and specifically refers to this example as unjust or unfair. The remaining five students provided examples that indicated harm, but did not clearly identify this harm as occurring because of someone's identity before and after participating in RASEL.

Table 14

Shifts in Recognizing Injustices and Acknowledging Harm

Category	Student
Beginning to Developing	**Edward**
	Cara
	Xavier
Developing to Advancing	**Sophia**
	Taylor
	Lindsey
	Henry
	Finn
	Bruno
	Carson
	Izzy
	Dillian
Developing before and after RASEL	**Tara**
	Brody
	Brittany
	Brooke
	Marco

Note. Anchor students in bold.

Beginning to Developing. 3 out of 17 students (Edward, Cara, and Xavier) shifted from an unclear understanding of injustice to an understanding that something harmful occurred and attributed (or alluded to) the harm as occurring because of the character's identity but did not reference their example from the text as being unjust or unfair. More specifically, in the pre-

activity, when these students were asked to provide an example of an injustice, Cara left this section blank because she was unfamiliar with the term, and Edward and Xavier's responses focused on Mali (the main character) not getting the food she wanted in her lunchbox, rather than the injustice the character experienced in the passage when her classmates were disrespecting her Thai culture. For example, Xavier responded that an example of an injustice was when "her mom packed her Thai food" in her lunch and Edward answered that it was when "she didn't get the food she wanted." Additionally, Edward mentioned in his pre-interview that this question felt "really confusing."

In their post-activities these students shifted towards an understanding that harm occurred attributed (or alluded to) the harm as occurring because of the character's identity. For example, Cara, who left this section blank in the pre-activity, responded that an example of an injustice was when the character "could not play in the game because of her headwear [hijab]" in her post-activity. Additionally, Xavier responded in his post activity that she "couldn't wear her hijab in the game" and Edward shared that "she could not play because of her headwear." In Edward's post-interview, after being prompted and reminded of the definition of injustice, he explained that "they were not like letting her do her religion." While Cara, Xavier, and Cara made important shifts towards recognizing harm occurred due to the character's identities, I did not code their responses as "advancing" because they did not explicitly indicate these examples as unjust or unfair.

Developing to Advancing. 8 out of 17 students (Sophia, Taylor, Lindsey, Finn, Bruno, Carson, Izzy, and Dillian) shifted towards an understanding that an injustice occurred due to the character's identity and specifically referred to their examples as unjust or unfair. For example, in his pre-activity, Henry's response was "one challenge Mali faced was when she asked for a

different food, but she wasn't specific" and this was "challenging for her because she had to eat food no one else had tried before." In his pre-interview, Henry explained that it was challenging for Mali because "she had to go the whole day" feeling this way, and "people didn't like it [her food] until they tried it." In this way, Henry indicated that Mali had a harmful experience based on the way her classmates treated her when she brought Thai food in her lunch box, but he did not clearly indicate that this occurred because of Mali's Thai culture and how this experience was unjust. After participating in RASEL, Henry shared in his post-activity that "the injustice was when Hani wasn't allowed to wear her hijab and had to sit on the bench due to the rule." Henry used his prior knowledge of prefixes to explain in his post-interview that "this was like unfair, because justice means fair, and 'un' [the prefix] means 'opposite of.'" In his post-interview, Henry also shared that people should "take their culture seriously" and asking her to take off her hijab was "disrespectful." In this way, Henry's example from the passage in his post-activity and his explanation in his post-interview suggest he recognized the unfairness of the injustice that occurred and acknowledged the harm that was caused.

The following are other notable examples from the data set that illustrate this shift towards an understanding that an injustice occurred due to the character's identity and specifically refer to their examples as unjust or unfair. In the pre-activity, Carson mentioned an example of an injustice was when people were "judging her food because it was different," and in his post-activity provided the example that the character "couldn't play basketball with her hijab" and this showed "unfairness because she wanted to respect her culture." Dillian focused on how Mali "got bullied for having different food" in his pre-activity, and shifted to how Hani "couldn't play because she was wearing a hijab" and "this was an injustice because the reason she was wearing a hijab was that it was her religion, and she wanted to follow it" in his post-

activity. In her pre-activity, Lindsey shared that "everyone was rude to Mali because of her lunch" and "people were laughing at her." Then in her post-activity, Lindsey included that "an injustice in the story was when they said Hani couldn't play basketball because she was wearing a hijab." When sharing her thinking in the post-interview she expressed that an injustice "is when like someone is downgrading other people" and "just because someone looks different or has a different culture doesn't mean they can't do it."

This shift in student thinking towards recognizing injustices and acknowledging harm, while respectfully engaging in conversations that challenge power and privilege (New York State Education Department, 2018) was a valuable first step. However, it is important to provide groups of predominantly White students with ongoing opportunities to begin working towards examining how their own privilege and biases play a role in racial and cultural injustices (Jagers et al., 2021; Soutter et al., 2025).

Student Insights

Additionally, my analysis uncovered students perceived shifts in their own learning around injustices after participating in RASEL. In her post-interview, Lindsey described this shift in her own thinking by saying "I've learned like a lot about injustices" and "like when something isn't fair, like when the coach pulled Hani to the side and told her no headwear, this wasn't fair because she always wore her hijab and if she took it off she would be disrespecting her culture and she was really upset." Similarly, Finn shared in his post-interview that he learned "like many people are different and different perspectives can show like different experiences with hardship or injustices." Lindsey and Finn both explored how, after participating in RASEL, they were able to identify and give examples of when White people treated people of color unjustly and understand how this causes real harm.

Identifying Themes that Advocate for Social Justice

The students in Liz's fifth grade class had strong prior knowledge of how to determine themes of a text from previous literacy instruction, but after participating in RASEL their thinking about theme shifted from identifying more generic themes (e.g., be kind) to more specific and justice-oriented themes (e.g., show kindness to all people and all cultures) from the texts. Asking students to examine possible themes across the text set provided opportunities to extract meaning to better comprehend the text (Shanahan et al., 201) and investigate how people (including themselves) are treated and how to treat others the way they want to be treated (Learning for Justice, 2022).

Instructional Context

During the RASEL lessons, Liz prompted students to examine possible themes across the text set. For example, during Lesson 2, which was referenced in the previous finding, after discussing the injustice that Grace experienced in Chapter 16 of *The Year of the Dog*, Liz asked students to consider "what do you think the author may be trying to teach you in this story or what could be a possible theme?" Liz reminded students that determining a theme is different than summarizing the text by saying "a theme is a message that the author is trying to teach you that you could apply to your own life." In response to Liz's prompt, Dillian shared a possible theme of "just because someone looks different doesn't mean they can't do something that someone else can." Liz repeated Dillian's response and acknowledged that other students were showing the connection symbol to indicate they were thinking something similar. Next, Finn shared a possible theme of "different kinds of people can do different things." Both themes identified by Dillian and Finn were alluding to ideas of social justice, but to conclude the lesson, Liz pushed the student's thinking further by referencing a part of the chapter when Grace shows

pride for her Chinese culture by wanting to author her own book with Chinese characters. Based on this moment in the chapter, Liz explained that other possible themes from this text include "being proud and celebrating what makes you, you" and "standing up for yourself and your culture."

In this way, Liz was modeling for her students how to examine themes that are more justice-oriented, specifically themes around how students can pay attention to how people are treated and working to treat others how they like to be treated (Learning for Justice, 2022). While encouraging thinking around how themes can connect to equity and inclusion, next steps include investigating how White students are using the term "different." While Dillian and Finn (White boys) shared themes connected to equity, they were emphasizing inclusion for people that were "different" than them (non-White), which could be viewed as a deficit perspective. This is an important distinction that could be further explored in future rounds of RASEL implementation.

Shifts in Identifying Themes that Advocate for Social Justice

In the pre- and post-activity, all 17 students were asked to identify a possible theme from the narrative reading passage. In addition, the eight anchor students were asked in their pre- and post-interviews to explain their reasoning and thought process when answering this question. The anchor student responses from the pre- and post-interviews are used as examples to support the whole class findings in this section. The evaluation codes I used to analyze the student responses included beginning, developing, and advancing. See Figure 33 for the description of my evaluation codes in relation to this finding.

Figure 33

Evaluation Coding Protocol: Identifying Themes

Identifying Themes that Advocate for Social Justice *(social awareness and reading comprehension)*		
Beginning	**Developing**	**Advancing**
Identifies a theme that does not allude to social justice **OR** cannot identify an accurate theme without support (e.g., the character ate Thai food)	Identifies a theme that broadly alludes to social justice (e.g., be kind)	Identifies a theme that is connected to social justice (e.g., show kindness to all people and all cultures)

My analysis of pre- and post-activities resulted in 10 out of 17 students showing a shift in identifying more justice-oriented themes after participating in RASEL (See Table 15). Among these 10 students, I identified two categories in which students showed shifts in their thinking: (1) identifies a theme that is not accurate in relation to the text to identifies a theme that broadly alludes to social justice (n = 1) and (2) identifies a theme that alludes to social justice to identifying a theme that is connected to social justice (n = 9). There were a range of responses from the remaining seven students who remained constant in their identification of themes. One of the students inaccurately identified a theme in both the pre- and post-activities and could benefit from more teacher support to scaffold these skills. Four of these students identified a theme that alluded to social justice before and after RASEL, and two of the students identified a theme that was clearly connected to social justice before and after RASEL. In future RASEL implementations, it will be important to incorporate explicit instruction around how themes can promote advocacy for social justice to support students to continue to push their thinking even further.

Table 15

Shifts in Examining Themes that Advocate for Social Justice

Category	Student
Beginning to Developing	**Xavier**
Developing to Advancing	**Sophia** **Taylor** **Lindsey** **Bruno** **Edward** Carson Brody Brooke Dillian
Beginning before and after RASEL	Cara
Developing before and after RASEL	**Tara** **Henry** Brittany Izzy
Advancing before and after RASEL	**Finn** Marco

Note. Anchor students in bold.

Beginning to Developing. One student, Xavier, shifted from identifying an inaccurate theme to a theme that alluded to social justice. During the pre-activity, Xavier provided a detail from the text, rather than a theme. For example, when asked "what do you think the author may have been trying to teach you in this story?" Xavier responded, "the character ate [Thai] food and liked it, yum." After participating in RASEL, Xavier was able to identify a theme in the post-activity by responding "you should be able to wear what you want." While this theme did not directly connect to social justice, Xavier was able to provide a theme rather than a detail, and he broadly alluded to the fact that it wasn't fair that the character was told she couldn't wear her hijab in the post-activity passage.

Developing to Advancing. 9 out of 17 students (Sophia, Taylor, Lindsey, Bruno, Edward, Carson, Brody, Brooke, and Dillian) shifted from identifying generic themes that broadly alluded to social justice to themes that were clearly connected to social justice. For example, in the pre-activity when asked "what do you think the author may have been trying to teach you in this story?" Edward responded, "just because you haven't tried food, doesn't mean you won't like it." In his pre-interview, when asked about how he knew this was a theme from the text to which Edward responded, "because I always try new food I'd never seen before, and it ends up being really good." In this way, Edward identified a theme that alludes to the fact that we should be open to trying food from other cultures, but his theme did not directly connect to how Mali (the main character) was experiencing harm because of how her peers were negatively viewing her Thai food or how the author may have been trying to teach us about how to challenge these behaviors in ourselves and others. Whereas in his post-activity, Edward shared a possible theme of "no matter your culture, you should still be able to play no matter what." Overall, after participating in RASEL, Edward recognized and identified a theme more directly connected to the harm caused by acts of racism and prejudice.

The following are additional student examples from the data set that illustrate this shift from identifying themes that allude to clearly connect to social justice. In the pre-activity, Bruno identified a possible theme as "try it before you judge it" and in the post-activity "don't compromise for your culture." Sophia identified the theme of "eat what you want, even if other people tease you" in her pre-activity, and the theme of "just because someone is different, that doesn't give people the right to disrespect them" in her post-activity. Taylor shared in her pre-activity that a possible theme could be "don't judge others," and in her post-activity she shared that "you can't give up" especially "when something represents you and your culture." In the

pre-activity, Dillian responded with the theme of "even if you are different, doesn't mean you should get bullied" and in the post activity, the theme of "you can always stand up and try to make things change using your voice." Brooke shared the theme of "trying something new is okay" in the pre-activity, and the theme of "don't give up because it [your culture] is worth fighting for" in her post-activity. These illustrative examples support the shift in how students were able to identify themes from the text that were more related to issues of social justice. Furthermore, after participating in RASEL, students showed more awareness of acts of injustice in the text, which related to how they considered themes that they could apply by advocating for social justice in their own lives.

Summary of Findings Research Question 1

In response to my first research question: *in what ways (if any) do fifth-grade students demonstrate changes in components of social-emotional learning and narrative reading comprehension after participating in RASEL*, I found simultaneous shifts in components of students' TSEL and narrative reading comprehension related to emotion, identity, and social justice.

In terms of emotion shifts, after participating in RASEL, students explored more complex emotion vocabulary and inferred emotions with evidence that highlights characters' cultural experiences. Providing opportunities for students to explore emotion vocabulary supported their TSEL (self-awareness) and narrative reading comprehension (vocabulary development, drawing inferences). Using a range of emotion vocabulary words to describe emotions (Learning for Justice, 2022) and inferring emotions allowed students to explore how emotions and actions are interconnected (Jagers et al., 2021), rather than identifying one's emotions for the purpose of managing or controlling them (Clark et al., 2021). Furthermore,

when students used vocabulary in a meaningful context (Elleman et al., 2009) and drew inferences during high-quality text-based discussions (Baker et al., 2013) they were building their reading comprehension (Shanahan et al., 2010).

Regarding identity, students shifted towards embracing the interrelated nature of their personal and social identities after RASEL, which simultaneously supported components of transformative SEL (self-awareness) and narrative reading comprehension (character perspective-taking, motivation and engagement). When students engaged in character perspective-taking to consider the personal and social identities of characters, they had the opportunity to practice valuing all parts of their own identities (Jagers et al., 2021) and recognizing how multiple identities interact to make them unique and complex individuals (Learning for Justice, 2022). Providing opportunities for students to put themselves in the character's shoes is also one way to foster motivation and engagement with the text (Guthrie et al., 2007).

Finally, in terms of social justice, students shifted in their ability to recognize injustices, acknowledge harm, and identify themes from the text that advocate social justice, which simultaneously supported components of transformative SEL (social awareness) and narrative reading comprehension (motivation and engagement, theme). Establishing purposes for reading and discussing texts, such as identifying injustices and engaging in critical conversations that challenge power and privilege (New York State Education Department, 2018), cultivated student engagement (Duke et al., 2006). Additionally, asking students to examine possible themes across the text set allowed them to extract meaning and continue building their reading comprehension (Shanahan et al., 2010). During these conversations, when students considered perspectives of characters with the same and different cultures (Jagers et al., 2021) to determine themes, they

gained an initial understanding that people, particularly those who are not part of mainstream White culture, experience racism and prejudice in ways that are harmful and negatively affect their lives (Learning for Justice, 2022).

Overall, these shifts in student's understanding of emotion, identity, and social justice support RASEL as a promising justice-oriented approach to simultaneously support components of TSEL (self-awareness and social awareness) and narrative reading comprehension (character perspective-taking, drawing inferences, identifying themes, motivation and engagement with the text, and vocabulary development).

CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS – RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

In this chapter, I report on findings from my second research question: *What aspects of Read Alouds for Social Emotional Learning (RASEL) instruction enhance or inhibit the integration of students' social-emotional and literacy development?* To answer this question, I drew upon components of retrospective analysis to qualitatively analyze my data set across both rounds of RASEL implementation. Retrospective analysis is the holistic "studying of the data set to contribute to the development or improvement of a framework" (Gravemeijer & Cobb, 2006, p. 153). This type of holistic analysis allowed me to triangulate my findings based on the experiences of the teacher, the eight anchor students, and myself as the researcher (Gravemeijer & Cobb, 2006).

I report findings from my data set across both rounds of RASEL implementation, which includes teacher semi-structured follow-up interviews, video observations of whole group RASEL lessons, my collaborative planning session notes and observational data from the classroom, and the anchor student semi-structured post-interviews from year two. Based on my analysis, I found aspects of RASEL instruction that enhanced or inhibited the integration of social-emotional and literacy development, which I categorized into emerging themes or pedagogical assertions (Colwell & Reinking, 2016) or suggestions to guide future iterations and evaluations of the instructional sequence. I found three major aspects of RASEL instruction that enhanced the integration of social-emotional and literacy development (which I describe as pedagogical assertions) and two major aspects of RASEL instruction that inhibited the integration of TSEL and literacy (which I describe as future suggestions). The following sections describe and provide illustrative examples of these aspects of instruction, with the intent of

contributing to future revisions of the RASEL framework (See Figure 23) and informing future implementations in a variety of classroom contexts.

Aspects of Instruction that Enhance Integration

Based on my analysis across the data set, I found three major aspects of RASEL instruction (feel wheel, identity silhouettes, and the text set) that enhanced the integration of TSEL and literacy and informed my pedagogical assortations: (1) using the feel wheel provided students with a range of words to identify their own emotions and the emotions of the characters based on their cultural experiences and perspectives (2) creating identity silhouettes supported students in recognizing the interrelated nature of their identities and valuing their unique and complex identities within their classroom community, and (3) including a text set that represents diverse culture groups and varied character experiences piqued student interest and supported conversations around social justice. In each subsection, I describe the instructional context in which the pedagogical assertion (Colwell & Reinking, 2016) was situated followed by qualitative examples to synthesize the experiences of the teacher, anchor students, and researcher to support each assertion.

Assertion #1: Using the feel wheel provided students with a range of complex words to identify their own emotions and the emotions of the characters based on their cultural experiences and perspectives.

Instructional Context: Feel Wheel

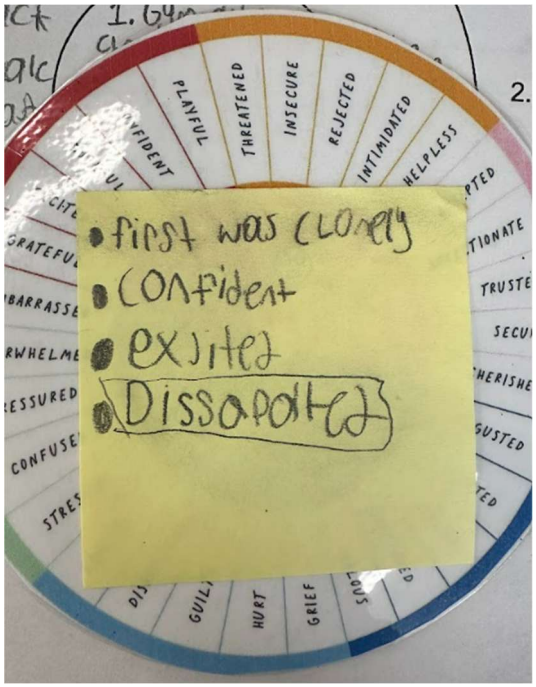
As detailed in my unit design chapter, one instructional adaptation from the first round of RASEL implementation was the use of the feel wheel as a resource for students to explore emotion vocabulary and infer characters' feelings across the interactive read-alouds. As described in the findings chapter for my first research question, the feel wheel was as an aspect of RASEL that supported students in identifying more complex emotion vocabulary to describe

the characters' feelings, which suggests a more nuanced understanding of their own emotions (Neff, 2022). See Figure 20 for the version of the feel wheel that students used across this study.

Across all three interactive read-alouds, Liz encouraged students to "use your feel wheels to think about possible emotions to describe how the character might be feeling." For example, during the interactive read-aloud of *Flying High*, Tara used her feel wheel to stop and jot that Simone was feeling a variety of emotions across the text: "lonely," "confident," "excited," and "disappointed." In doing so, Tara extended her thinking beyond the broad emotion of sadness and explored more complex and specific emotions when she identified that Simone was feeling a specific type of sadness: "lonely" and "disappointed" See Figure 34 for Tara's sticky note.

Figure 34

Tara's Stop and Jot using the Feel Wheel



Teacher Insights

In her follow-up interview, Liz expressed that using the feel wheel during RASEL enhanced her ability to integrate TSEL and literacy because it encouraged meaningful vocabulary development and provided opportunities to dive deeper into the complexities of emotions across the school day.

In terms of vocabulary development, Liz felt that the feel wheel was a beneficial tool for students to make connections to TSEL when encountering an unknown emotion vocabulary word in a text. Liz explained that "if [a student] doesn't understand a word, but they remember it from the feel wheel" it could help them better comprehend the text. Similarly, Liz noticed when students were exploring emotion vocabulary with the feel wheel during RASEL, they were making connections to their learning about prefixes, suffixes, and root words during Liz's Greek and Latin roots instruction. Overall, Liz felt the feel wheel was a valuable aspect of RASEL instruction that she will continue to use in the future because it she could "really dive in and say, 'ok, broadly you are feeling sad', but then narrowing it down to a more specific word was important for [students] to not only express how they feel, but feel comfortable recognizing those [emotions] in themselves."

In addition to supporting vocabulary development, Liz explained that "the feel wheel [was] really important not only in our SEL [instruction]," but across the school day. Liz acknowledged that using the feel wheel during RASEL supported her literacy instruction because students could "better understand how the character felt and how [as the reader] you can take the character's perspective." Liz also indicated that the feel wheel could help students explore their own big feelings or emotions during TSEL instruction or identify them "when they are taking a break in the classroom break space." Overall, she expressed that the feel wheel was a meaningful

way to support TSEL and literacy integration across the school day because she could "take advantage of these connections across [her] SEL curriculum, narrative reading comprehension when [they] are expressing theme, and when [students] are taking a break in the classroom."

Students Insights

Five out of eight anchor students mentioned the feel wheel in their post-interviews when asked to share their favorite parts of RASEL and how they felt it contributed to their learning. Overall, students felt the feel wheel gave them access and choice of emotion vocabulary words that they may have not thought of initially.

For example, Edward shared that the "feel wheel was cool because it had all of these new words" and Taylor liked having "access to all of these different words" when identifying and exploring emotions across RASEL. Tara and Henry both explained that the feel wheel supported their ability to infer emotions to describe the characters' feelings. Tara also verbalized her thought process by explaining how she automatically thought of an emotion like "sad or mad or those types of [broad] words," but "when [she] looked on the feel wheel, [she] could see other [more complex] words to pick out." Similarly, Henry described how when asked to infer emotion vocabulary to describe Mali's feelings in the post-activity reading passage, he looked at "sad" on the inside circle first, and then thought about how "she was more disappointed than sad because she was really offended that she couldn't wear it [her hijab], so I thought that [disappointed] was the better word." In his post-interview, Bruno attributed his shift in emotion vocabulary to the feel wheel by saying "my words were more descriptive this time because the last one, it was more generic and stuff and then this was like more specific and how she felt."

In addition to giving students access and choice of emotion vocabulary words, Finn contributed that although the feel wheel was helpful, he thought "the feel wheel could get

updated, like with another ring around it" to include "a lot more emotion words." In his post-interview, Finn shared the example of when he was thinking of a word to describe Jordan in the text *I Talk like a River*, he used the word "alone," which wasn't on his version of the feel wheel.

Researcher Insights

Overall, Liz's and the anchor students' responses support the pedagogical assertion that using the feel wheel during RASEL provided students with a range of words to identify emotion vocabulary and think deeply about emotions of people with similar and different identities to their own (Learning for Justice, 2022) rather than naming emotions for the purpose of managing or controlling them (Clark et al., 2021). Inviting students to think about emotions in this way allowed opportunities to make space for emotions and move away from the traditional SEL emphasis on regulating emotions in classrooms and towards investigating the relationships between emotions, identities, and experiences (Simmons, 2019).

While these opportunities to explore and think deeply about characters' emotions and students' own emotions during interactive read-alouds are valuable, future iterations of RASEL could extend these opportunities to further support TSEL with a stronger emphasis on recognizing how thoughts, feelings and actions are interconnected (Jagers et al., 2021; Soutter et al., 2025). One suggestion for doing so would be to incorporate an adaptation of the feel wheel called the *emotion-sensation wheel* that was created to connect emotions to common actions or body-based expressions of emotions (Braman, 2020). During RASEL students used their feel wheels during the interactive read-aloud of *The Year of the Dog* (Chapter 16) to identify that Grace (main character) may have been feeling "disappointed" or "insignificant," when she experienced harm as a target of racist comments. To draw more explicit connections between feelings and actions in future RASEL implementations, teachers could refer to the portion of text

after Grace experienced injustice, which read “like a melting icicle my dream of being Dorothy fell and shattered on the ground” and “the girls kept going, but I didn’t even hear them” and incorporate the emotion-sensation wheel to draw connections between Grace’s body-based expressions (e.g., frozen, numb, speechless) and corresponding emotions (e.g., inferior, distant, confused).

Across RASEL instruction, the feel wheel provided opportunities to support students’ self-awareness and vocabulary developing during interactive read-alouds when identifying and thinking deeply about students’ own emotions and the emotions of the characters based on their cultural experiences and perspectives. Based on the experiences of the teacher, the students, and me as the researcher across this study, I suggest future implementations of RASEL should continue to include the feel wheel as a resource to identify complex emotion vocabulary, but I encourage using adaptations of the feel wheel to enhance the connections between feelings and actions (Jagers et al., 2021; Soutter et al., 2025). In addition, I suggest providing various feel wheel options to support differentiation across grade levels or students’ reading development. While the feel wheel used in this study (See Figure 20) could support students in grades 3-5, there are feel wheel options that pair emotion vocabulary with images for K-2 students (Gentle, Observations, n.d.), and feel wheels with three tiers of emotions that could be used with students in middle school or high school (Dhuka, 2020).

Assertion #2: Creating identity silhouettes supported students in recognizing the interrelated nature of their identities and valuing their unique and complex identities within their classroom community.

Instructional Context: Identity Silhouette

During the second round of RASEL implementation, students engaged in character perspective-taking practices to consider the viewpoints and identities of characters across the text

set (Lysaker & Sedberry, 2015; McTigue et al., 2015). Encouraging students to put themselves in the character's shoes increased students' motivation and engagement with the text (Guthrie et al., 2007) and provided opportunities to practice valuing how all parts of their identities make up who they are (Jagers et al., 2021). As I discussed in my unit design chapter, the culminating RASEL lesson allowed students to connect and extend their learning from all three texts to their own lives (Jagers et al., 2019). The culminating activity involved creating an identity silhouette, which is a representative portrait of the students' silhouettes that represents components of their identities (Johnson, n.d.). Creating an identity silhouette provided students with an opportunity to extend their learning from their explorations of the characters' identities during RASEL and to practice self-awareness by creatively reflecting on their own multifaceted identities. After students designed and created their silhouettes, Liz and I facilitated a gallery walk for students to highlight the multiple identities of their peers that positively contribute to their classroom and school community. See Figure 6 for an example of an identity silhouette's created by one of the anchor students (Bruno) and Figure 22 for a class photo that was taken following the gallery walk.

Teacher Insights

In her follow-up interview, Liz shared that the identity silhouette was a powerful tool for students to explore their own identities in a meaningful way that combined creativity with purpose. For example, Liz shared that using the identity silhouette as RASEL's culminating activity helped students to "see the big picture" while also "channeling their inner creativity." More specifically, Liz explained that identity silhouettes allowed students extend their understanding of components of their personal and social identities which they identified during the RASEL pre-and post-activity. Liz valued the authenticity of the silhouette activity because

instead of simply telling her students to "draw this thing on a piece of paper," she was able to "provided them with a purpose" and "they took a lot of pride in their work" and therefore pride in their identities. Finally, Liz discussed how the identity silhouette enhanced her integration of TSEL during RASEL because "anytime we make connections [across the school day] students are so much more engaged and willing to contribute in meaningful ways."

Student Insights

Seven out of eight anchor students mentioned the identity silhouette in their post-interviews when asked to share their favorite parts of RASEL and how they felt it contributed to their learning. Overall, the students valued the freedom and creativity the identity silhouette offered and verbalized how it allowed for a more accurate depiction of their multifaceted identities in comparison to the more structured identity map they completed during the RASEL pre- and post-activity. Tara, Bruno, and Edward specifically mentioned that they enjoyed the more creative approach, which allowed them to express themselves and their ideas with drawings, words, or images. Bruno shared that he liked it because "you could draw, and it was way more colorful," and Tara liked that she could be "creative." Edward, who loves to sketch and draw, mentioned how in fifth grade they do not have many chances to draw and shared that when he got to "color" to explore his identity it "just felt better."

In addition to the opportunity to creatively express themselves, students felt capturing components of their identities in the silhouette allowed for a more accurate representation. For example, Sophia mentioned that the identity silhouette "made me go [more deeply] into everything in my identity." Similarly, Taylor shared that she was able to learn about and reflect on "what I think of myself," and Finn expressed that it "really made me think about my identity more, and what makes me, me."

Researcher Insights

My analysis of the teacher and student data sources support the pedagogical assertion that creating an identity silhouette provided an opportunity for students to recognize the interrelated nature of their identities (Learning for Justice, 2022) and including the gallery walk component provided space for students to value their unique and complex identities and the identities of their classmates that make up their classroom community. Creating identity silhouettes at the conclusion of RASEL allowed students to connect and extend their learning about characters' identities in the text set to their own self-awareness. Moreover, they reflected upon their own personal, cultural, and linguistic assets and demonstrated the connections between their personal and social identities (Jagers et al., 2021). In doing so, students also recognized that multiple identities continue to themselves and unique and complex individuals (Learning for Justice, 2022).

While the identity silhouette provided opportunities for students to reflect upon the interrelated nature of their identities in a meaningful way that combined creativity with purpose, future iterations of RASEL could be more intentional in drawing connections between the silhouette activity and student learning about identities from RASEL. Liz and her students appreciated the artistic aspects and purposeful nature of the identity silhouette, but there were missed opportunities for extending learning from RASEL. For example, during the gallery walk component, I observed several students not taking the time required to examine their classmates' artwork to consider the unique and complex identities that make up their classroom community. Going forward, I suggest providing space for discussions beforehand to explain the purpose of the gallery walk, which was to extend learning from RASEL about how our identities make us unique and complex individuals (Learning for Justice, 2022) and afterwards for students to share

insights about the importance of recognizing the interrelated nature of their own identities and valuing the identities of their peers.

Based on the experiences of the teacher, the students, and myself as the researcher across this study, I suggest future RASEL implementations should include the identity silhouette, but include more intentional discussions around the purpose of the silhouette to further extend student thinking around identity.

Assertion #3: Using a high-quality text set of children's literature that represented diverse culture groups and varied character experiences piqued student interest and supported conversations around social justice.

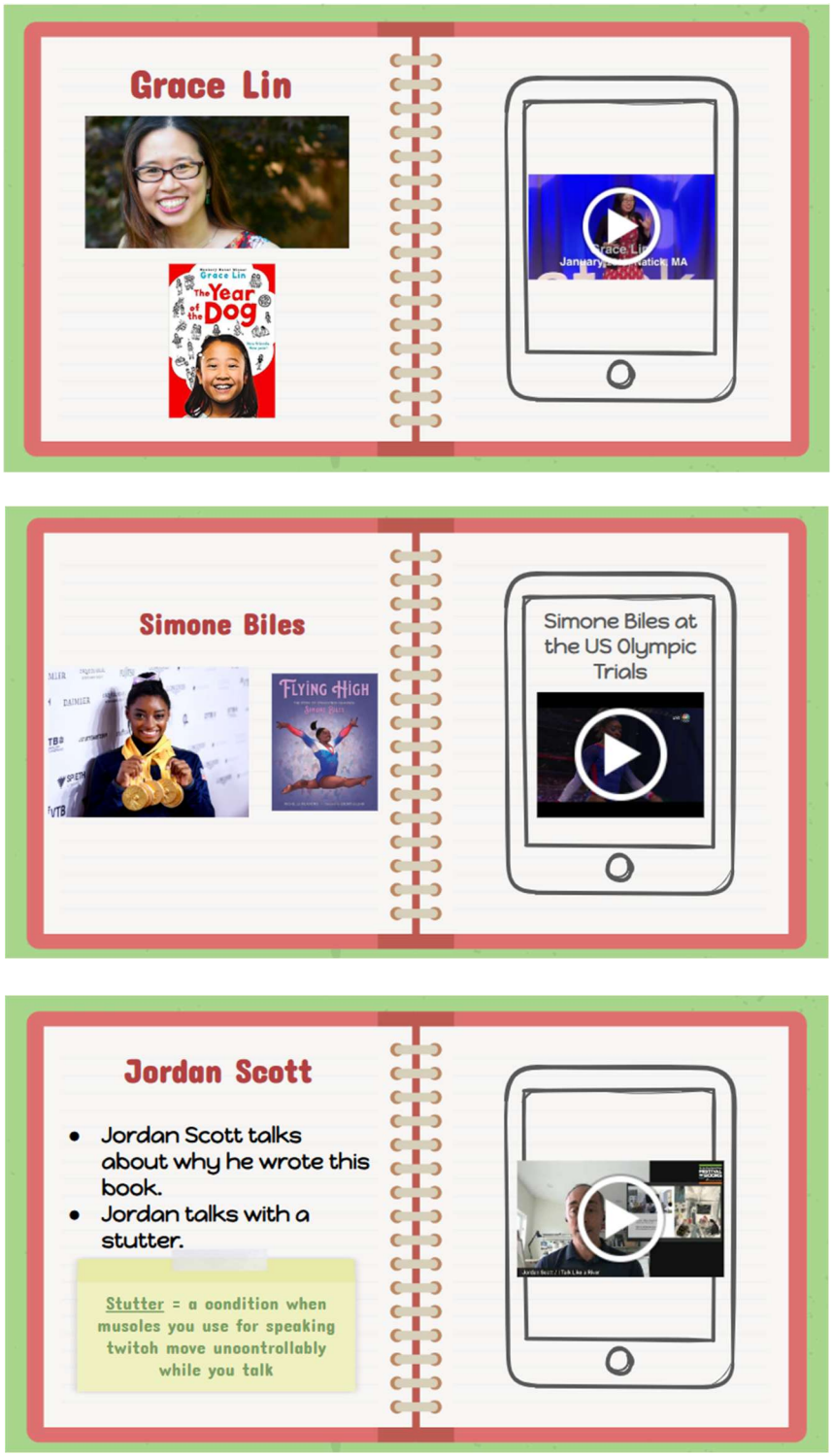
Instructional Context: Text Set of Children's Literature

RASEL involved a series of interactive read-alouds using a text set (3) of children's literature based on similar social-emotional themes. As mentioned in the Unit Design chapter, it was imperative for the texts to be transformative in nature and introduce new backgrounds and cultural experiences to students to align with culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2014). During the text analysis and selection process, I utilized the anchor questions from Clark et al.'s (2021) framework for critically evaluating texts that may be used to teach with TSEL and the checklist created by Adam and Harper (2016) for selecting and evaluating multicultural texts. Based on my text analysis and considering the findings from the first round of RASEL implementation, the texts utilized during the second round of RASEL implementation included *The Year of the Dog* by Grace Lin, *Flying High (The Story of Gymnastics Champion Simone Biles)* by Michelle Meadows, and *I Talk Like a River* by Jordan Scott. Overall, these three texts shared common themes of self-awareness and social awareness, while representing diverse cultural groups and varied character experiences that piqued student interest and supported conversations around equity and inclusion.

In addition to the overlapping components of TSEL and literacy instruction during the interactive read-louds of each text, the RASEL lessons provided opportunities for students to build background knowledge about the characters' unique experiences and identities before reading the text. For example, *The Year of the Dog* is a semi-autobiographical novel in which Grace Lin draws upon her own childhood experiences as a Chinese American girl growing up in New York. Prior to reading aloud Chapter 16 of the text, Liz introduced students to the author Grace Lin by sharing a video clip from Grace Lin's Ted Talk in which she shares her childhood experiences with injustices that influenced her writing of this chapter. Similarly, before reading aloud *Flying High (The Story of Gymnastics Champion Simone Biles)* and *I Talk Like a River*, Liz included similar types of real-life examples to build students' background knowledge about the identities and experiences of Simone Biles and Jordan Scott to help them better understand and engage with the text in meaningful ways. See Figure 37 for images of the videos and images used during RASEL to provide these experiences for students.

Figure 37

RASEL Slides: Building Background Knowledge



Teacher Insights

When we began designing RASEL in year one of the study, Liz expressed concerns about using picture books because her literacy and SEL curricula didn't typically include them, and she worried that her fifth graders may perceive them as "babyish" or "for little kids." However, after the second round of RASEL implementation, Liz verbalized in her follow-up interview that her students "enjoyed the books" and as a teacher "it was nice to use picture books that included themes that are geared towards their level." Liz also expressed how utilizing the text set of children's literature made the interpretation of complex themes more accessible for students and supported higher-level discussions around themes of social justice, which may not be facilitated by the SEL curriculum. Additionally, Liz shared that she enjoyed reading these texts aloud to integrate TSEL and literacy because it was an engaging way for students to explore theme, which "is such a big topic in the fifth-grade [literacy] standards." Liz went on to say that "using the characters' experiences to have authentic conversations around SEL and emotions felt more genuine than the curriculum which sometimes feels like [the conversations] are forced." For example, RASEL utilized the experiences of characters in children's literature for students to explore ways in which "not everyone is the same as [them] and how to be more accepting of other cultures, beliefs, and ways of thinking." Finally, Liz shared that she appreciated how RASEL presented ideas around diversity, equity, and inclusion "with curiosity as opposed to judgement" and did not "downplay the complexity [of these conversations]" and her "group [of students] was very mindful of the importance of these topics."

Student Insights

Five out of eight anchor students mentioned aspects of the text set (books, characters, or read-alouds) in their post-interviews when asked to share their favorite parts of RASEL and how

they felt it contributed to their learning. Overall, students felt the text set was an interesting and engaging way to explore components of TSEL and narrative reading comprehension. For example, Henry "really liked listening to [Liz read] the books" and Edward "liked the books because they all shared some similarities [common themes]." Lindsey shared that practicing [TSEL skills] with characters in the book, made it feel easier to learn more about herself [identity] and explain [her] thinking." Bruno shared "I feel like the books helped explain it [identity] but in a very interesting way." Bruno went on to say that he especially enjoyed *I Talk Like a River* because he felt "it was very interesting how he [Jordan, the main character] talks with a stutter." Finally, Finn shared that he really enjoyed the books because "it was interesting to see another culture's point of view and see how they are different than us, and it was really cool."

Researcher Insights

Overall, Liz's and the anchor students' responses support the pedagogical assertion that using a high-quality text set of children's literature that represented diverse culture groups and varied character experiences piqued student interest and supported conversations around social justice. Utilizing a text set of children's literature that was of high quality and connected to students' interests provided multiple opportunities to make connections and create complex layers of understanding (Short, 2011). Additionally, providing experiences to build students' background knowledge before reading texts that represented diverse cultural groups and varied character experiences aligns with culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2017). By utilizing this text set across RASEL, students were also able to inquire about other people's lives and experiences (Learning for Justice, 2022), and acknowledge harm when people are treated unfairly based on their identities (New York State Education Department, 2018).

The text set of children's literature was a central component of RASEL and prompted text-based discussions that challenge power and privilege (New York State Education Department, 2018) by recognizing injustice and acknowledging harm (Learning for Justice, 2022). While valuable, these discussions could be enhanced with ongoing opportunities for students to examine how their own privileges and biases play a role in racial and cultural injustices (Jagers et al., 2021; Soutter et al., 2025) and empower students with a call towards social action in their own lives and communities (Clark et al., 2022). For example, during the interactive read-aloud of *The Year of the Dog* (Chapter 16), Liz encouraged students to reflect on a specific moment in the chapter when Grace, who was Chinese American, experienced injustice. In the text a White girl named Becky told Grace she couldn't be Dorothy in the play *The Wizard of Oz* because Dorothy is not Chinese. When reflecting upon this moment in the chapter, Liz asked students to identify how Grace experienced injustice in the text, to which several students responded ideas such as "Becky was discriminating against her, like show she [Grace] looked" and "this was an injustice because she [Becky] is basically telling her she can't do something because she's Chinese." During this discussion, Liz expressed how injustices "are hurtful" and stressed the importance of being "mindful of the things we say" and to "recognize when these types of injustices happen." In this way, Liz made space for recognizing injustice and acknowledging the harm that was caused (Learning for Justice, 2022), which was an important first step. However, in future iterations, I would encourage teachers to ask follow-up questions to support students in beginning to examine how their own privileges and biases play a role in injustices and consider their own responsibility to stand up to exclusion and prejudice in their own lives (Learning for Justice, 2022). Possible follow-up questions for future instruction may include: "why do you think some people (e.g., Becky) might not notice when they are making a

harmful comment or treating someone unfairly due to their identity?", "imagine you witnessed Becky make a racist comment towards Grace, how could you speak up when someone has been hurt despite negative peer pressures?", "how can we work to make things fair for everyone, not just in the story, but in real life?"

Based on the experiences of the teacher, the students, and myself as the researcher across this study, I suggest future implementations of RASEL should continue to keep students at the center of the text selection process, while also being intentional to represent diverse cultural groups and varied character experiences across the texts to support conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion. Additionally, I would encourage teachers to ask follow-up questions to further enhance discussions during RASEL to support students in the ongoing work of examining how their own privileges and biases play a role in injustices and considering their responsibility to stand up to exclusion and prejudice in their own lives (Learning for Justice, 2022).

Aspects of Instruction that Inhibited Integration

Based on my analysis, I found two major aspects of RASEL instruction that inhibited the integration of TSEL and literacy development. These aspects of instruction informed my suggestions for future revisions to RASEL, which include (1) utilize the open-ended identity silhouette, rather than the closed-ended identity mapping template and (2) include additional perspective-taking activities that go beyond connecting with the characters' emotions, focusing instead on fully exploring the characters' experiences and imagining what it might feel like to be in their shoes. In each subsection, I describe the instructional context in which each suggestion was situated followed by qualitative examples to synthesize the experiences of the teacher, anchor students, and myself as the researcher to support each suggestion.

Suggestion #1: Utilize the open-ended identity silhouette, rather than the closed-ended identity mapping template, which limits the students' ability to explore how all parts of their identities make up who they are.

Instructional Context

As I described in Findings Chapter #1, before and after participating in RASEL, students were asked to complete an identity map, which was based on an identity mapping activity provided by the Social Justice Standards (Learning for Justice, 2022). Across the RASEL lessons Liz modeled and encouraged students to identify attributes that contributed to the personal and social identities of characters in the text. For example, in Lesson 5 following the interactive read-aloud of *I Talk Like a River*, Liz facilitated a class discussion during which students shared attributes of Jordan's (the main character) personal and social identities based on ideas from a digital anchor chart (See Figure 27). Following this discussion, students were asked to complete an identity map for Jordan focused on aspects of his personal and social identities (See Figure 28).

Before the second round of RASEL implementation, Liz and I made the instructional decision to include "fill in the blank" boxes for the personal and social identity sections on the map to provide students with a specific number of traits to include. We originally made this decision because the concept of identity mapping was new to the students, so we wanted to scaffold the experience as much as possible. Liz also shared that her students tend to be more successful when they are given specific directions and/or the number of items they were required to complete. While this instructional decision supported students in how to complete this activity in terms of exploring both their personal and social identities, the closed-ended format unintentionally led to limiting students' ability to reflect upon and include multiple facets of their intersectional identities.

Teacher Insights

Aligned with this suggestion, Liz shared in her follow-up interview that her students showed perseverance when engaging with complex questions around identity yet alluded to room for improvement because the closed-ended responses unintentionally gave students the impression that there was a "right and wrong" way to complete the activity. When reflecting on her experiences, Liz shared that when we asked students "'what makes you, you?' we achieved the goal of having kids dive into who they are [identity], even though they were very uncomfortable with the question at first." Liz appreciated the consistency across RASEL of practicing identity mapping with characters from the text set to model how students can reflect upon their own identities. However, Liz noticed that this was "very challenging" for them because "they had never seen an identity map before" and even though they "eventually got there," students were more focused on "filling it out correctly" or "doing it right" rather than articulating multifaceted aspects of who they are.

Students Insights

In their post-interviews, none of the anchor students mentioned the identity map when they asked to share their favorite parts of RASEL and six out eight anchor students alluded to the close-ended nature of the identity map feeling confusing or lacking purpose. When asked about the identity map, Tara shared that "in the beginning it was kind of a struggle" and "I got confused." Sophia also shared that "it took [her] a second because [she] was just trying to think of stuff" and Edward mentioned how he "didn't really think [about his responses]," he just "picked words" and thought "that's good enough." Similarly, Taylor was more focused on "where to put what [words]" rather than reflecting on her identities. These student insights

indicate that they were more focused on how to complete the activity, rather than reflecting upon unique aspects of their personal and social identities.

In addition, Bruno pointed to the identity map during his post-interview when asked about parts of RASEL he did not like, and he shared that he preferred "the identity silhouette because it was more colorful and fun." Furthermore, Finn verbalized that he felt the identity map was a less accurate representation of his identity than the silhouette. To elaborate Finn shared that "there's a lot more to your identity than six different things, and with this [identity map] it was hard to represent your whole characteristics and identity." Finn went on to say that he preferred the identity silhouette to the identity mapping because it was more open-ended. Finn also provided the suggestion to use the identity silhouette as the pre- and post-activity, rather than the identity map, in future rounds of RASEL implementation because it was more creative, and provided a more accurate representation of students' self-awareness.

Researcher Insights

Overall, Liz's and the anchor students' responses support the view that the closed-ended identity mapping template inhibited the students' ability to meaningfully explore how all parts of their identities make up who they are. Based on my experiences observing the RASEL lessons, facilitating the pre- and post-activity, interviewing anchor students, I agree that asking students to engage in explorations around their complex identities requires more meaningful and open-ended ways for students to express their thinking. While the instructional decision to utilize the close-ended identity map was made in hopes of providing consistency and clarity, it unintentionally limited how students reflected and responded to the prompt "what makes you, you?" Based on these findings, I would encourage future rounds of RASEL implementation to utilize either the identity silhouette or a more open-ended version of the identity map for students

to practice exploring the identities of the characters in text, which can translate to their own self-awareness and identity work.

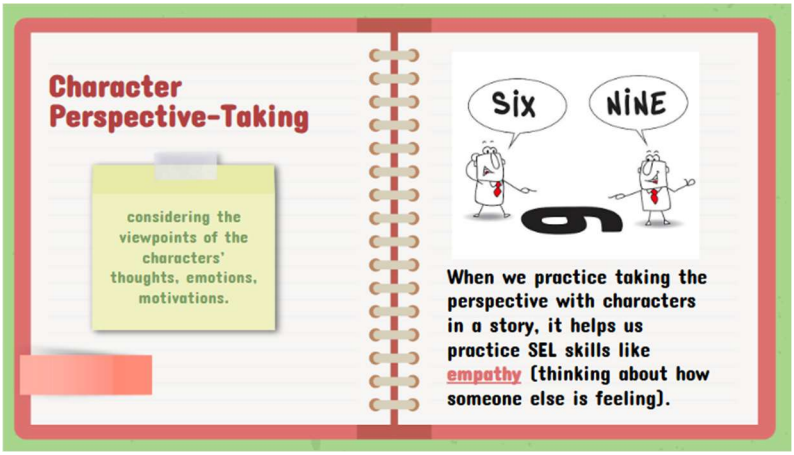
Suggestion #2: Include additional perspective-taking activities that go beyond connecting with the characters' emotions, focusing instead on fully exploring the characters' experiences and imagining what it might feel like to be in their shoes.

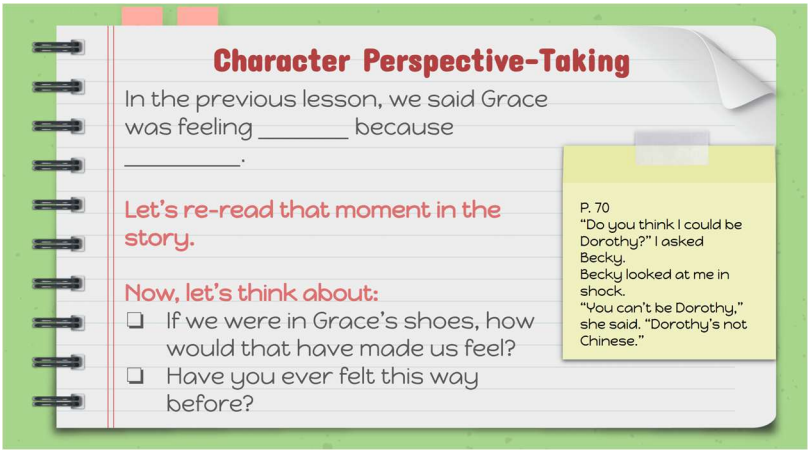
Instructional Context

In my unit design chapter, I detailed the perspective-taking practices that took place during the second lesson with each text. Character perspective-taking is the ability to consider the viewpoints of the characters' thoughts, emotions, motivations (Lysaker & Sedberry, 2015), which supports reading comprehension of narrative texts (McTigue et al., 2015) and is a key component of social awareness (Jagers et al., 2021). During the first round of RASEL implementation, we discovered that without prior knowledge or experiences with character perspective-taking, students required more explicit explaining, modeling, and guiding to engage with this practice. Based on the findings from the first round of RASEL implementation, we utilized the gradual release model across the text set to support students in this complex work. For example, when reading aloud *The Year of the Dog*, Liz introduced and explained the definition of character perspective-taking to students while also modeling how to engage in character perspective-taking with a specific moment from the read-aloud (See Figure 38).

Figure 38

RASEL Slides: Character Perspective-taking





In the lesson with *Flying High: The Story of Gymnastics Champion Simone Biles*, Liz referred to the description of character perspective-taking from the previous lesson, prompted students to engage in character perspective-taking with a partner, and provided support for individual students. Finally, with *I Talk Like a River* students responded in writing to the character perspective-taking prompt independently. While adapting the RASEL lessons to include more gradual release with this type of complex thinking was helpful, the character perspective-taking remained challenging for students. Ultimately, character perspective-taking was a valuable component of RASEL to help students consider the viewpoints of and make connections to the emotions of the characters prompted the powerful classroom discussions about injustices that occurred in the story. However, it was challenging to provide ample opportunities during the interactive read-alouds to extend student thinking towards more fully imagining what it would feel like to be in the character's shoes. This was due in part to the time constraints within teachers' interactive read-aloud blocks, which are typically around 20-25 minutes. Upon reflection, it may have felt challenging for Liz and her students to engage in character perspective-taking because I attempted to include too many TSEL components into the interactive read-aloud. During Liz's interactive read-aloud block (two sessions for each text), she was able to successfully build students' background knowledge about the characters before reading, enact interactive read-alouds with a focus on identifying emotion vocabulary and inferring emotions, and facilitate in-depth class discussions about identifying injustices, acknowledging harm, and determining themes from the texts after reading. While these TSEL connections are valuable and can simultaneously support students' social-emotional and literacy development, including all of them left less time to dedicate to the complex work of fully engaging in character perspective-taking practices.

Teacher Insights

Liz shared in her follow-up interview that while she valued using character perspective-taking to practice empathy and develop a deeper understanding of the characters in the text, she also recognized that developmentally these skills may take additional time and instruction. Liz reflected that during RASEL "the character perspective-taking felt hard" because the students needed more "experience with it to push it a step further" beyond just making a "connection to a time you were frustrated like Simone Biles when she missed the national team by one spot." Liz went on to say that she wanted to validate students' connections of "feeling frustrated while playing Fortnite," but she also wanted to help them understand that while this is a good connection, "it's not the same" as putting themselves in Simone's shoes and taking her perspective." Overall, Liz felt that during RASEL she was able to support students in "making connections by thinking about a time they may have felt frustrated," but more time was needed to fully engage in the practice of taking the perspective of the character.

Students Insights

In their post-interviews, none of the anchor students mentioned character perspective-taking when asked to share their favorite parts of RASEL, and three out of eight anchor students alluded to the character perspective-taking written reflections feeling challenging. For example, Taylor shared that "taking the perspective of the character felt kind of hard." In addition, Lindsey pointed to the character perspective-taking component during her post-interview when asked about parts of RASEL she didn't like, and she shared that she "didn't enjoy writing about [it]" independently and would have preferred to "talk about it or write about it in partners or groups." Sophia echoed Lindsey's response when she conveyed in her post-interview that during the character perspective-taking "it would have been nice to work in partners more" and "some kids

in my class don't like writing, so it would have been nice to have less of that." It is possible that these insights about character perspective-taking may have been influenced by students' negative opinions about writing tasks more broadly. However, Lindsey and Sophia's suggestions around including more partner work may also be stemming from the fact that they found character perspective-taking challenging because Liz and I did not provide ample time and scaffolded instruction to support students in developing and practicing this complex skill.

Researcher Insights

Overall, Liz's and the anchor students' responses support the suggestion to include additional character perspective-taking activities that go beyond connecting with the character's emotions, focusing instead on fully exploring the character's experiences and imagining what it might feel like to be in their shoes. Based on my experiences observing the RASEL lessons, facilitating the pre- and post-activity, and interviewing anchor students, I agree that asking students to fully engage in character perspective-taking requires more time and scaffolding, which may not be available in the context of an interactive read-aloud. This suggestion aligns with the findings around character perspective-taking from the first implementation of RASEL, which was that students required more explicit explaining, modeling, and guiding to engage with this work. While we included more scaffolding with gradual release across the text set during the second implementation, this still was not enough to adequately support students to engage with this practice. It was reasonable to include character perspective-taking practices because of its contribution to the reciprocal relationship between TSEL and literacy development. However, by focusing on too many instructional practices that overlap across TSEL and literacy during RASEL (building background knowledge, emotion vocabulary, inferring emotions, identifying injustices, and determining themes) left less time to dedicate to the complex work of fully

engaging in character perspective-taking practices. Going forward, I suggest encouraging students to make connections to characters emotions and begin initial explorations of the perspectives of the characters across RASEL, but for teachers to integrate character perspective-taking more fully using additional literacy practices across the school day such as writing or book clubs.

Summary of Findings – Research Question 2

In response to my second research question: What aspects of RASEL instruction enhance or inhibit the integration of students' social-emotional and literacy development, I found three aspects of RASEL (feel wheel, identity silhouettes, and the text set) that enhanced the integration of TSEL and literacy development and two aspects of RASEL (identity mapping and character perspective-taking) that inhibited the integrate of TSEL and literacy development.

Overall, these findings support pedagogical assertions and suggestions to guide future iterations and evaluations of the RASEL framework. Moreover, drawing upon components of retrospective analysis (Gravemeijer & Cobb, 2006) allowed me to situate my findings in the experiences of the teacher and anchor students, which aligned my goal of highlighting teacher's expertise and students' voices in my study. In this way, I valued student voices that are often not considered in research and drew upon the knowledge from the true experts in the field (teachers) when examining and transforming instructional practices in authentic settings.

In the final chapter, I discuss how findings from both research questions confirm, extend, and operationalize the theoretical and empirical literature on this topic, describe the implications, limitations, suggestions for future research, and conclude with the study's significance to the field of education.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION

"Every child deserves a champion: an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists they can become the best they can possibly be."

-Rita Pierson

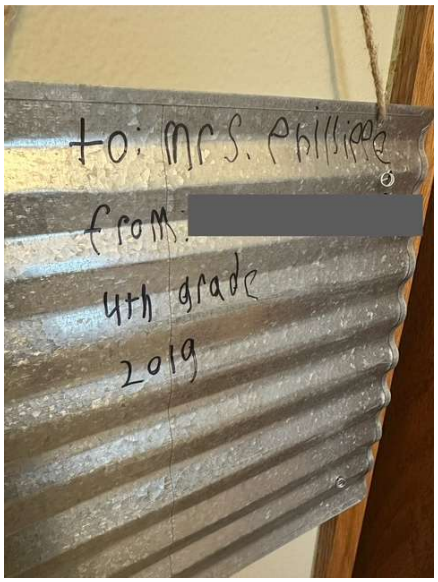
When I reflect on my nine years as an elementary teacher, what comes to mind are not the lessons I planned, the content I taught, or the Pinterest-worthy classroom decor. My proudest memories are the inclusive classroom communities and positive relationships I worked to build over the years. While I strived to support my students' academic growth, I was most passionate about underscoring the social and emotional dimensions of learning in my classroom with the goal of helping students become "good people," not just "good students."

In 2019, I had a fourth grader in my class named Dylan (pseudonym). Dylan's previous teachers would say things like "just wait until you have Dylan" or "when Dylan gets to fourth grade . . . good luck." He was smart and determined but was behind academically and was navigating the trauma of losing his dad to suicide. Dylan would often get frustrated in class and shut down or become angry. When he walked into school on the first day of fourth grade, he assumed I had already given up on him. Dylan was undoubtedly challenging to teach, but that only reinforced how much he needed a caring educator who was committed to his social-emotional development and overall well-being. By working day after day to build a positive relationship and attend to his social and emotional needs in the classroom, I began to see growth in his motivation and willingness to participate in class. Most importantly he began to allow himself to trust that as his teacher I was not going to give up on him. See Figure 39 for a photo of

a gift I received from Dylan and his mom at the end of the 2019 school year that is still hanging in my office today.

Figure 39

It Takes a Big Heart to Shape Little Minds



Overall, the impactful experiences throughout my teaching career with students like Dylan motivated me to pursue this line of research and collaborate with teachers to investigate ways in which they can support their students' social-emotional development and literacy development in more humanizing and culturally responsive ways. In this discussion chapter, I (1) explain how this study confirms, extends, and operationalizes the theoretical and empirical scholarship on this topic, (2) explore the implications of this study for teaching, teacher education, curriculum design, and educational policy, (3) describe the limitations of this study, (4) offer suggestions for future research, and (5) conclude with the study's significance to the field of education.

Situating the Findings in Scholarship

The purpose of my design-based study was to investigate a culturally responsive, humanizing, and authentic approach to integrate TSEL with interactive read-alouds to simultaneously support students' social-emotional and literacy development. More specifically, I collaborated with Liz Klien (a fifth-grade teacher) during the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years to iteratively design, enact, and revise the Read Alouds for Social Emotional Learning (RASEL) approach. In this study, I investigated (1) ways fifth-grade students demonstrated changes in components of transformative SEL (TSEL) and narrative reading comprehension after participation in RASEL and (2) aspects of RASEL instruction enhanced or inhibited the integration of students' social-emotional and literacy development. To answer these research questions, I utilized Design-based Research (Bradley & Reinking, 2011) and qualitative analysis (Miles et al., 2020). My dissertation advances the field's understanding of the reciprocal relationship between social-emotional and literacy development, builds upon the growing body of TSEL research, and provides actionable steps towards more authentic, humanizing, and culturally responsive TSEL integration. This study highlights the teacher's expertise and student voices that contributed to the RASEL design, which shows promise as a framework for fostering social-emotional growth in ways that embrace culture, complexity, and justice.

In response to my first research question, the patterns that resulted from my analysis support simultaneous shifts in components of students' TSEL and narrative reading comprehension after participating in RASEL, which I grouped into three categories: emotion, identity, and social justice. In terms of emotion shifts, students explored more complex emotion vocabulary and inferred emotions with evidence that highlights characters' cultural experiences. Regarding identity, students shifted towards embracing the interrelated nature of their personal

and social identities after RASEL. Finally, in terms of social justice, students shifted in their ability to recognize injustices, acknowledge harm, and identify themes from the text that advocate social justice. Overall, these shifts in students' understanding of emotion, identity, and social justice support RASEL as a promising justice-oriented approach to simultaneously support components of TSEL (self-awareness and social awareness) and narrative reading comprehension (vocabulary development, motivation and engagement with the text).

In response to my second research question, my analysis highlighted three aspects of RASEL (feel wheel, identity silhouettes, and the text set) that enhanced the integration of SEL and literacy development and two aspects of RASEL (identity mapping and character perspective-taking) that inhibited the integration of SEL and literacy development. The experiences of the teacher, anchor students, and me as the researcher, support pedagogical assertions and suggestions to guide future iterations and evaluations of the RASEL framework. Moreover, situating my findings in the experiences of the teacher and anchor students aligned my goal of highlighting teacher's expertise and students' voices when examining and transforming instructional practices in authentic settings.

Reciprocal Relationship between Social-emotional and Literacy Development

This study was driven by theoretical perspectives (Johnson, 2019; Rosenblatt, 1983), models of the reading process (Kim, 2020; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002) and social-emotional frameworks (CASEL, n.d.) that support the existing connections between students' social-emotional and literacy development. Previous empirical research supports these connections and encourages the integration of TSEL with current instructional practices across the school day (Durlak et al. 2011), such as interactive read-alouds. Furthermore, the previous literature outlines specific advantages for interactive read-alouds as a vehicle for integrating

TSEL such as simultaneously supporting students' literacy and social-emotional development (Britt et al., 2016; Doyle & Bramwell, 2006; Dresser, 2013; Fettig et al., 2018; McTigue et al., 2015; Petrich, 2015; Venegas, 2019).

Broadly, my findings align with theoretical and empirical perspectives that advocate for the integration of TSEL and literacy practices (Boyles, 2018; Britt et al., 2016; McTigue et al., 2015). This study contributes to this evidence base and support RASEL as an approach that provides opportunities to simultaneously support components of students' TSEL (self-awareness and social awareness) and narrative reading comprehension (vocabulary development, motivation and engagement with the text, and authentic purposes for reading) during interactive read-alouds. In this study, students were highly engaged during the interactive read-alouds that integrated TSEL, which is not always the case with pre-packages and didactic materials that support TSEL in isolation (Clark et al., 2021; Pysarenko, 2020). In her post-interview, Liz described RASEL as an engaging way for students to "use the characters' experiences to have authentic conversations around SEL, which felt more genuine than the [SEL] curriculum which sometimes feels like [the conversations] are forced." Similarly, Liz shared that "anytime we make connections across the content areas [TSEL and literacy], students are so much more engaged and willing to contribute in meaningful ways."

Additionally, students in this study demonstrated shifts in emotion, identity, and social justice after participating in RASEL, extending and operationalizing the evidence base that supports the reciprocal relationship between social-emotional and literacy development, which I discuss in the following subsections.

Emotion

Students improved their understanding of emotion vocabulary after participation in RASEL. Likely, emotion vocabulary is a key component in the reciprocal role between student's social-emotional (self-awareness) and literacy development (vocabulary) because readers can infer the emotions of the characters in the text while exploring their own emotional experiences (Doyle & Bramwell, 2006). More specifically, 9 out of 17 fifth graders in Liz's class showed shifts towards exploring more complex emotion vocabulary and 10 out of 17 students shifted towards inferring emotions with evidence from the text that highlights the character's cultural experiences. Moving beyond broad emotion vocabulary (e.g., happy, sad) and towards more complex emotion vocabulary (e.g., grateful, lonely) indicates a more nuanced understanding of students' emotions (Neff, 2022).

Culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP) played a large role in the design of RASEL (Ladson Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014). For example, RASEL provided opportunities for students to explore the complexities of emotions and think deeply about the emotion vocabulary they were using to describe the emotions of the characters, rather than identifying emotions for the sole purpose of managing or controlling them in classrooms (Clark et al., 2021). By asking students to infer emotions of characters with evidence from the text, they were able to explore how emotions and actions are interconnected as well as understand how people may react to situations based on their cultural backgrounds and perspectives. RASEL is one way teachers can use emotions to simultaneously support students' TSEL and reading comprehension aligned with previous research, yet extend the possibilities for utilizing the connections between self-awareness and vocabulary development when exploring students' own emotions and the emotions of the characters.

Identity

All eight anchor students demonstrated a shift towards embracing the interrelated nature of their identities after participating in RASEL. When students engage in character perspective-taking practices to consider the viewpoints and identities of characters (Lysaker & Sedberry, 2015; McTigue et al., 2015), they can practice valuing how all parts of their identities make up who they are (Jagers et al., 2021). In this way, teachers are simultaneously supporting components of their students' TSEL (self-awareness) and narrative reading comprehension (motivation and engagement with the text).

Enhancing TSEL and literacy integration with CSP (Ladson Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014) is likely to make instruction in these areas more effective. For example, completing an identity map (Learning for Justice, 2022) for each main character across the RASEL text set provided initial opportunities for students to explore the multifaceted identities of the characters in the text and to imagine what it feels like to be in another person's shoes (New York State Education Department, 2018). In this way, students practiced valuing all parts of their own identities (Jagers et al., 2021) and recognizing that multiple identities interact to make them unique and complex individuals (Learning for Justice, 2022). Additionally, teachers can simultaneously support their students' TSEL and narrative reading comprehension by providing opportunities to recognize the interrelated nature of their identities and space for students to value the complexity of their own identities and those of their classmates that make up their classroom community.

Social Justice

In this study, students' skills recognizing examples of injustices and the harm they cause in texts and identifying themes from the text aligned with social justice improved following the

implementation of RASEL. After participating in RASEL 12 out of 17 students provided examples from the text that suggested a shift in their understanding of injustices and the harm that occurs as a result. While students in Liz's class had prior knowledge of determining themes from a text, after participating in RASEL 10 out of 17 students also shifted towards identifying themes that were more connected to social justice (e.g., show kindness to all people and all cultures). These findings align with previous research that supports interactive read-alouds of children's literature as an authentic context teaching against traditional notions of SEL that have the potential to reinforce norms of whiteness (Clark et al., 2021).

Integrating TSEL with interactive read-alouds in ways that center culture, complexity, and justice (Camangian & Cariaga, 2021; Clark et al., 2021, 2022; Simmons, 2019, 2021) shows promise. Teachers can simultaneously support students' TSEL and narrative reading comprehension by asking questions that promote conversations that challenge power and privilege during interactive read-alouds. However, it is important to note that while RASEL supported an initial understand of the harm caused by injustice, providing more time for self-reflection on students' own contributions towards acts of racism would be necessary for students to begin the ongoing work of examining their own privilege and biases, which are crucial components of TSEL (Jagers et al., 2021; Soutter et al., 2025).

Across my analysis students tended to use broad descriptions that focused on how the character was being "made fun of," or "laughed at" before RASEL, whereas after RASEL they tended to use more nuanced language focused on how the character was "mistreated" or "denied because of their race, culture, or gender." While this change is substantial, five out of 17 students' thinking did not shift. In these cases, students provided examples from the text that alluded to or indicated harm *without* making direct connections to injustice before and after

participating in RASEL. While RASEL worked to support some students in shifting to a more nuanced understanding of social justice, it did not work for all students. This interpretation is valuable because while RASEL can act as a springboard for ongoing discussions that challenge power, privilege, and our own biases, integrating TSEL with interactive read-alouds alone cannot resolve inequitable classroom environments that are neglectful of students' social, emotional and cultural needs.

Extending the Growing Body of Transformative Social-emotional Learning Research

My study responds to Simmons' (2021) caution of SEL "facing the risk of becoming White supremacy with a hug." Even the well-intentional goals of a more transformative approach to SEL (Jagers et al., 2019) fall short of culturally responsive, humanizing, and authentic ways to bring SEL into classroom instruction (Camangian & Cariaga, 2021; Clark et al., 2021, 2022; Simmons, 2019, 2021). My design and analysis of RASEL responds to this call by investigating a justice-oriented approach to teach against traditional SEL practices that have potential to reinforce norms of whiteness (Clark et al., 2021).

Throughout this study, Liz and I had shared goals of enhancing her traditional SEL instruction with a more transformative approach focused culturally sustaining pedagogies. After participating in the study, Liz viewed RASEL as an "engaging", "meaningful", "authentic" way to integrate TSEL with interactive read-louds. Our experiences across the DBR process to design, implement, and iteratively revise the RASEL framework have important contributions to the growing field of TSEL research, specifically existing TSEL frameworks such as Jagers et al.'s (2021) equity elaborations of the traditional SEL competency areas (CASEL, n.d.).

Jagers et al.'s (2019) equity elaborations to CASEL (n.d.) competency areas were a valuable, but initial step, to shift the focus from traditional to TSEL. By drawing upon

frameworks in the development and analysis of RASEL that center CSP (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014) and aim to support more equitable school environments such as the Social Justice Standards (Learning for Justice, 2022) and the Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework (CR-S) (New York State Education Department, 2018), I worked to build upon and extend Jagers et al.'s (2021) equity elaborations. In the subsections that follow I describe how language from these CSP frameworks and examples from RASEL support my conceptualization of self-awareness and social awareness that build upon Jagers et al.'s (2021) equity elaborations with the understanding that this work is ongoing in the hopes of continuing to push the growing field of TSEL towards more culturally responsive, humanizing, and authentic approaches (See Table 16).

Table 16

Extending Transformative SEL

SEL Competency Area	CASEL (n.d.)	Jagers et al., (2019) Equity Elaborations	RASEL Conceptualization of TSEL based on CSP Frameworks
Self-awareness	Identifying one's emotions	Recognizing how thoughts, feelings, and actions are interconnected in and across diverse contexts	Using a range of complex words to describe emotions Recognizing how emotions and actions are interconnected and how everyone reacts to situations differently based on their own experiences, cultural backgrounds, and perspectives
	Integrating personal and social identities	Understanding the link between one's personal and collective history and identities	Understanding that all parts of our identities interact to make us the unique and complex individuals that they are
Social Awareness	Demonstrating empathy and compassion	Appropriately empathizing and feeling compassion	Recognizing and responding with empathy and compassion to how people are treated Reflecting on the harmful impacts of injustice and examining our own contributions towards how people are treated
	Taking others' perspectives	Taking the perspective of those with the same and different backgrounds and cultures	Taking the perspective of those with the same and different backgrounds and cultures by considering their experiences, and imagining what it feels like to be in another person's shoes

Self-awareness

CASEL (n.d.) defines self-awareness as "the ability to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts." In 2019, Jagers and colleagues worked to shift the focus from traditional practices within self-awareness of "identifying one's emotions" to a more transformative approach of "recognizing how thoughts, feelings, and actions are interconnected in and across diverse contexts." By highlighting the connections between emotions and actions alters the focus beyond naming emotions for the purpose of managing or controlling them. Similarly, Clark et al., (2022) emphasized that we need to make space for emotions to allow students to feel seen, express how they feel, and create opportunities for promoting justice. Across RASEL when promoting students to use a range of specific emotions to describe characters, Liz was making space for conversations about the complexity of emotions and broadening students' emotion vocabulary (Soutter et al., 2025). For example, when students shared broad emotion vocabulary (e.g., happy), Liz promoted "what other [more complex] words from our feel wheels could we use?" to which students responded "hopeful" and "excited." Liz also asked students to infer emotions and students supported their inferences with evidence that highlighted the characters' cultural experiences (e.g., the character was feeling rejected and upset because in the story her culture was being disrespected). In this way, while students were "recognizing how thoughts, feelings, and actions are interconnected in and across diverse contexts" (Jagers et al., 2019), they also used a range of complex words to respectfully describe emotions (Learning for Justice, 2022) while maintaining awareness that everyone reacts to situations differently based on their own experiences, cultural backgrounds, and perspectives (New York State Education Department, 2018).

Jagers et al.'s (2019) equity elaborations also enhanced the "integration of personal and social identities" towards "understanding the link between one's personal and collective history and identities." In this way, TSEL acknowledges how one's personal identity continues to be influenced by systemic structures and cultural narratives (Jagers, et al., 2019). During RASEL, when Liz prompted students to engage in perspective-taking to consider the identities of the characters, she facilitated opportunities for students to practice reflecting on how parts of their cultural identities (e.g., race, socioeconomic status, gender, language, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, and ability) work together to make them who they are. In her follow-up interview, Liz reflected how initially when students were asked to share "what makes you, you" they seemed "uncomfortable" and resorted to sharing about their interests or hobbies (e.g., soccer player, gymnast, artist). Whereas after participating in RASEL, students were able to say, "I'm more than just a soccer player" and "dive into what really makes them who they are." In this way, RASEL provided opportunities for students to develop initial understandings that all parts of their cultural identities interact to make them unique and complex individuals (Learning for Justice, 2022; New York State Education Department, 2018).

Social Awareness

CASEL (n.d.) defines social awareness as "the ability to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts." In their equity elaborations Jagers et al., (2019) shifted the focus from "demonstrating empathy and compassion" to "appropriately empathizing and feeling compassion" with the goal of supporting more historically informed understandings how different social and cultural experiences shape peoples lives. In this way, TSEL seeks to challenge "entrenched norms grounded in whiteness" and "center equity and justice." (Soutter et al., 2025, p. 20). Across RASEL, Liz provided

opportunities for students during text-based discussions to recognize acts of injustice and acknowledge the harm that was caused. Liz shared in her follow-up interview that she appreciated how RASEL, unlike her SEL curriculum, provided opportunities for her to facilitate discussions with her students that did not "downplay" the importance of conversations that challenge power and privilege. Liz felt that her students engaged in these conversations "with curiosity as opposed to judgement" and were "mindful and accepting of cultures and beliefs different from their own." In this way, RASEL provided opportunities for students to "appropriately empathize and feel compassion" (Jagers et al., 2019) but doing so with respect and care during text-based discussions that challenge power and privilege in our society (New York State Education Department, 2018) and acknowledge that when people are treated unfairly based on their identities, this causes real harm (Learning for Justice, 2022). While RASEL supported students' initial understanding of the harm caused by injustice, more time for self-reflection on their own contributions towards acts of racism would be necessary for students to begin the ongoing work of examining their own privilege and biases, which are also crucial components of TSEL (Jagers et al., 2021; Soutter et al., 2025).

An additional component of social awareness drawn upon in this study is "taking others' perspectives" (CASEL, n.d.), which Jagers et al., (2019) enhanced to include "taking the perspectives of those with the same and different backgrounds and cultures." When students practice analyzing narratives from multiple perspectives, they are gaining self-awareness and developing capacity for empathy (Souter et al., 2025). Character perspective-taking was included as a part of RASEL because it supports reading comprehension of narrative texts (McTigue at al., 2015) and is a key component of social awareness (Jagers et al., 2019). During RASEL students were able to broadly connect to the character's emotions, but future implementations of

RASEL should include more in-depth explorations of the character's experiences and imagining what it might feel like to be in their shoes. As mentioned in the Findings Chapter, character perspective-taking turned out to be an aspect of RASEL instruction that inhibited TSEL and literacy development because of it required more time, explicit instruction, and modeling for students to engage in this complex work. Although unexpected, these findings support the inclusion of "considering someone's experiences" and "imagining what it feels like to be in another person's shoes" (Learning for Justice, 2022) when extending the TSEL equity elaborations of "taking the perspectives of those with the same and different backgrounds and cultures" (Jagers et al., 2019).

Overall, integrating TSEL with interactive read-alouds with an emphasis on CSP informed a loving critique of Dr. Robert Jager's well-intentioned equity elaborations with the hope of continuing to push the growing field of TSEL towards more humanizing (Camangian and Cariaga, 2022) and justice-oriented approaches that view TSEL and social justice as inextricably linked (Souter et al., 2025). While the design of more justice-oriented approaches to integrate TSEL with interactive read-alouds is valuable, ongoing work is required of educators and scholars to critically examine traditional SEL practices that have the potential to reinforce norms of whiteness (Clark et al., 2022).

Implications

The RASEL framework (See Figure 23) provides pre-service and in-service teachers with an alternative to traditional SEL practices with a justice-oriented approach to simultaneously support their students' SEL and narrative reading comprehension. RASEL demonstrates that TSEL may be effectively integrated across the school day and may influence curriculum design across subject areas. In addition, the findings are timely due to the current political climate and

have implications for policy makers in states aiming to censor instructional practices focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion in classrooms. Overall, my study offers directions to reshape teaching and teacher education, curriculum design, and educational policy that I discuss in the following subsections.

Teaching and Teacher Education

Since the onset of the pandemic, educators have indicated gaps in students' social-emotional development, an increase in emotional distress among their students, and a need for increased SEL in a post pandemic world (McGraw Hill, 2021; Skoog-Hoffman et al., 2024). Interactive read-alouds are one way to integrate TSEL and literacy to simultaneously support children's academic and social-emotional education goals (Britt et al., 2016; Doyle & Bramwell, 2006; Dresser, 2013; Fettig et al., 2018; McTigue et al., 2015; Petrich, 2015; Venegas, 2019). The findings from my study respond to the need for increased SEL in classrooms while also extending the evidence base that advocates for integrating TSEL with literacy and providing practical suggestions for teachers to simultaneously support their students' social-emotional and literacy development with a justice-oriented lens.

Teaching

As discussed previously in this chapter, theoretical and empirical perspectives highlight the importance of social-emotional experiences and cultures within the reading process, but ways to integrate social-emotional learning into reading instruction are not specified. RASEL is one approach for teachers to capitalize on the reciprocity between social-emotional and literacy development. The RASEL framework provides a guide for elementary teachers to support components of their students' TSEL and narrative reading comprehension with interactive read-alouds in their own classrooms. While the RASEL lesson plans (see Appendix E) outline the

specific instruction Liz implemented in her fifth-grade classroom, the RASEL framework offers a broader guide for elementary teachers across grade levels. It provides guiding questions teachers can use to bring RASEL into their own classrooms with unique text sets of children's literature tailored to their students.

First, during interactive read-alouds teachers can ask questions about emotions such as: What emotions do you think the character is feeling? What can you infer about how the character is feeling based on their cultural experiences? Teachers can further support students by utilizing tools such as the feel wheel, which students described as giving them "access to all these new words" and moving them towards "more descriptive words" that were more "specific about how [the character] felt." Discussions that stem from the feel wheel can provide authentic opportunities to support students' self-awareness and vocabulary development when identifying and thinking deeply about students' own emotions and the emotions of the characters.

Next, in terms of identity, teachers can simultaneously support their students' TSEL and narrative reading comprehension by asking questions during interactive read-alouds such as: Imagine you are the character in the story, what makes you, you? Teachers can also support students in creating identity silhouettes to connect and extend their learning about the characters' identities to their own self-awareness. After participating in RASEL, students expressed that creating their identity silhouettes helped them think more deeply about "everything that makes up my identity" and "what really makes me, me." Utilizing the RASEL framework as a guide, teachers can incorporate the identity silhouette to provide opportunities for their students to value the interrelated and complex nature of their identities and the identities of their classmates that make up their classroom community.

Finally, teachers can facilitate conversations that challenge power and privilege during interactive read-alouds by asking questions such as: What examples of injustice occur in the text(s)? Why do you think that happened, how did the character respond? What is a possible theme from the text(s)? Students' insights about RASEL further support this suggestion because students shared that they "learned a lot about injustices" and got to "see another culture's point of view, which was really cool." However, it is important to note that while RASEL supported an initial understand of the harm caused by injustice, it would be necessary for teachers to provide time for students to reflect upon their own contributions towards acts of racism to begin the ongoing work of examining their own privilege and biases, which are crucial components of TSEL (Jagers et al., 2021; Soutter et al., 2025).

Overall, this study has implications for supporting teachers to simultaneously support their own students' social-emotional and literacy development with an integrated and justice-oriented approach. Due to the collaborative nature of DBR, which allowed me to highlight Liz's voice and her active role in designing RASEL, publishing my findings in practitioner journals and sharing my RASEL framework at teaching conferences and professional developments can empower teachers to enhance their own TSEL and literacy practices.

Teacher Education

In teacher preparation programs, it can be uncommon to find coursework that is devoted explicitly to SEL, and even more uncommon to look at transformative approaches to SEL (Soutter et al., 2025). According to Soutter et al. (2025), there are a variety of ways TSEL can be incorporated into teacher preparation programs including stand-alone courses, workshops, or adding a TSEL unit to existing courses or field placements. Due to this study's focus on integrating TSEL with interactive read-alouds, the findings have the strongest implications for

incorporating components of TSEL across existing courses in teacher preparation programs, but particularly those that emphasize literacy practices and children's literature. Preparing future teachers with the tools and knowledge to integrate TSEL in the context of interactive read-alouds could take place as part of their literacy instruction or additional content areas such as science or social studies. For example, in an existing literacy course with an emphasis on enacting interactive read-alouds, could highlight components of the RASEL framework to encourage pre-service teachers to plan, enact, and reflect upon their instruction that simultaneously supports their students' vocabulary development and self-awareness (e.g., asking students to identity emotion vocabulary using the feel wheel). Using components of the RASEL framework within an existing literacy course could also work to enhance pre-service teachers' knowledge of research-based literacy practices as indicated by the *Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy* (2016) such as: incorporating text set of children's literature connected to children's interests and cultures, conducting interactive read-alouds to model comprehension strategies, and helping establish purposes for children to read beyond being assigned to do so (MAISA General Education Leadership Network Early Literacy Task Force, 2016).

Curriculum Design

With regards to curriculum design, this study demonstrates that TSEL can be effectively integrated within interactive read-alouds and encourages curriculum designers to consider using the RASEL framework to integrate TSEL and literacy across the school day. Curricula for SEL and curricula for literacy already exist, and the intent of this study is not for RASEL to replace these curricula. Instead, the observed aspects of RASEL instruction suggest opportunities for teachers to further enhance TSEL and literacy development in the context of their own classrooms. When asked to describe why TSEL was important to her, Liz shared that "SEL is not

just something I teach, it is a part of every interaction and every moment with my students." I encourage designers to integrate TSEL across the day, specifically with literacy, due to the overlapping skills that support both domains (e.g., emotion vocabulary, character perspective-taking).

An example of a recently developed curriculum that is already working to integrate TSEL instruction with CSP across the school day is Great First Eight (GF8), which is an open educational resource curriculum for children from historically underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds birth through age eight (Great First Eight, n.d.). Soutter et al., (2025) describes GF8 as a project-based and comprehensive curriculum that centers content areas (e.g., science, social studies, literacy, math) while also addressing TSEL and social justice. My findings align with the goals of GF8 in that TSEL should be integrated across the school day, rather than being taught in isolation. Moreover, Liz described that RASEL "felt more genuine than the [stand-alone SEL] curriculum which sometimes feels like [the conversations] are forced" and "anytime we make connections across the content areas students are so much more engaged and willing to contribute in meaningful ways." Literacy practices, such interactive read-alouds, are a valuable option for TSEL integration, but they aren't the only option for integrating TSEL across the school day. Future curriculum design should work to incorporate justice-oriented approaches to TSEL across the school day, such as with GF8.

Educational Policy

This study is timely due to the current political climate in which many states are aiming to censor instructional practices and curricular materials focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion in classrooms. Current misconceptions around TSEL exist, and a controversial issue has been: should TSEL be taught in schools? Opposition to TSEL in schools may be coming

from a small subset of White parents and community members who have yet to grapple with the ongoing issues of racism in the U.S. From these extreme perspectives, TSEL has been conflated TSEL with critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) or viewed as a way to control the social-emotional health of students (Arundel, 2022). Despite these misconceptions, advocacy for TSEL has grown, and teachers, parents, and administrators see a need for increased TSEL in a post pandemic world (McGraw Hill, 2021) and most states currently have policies in place that support SEL in schools (Skoog-Hoffman et al., 2024).

However, because of TSEL's commitment to center equity, justice, and more inclusive classroom spaces, its future as a crucial component of classroom instruction remains unknown. Given these political obstacles, the findings from this study highlight the need for educational policymakers to advocate for TSEL instruction that promotes "collaboration and care both in and out of the classroom" (Soutter et al., 2025, p. 12) with the commitment to integrating TSEL with culturally sustaining practices.

Limitations

The findings from this study must be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, in this DBR study, I collaborated with one teacher and collected student data from one classroom. While this small sample size was a purposeful decision based on the methodologies described in this manuscript, it still limits teacher application of RASEL across contexts. To enhance the accessibility of RASEL, I documented detailed implementation processes, instructional moves, and student responses, providing a foundation for future research with broader participant groups. It is also important to consider that without a control group and randomized assignment, I cannot make causal claims about the effectiveness of RASEL. Although the results of this study are promising and support future implementations of RASEL, research with a larger number of

classrooms and participants will be needed to improve generalizability and to conclude that RASEL is more effective than other approaches to TSEL instruction.

Second, the students in this study are predominantly White (64%), a demographic that is not reflective of most elementary schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024). This study offered opportunities to provide White students the multicultural perspectives needed to develop the skills, knowledge, and mindset to examine biases and evaluate social norms. However, when conducting future research on this topic it will be necessary to compare implementation of RASEL across a variety of classroom settings and populations. In this study, I intentionally selected children's literature that foregrounded a variety of cultural perspectives, ensuring that students engaged with narratives beyond their own lived experiences. Furthermore, while Liz and I had shared goals of critically examining traditional SEL practices and designing a promising approach to integrate TSEL, we only skimmed the surface of possibilities for working to integrate more equitable TSEL across the school day. Ongoing research is needed to support teachers in modifying and expanding on this approach with a variety of text sets and more diverse student populations.

Finally, there is a delicate balance between using children's literature as a vehicle to spark discussions around a particular topic, such as TSEL, and presenting children's literature as a solution to a problem that can be fixed (Heath et al., 2017). Children's literature can be a powerful way for elementary teachers to support necessary, yet sometimes sensitive, conversations. Reading a children's book about empathy should be viewed as a way to launch asset-based conversations about showing compassion to others, rather than being viewed as a solution for "fixing broken kids." Across this study, rather than positioning children's literature as a prescriptive solution, I framed it as a vehicle for inquiry, dialogue, and critical reflection. I

collaborated with Liz to ensure that the text-based discussions across RASEL encouraged students to engage deeply with the texts, their emotions, and the broader social contexts in which they live and learn. Framing children's literature in this way provided a more nuanced approach to TSEL integration, and it is important to be cognizant of this framing when sharing the implications with practitioners.

Future Research

My research builds upon the evidence base the supports the reciprocal relationship between social-emotional and literacy development and extends existing TSEL scholarship to center culture complexity, and justice. My DBR highlights a teacher's expertise and student voices and offers exciting directions for future research around the integration of TSEL with interactive read-alouds. I suggest three main areas for future research based on my findings and experiences conducting this study: (1) examining shifts in components of students' TSEL and narrative reading comprehension after participating in RASEL with diverse demographics, (2) collaborating with a larger subset of teachers across grade levels to further develop the RASEL framework, and (3) continued investigations of TSEL frameworks and their alignment with CSP.

The fifth-grade classroom at Billings Elementary (pseudonym) did not feature a diverse student population in terms of socioeconomic status or race/ethnicity. More research is needed to examine how students in a more diverse classroom setting would respond to the current RASEL framework. Students in other schools could have varying social and emotional experiences, which could lead to different text sets, TSEL themes of focus, or student responses to the interactive read-alouds and text-based discussions across RASEL. Future research could inform additional RASEL revisions to be more inclusive to diverse classrooms. RASEL was designed with a group of students in mind that had limited experience engaging in text-based discussions

that challenge power and privilege. Therefore, Liz and I designed an additional lesson to provide opportunities for students to build vocabulary and background knowledge to support their navigation of justice-oriented conversations across RASEL. Consequently, more research is needed across classroom settings to better understand which scaffolds and differentiations would or would not be useful for students with varying needs.

Future studies featuring DBR could further develop the current RASEL framework in collaboration with a larger subset of teachers across grade levels. In the current study, I purposefully selected interactive read-alouds as the vehicle for TSEL integration because read-alouds have been suggested as an important and joyful daily practice that can be implemented across grade levels (Wright, 2019). While the design of the current RASEL framework was based on a fifth-grade classroom, it was developed with the intent of informing future implementations and ongoing adaptations to RASEL across grade levels. For example, further studies utilizing the current RASEL framework as a guide could be implemented in first, second, and third grade classrooms in collaboration with lower elementary teachers to continue to modify and enhance the overlapping components of TSEL and literacy (e.g., emotion vocabulary, character perspective-taking, justice-oriented themes) based on the expertise and experiences of teachers across grade levels. Notably, results from this study underscore the importance of valuing teacher expertise in research. Without Liz's collaboration and suggestions across this two-year study, I would not have included instructional components (e.g., the feel wheel) that ended up being crucial elements that led to shifts in students' TSEL and narrative reading comprehension. Therefore, future research on this topic or other topics aiming to make meaningful adaptations to instruction should position teachers as experts and value their collaboration.

Finally, RASEL showed promise as a justice-oriented approach that promotes the integration of TSEL with interactive read-alouds aligned with CSP. My findings contribute to and work to extend the current TSEL frameworks, yet research is needed to continue to examine the alignment between TSEL and CSP. While scholars argue that TSEL is an asset-based, culturally responsive way of teaching that views SEL and social justice as linked (Soutter et al., 2025), future research should continue to examine how the language within TSEL frameworks does or does not align with a more culturally sustaining lens. In addition, future research should investigate how teachers are implementing SEL instruction in alignment with TSEL frameworks and work towards providing teachers with actionable steps to teach against traditional notions of SEL that reinforce norms of whiteness (Clark et al., 2021) with meaningful and authentic practices across the school day.

Conclusion

As highlighted across this DBR study, integrating TSEL and interactive read-alouds provides an authentic context for simultaneously supporting students' social-emotional and literacy development. RASEL provided students with opportunities to examine connections between the characters in the text, their own social and emotional experiences, and issues of justice in the world around them. Additionally, this study extends existing scholarship in new directions by offering actionable steps for teachers to reject traditional notions of SEL and center CSP when integrating TSEL with literacy practices in elementary classrooms. Valuing teacher expertise, amplifying student voices, and conducting research in an authentic classroom setting was crucial to the iterative design of RASEL, which shows promise as a framework for fostering social-emotional growth in ways that embrace culture, complexity, and justice.

Across my elementary teaching career, I was passionate about underscoring the social and emotional dimensions of learning, building positive relationships with students, and striving to create inclusive classroom communities. My former teaching experiences continue to contribute to my motivation for conducting research in collaboration with teachers to investigate ways in which teachers can support their student's social-emotional development as well as their literacy development in ways that are humanizing, authentic, and culturally responsive. Supporting students socially and emotionally is especially important in classrooms today as teachers navigate the repercussions of a global pandemic, the alarming rate of school shootings, ongoing racial injustices, and increasing concerns about children's mental health and well-being.

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APPENDIX A

NARRATIVE READING COMPREHENSION PASSAGES

Reading Passage 1: Something Different

By: Juliette Loove

1 Mali's alarm clock sounded. It was Monday morning. Mali went into the kitchen. Her mother was putting breakfast on the table. "Good morning, sleepyhead," smiled Mrs. Boonmee. "Sit and eat your breakfast. Then you can get dressed, and I'll pack you a lunch. I don't want you to be hungry at school." Mali sat and watched her mother for a while. She was thinking of what to say. Then, finally she began. "Mom," she said slowly. "Can I please have different food for lunch today?" "Different food?" asked Mrs. Boonmee. She thought for a while. Then she said, "OK!" "Oh, thank you!" said Mali. She threw her arms around her mother. She squeezed so hard that Mrs. Boonmee couldn't speak. "I knew you would understand!" Mali added. And then she got ready for school.

2 The morning was passing slowly at school, and Mali was very hungry. She could not wait for the bell to ring. She wanted to see what her lunch would be. She was glad it would be different today.

3 Finally, the lunch bell rang. Mali put her books away. Then she took out her lunch and looked around. For once, she was not upset. She smiled at the students who were watching her. They watched her every day. And every day, they did the same thing. They made fun of her food, and they held their noses. They made her feel different—like she didn't fit in. Mali reached into her lunch bag. *Today, I'll fit in*, she thought. *I'll have a sandwich like everyone else. Let's just see what kind of sandwich it is...*

4 "Oh, no!" said Tony, and he held his nose. "I smell something funny again. Mali, when are you going to eat normal food? Your food always smells up the room."

5 Mali could not believe it! She had asked her mother for different lunch food. And her mother had said OK. So why was Mali's lunch panang curry with chicken? *Ugh! Why?* Mali thought. But then she began thinking, *I asked for different food. But I didn't tell my mother what I really wanted. I really wanted a sandwich... made with two slices of bread and peanut butter and jelly. Mali wanted American food. But her mother thought she wanted different Thai food. And she gave Mali panang chicken today.* Mali wanted to cry. Her mom was just doing what she thought was best. But Mali still wanted to fit in. *Why can't they accept me for who I am?* she thought. *Why do they have to judge me because of what I eat? I'll bet they have never even tasted Thai food!* Mali turned her desk to the wall. She would ignore her classmates while she ate her lunch. They would not make her cry.

6 Soon, Mali's classmates ignored her. But she just stared at her food. *Panang chicken is my favorite dish,* she thought. *That is why my mom made it for me. She wanted to surprise me with something different*. Mali decided to save her lunch for later. Mali started to turn her desk back around. Just then, Miss Paige closed her eyes and sniffed the air. She had a strange smile on her face. "What's that smell?" she asked the class. The students burst into laughter. "It's Mali's smelly food!" some of them said. "Smelly food!" said Miss Paige. Her smile was gone. She walked to Mali's desk and knelt down. "Is it true, Mali? Am I smelling your food?" She could not believe she was getting in trouble—and all because of her lunch! She opened her mouth, but she could not speak. She nodded her head instead. "What is that, Mali?" asked Miss Paige softly. "What did you bring for lunch? "My mom made it," replied Mali. "It's panang chicken. It's made with red curry and coconut milk."

7 "I knew something smelled familiar!" smiled Miss Paige. "When I was in college, I went to Thailand. Panang chicken was my favorite dish. And, it still is." "It's my favorite, too," smiled Mali. Miss Paige stood up and looked around. "Have any of you ever tasted Thai food?" she asked. No one said a word. "Well, who would like to try some? You can trade some of your lunch for Mali's." "I'll try," said Tony. "I've got peanut butter and jelly on White bread. I'll trade Mali some of my sandwich."

8 Mali smiled. She was finally going to taste a PBJ sandwich. She hoped Tony would like her lunch as much as she would like his. Miss Paige helped Mali and Tony make their trade. Everyone was silent. Tony tasted Mali's food. "Wow, this is great!" he said. "I thought I would never like Mali's food, but this is really delicious!" Mali beamed and her smile widened. Then, Mali tasted Tony's sandwich. At first, she could not speak. Her tongue was stuck to the roof of her mouth. Finally, she said, "It's different! Thank you so much, Tony." "Would you like to trade your whole lunch?" asked Tony. "I'll give you the rest of my PBJ." Mali traded, but she liked panang chicken better. And now Tony liked it, too. *Maybe now*, she thought, *I will start to fit in. I hope more of my classmates will be like Tony and me. I hope they will try something different, too*.

Reading Passage 2: SWOOSH!

By: Ann Malaspina

1 Hani tied up the laces on her high-tops. The girls' basketball team at Hancock School had one more practice before the league tournament. For two hours, Hani and her teammates pounded the court. Dodging. Dribbling. Passing. Shooting. Akiko, the team captain, shouted the plays. Hani missed a layup. But five minutes later, her best friend Elly passed her the ball again. Swoosh! A perfect hoop. "Good job!" yelled Akiko.

2 After practice, Coach Risa gave the girls a pep talk. "Remember, you're part of a team. You have to go out there and help each other." The girls gave each other high-fives and headed for the locker room. "Do you have a minute, Hani?" Hani wondered why Coach Risa wanted to talk to her.

3 "No headwear is allowed in the tournament," said Coach Risa. "I'm sorry. Those are the rules." Hani always wore a hijab outside her house. The headscarf was a symbol of respect and devotion for Muslim girls and women. In Egypt, where her grandmother Tetta lived, many girls wear a hijab. On the basketball team, Hani was the only one. She also wore a long-sleeve top under her jersey and leggings under her basketball shorts to preserve her modesty.

4 Before she went to bed, Hani's eyes filled with tears as she unfolded Tetta's most recent letter. "Your hijab makes you special on the inside and the outside," Tetta had written. Hani hardly slept all night. The next morning, her parents drove her to the community center. Hani hadn't told them about the rule. Mom turned around to look at Hani. "You are very quiet today." "I always got the jitters before a game," Dad said. He had played basketball in high school. Hani's stomach was in knots as she looked silently out the window.

5 In the gym, Hani lined up with the team. But when the girls ran onto the court, Coach Risa stopped her. "You'll have to sit on the bench, Hani," she said. Two girls were sick and there was no one to substitute for Hani. That meant the Hancock squad was one player short. *Maybe I should take it off just this once,* Hani thought. She raised her hands, feeling the soft cloth. Then she remembered how beautiful Tetta looked in her blue-flowered hijab.

6 She put her hands down. Akiko saw Hani and asked for a time-out. As the players gathered on the sideline, Coach Risa explained the no-headwear rule to the whole team. The girls then gathered at the bench. "If you can't play, I'm not going to either," Elly told Hani. Akiko hugged Hani. "You're our best rebounder. It's not fair." One by one, Hani's teammates sat down on the bench, too.

7 As people sitting near the huddle picked up on what was happening, the news quickly spread throughout the stands. Everyone began talking at once. Some people agreed with the no-headwear rule for Hani. Others did not. "The Hancock team should forfeit the game!" said one parent. "The girl should be allowed to play!" said another. The noise in the gym grew louder. Coach Risa talked with the tournament judges. Hani's cheeks burned and she began to sweat as she remembered Tetta's words. *Your hijab makes you special.* The head judge walked over to Hani. "We're willing to compromise," he said. "You can wear the scarf at halftime." Hani stood up tall, and decided halftime wasn't good enough. Her heart was racing, but her voice stayed steady as she asked "Can I wear it during the game if I tuck in the ends?" The judge thought for a minute. "Agreed!" He shook Hani's hand.

9 Hani's team played hard. Dodging. Dribbling. Passing. Shooting. Swoosh! A perfect three-pointer for Akiko. After a long day, the Hancock team got the third-place trophy. The girls went out for pizza to celebrate. As they ate, they tried to pick the best moment of the game. Was it Akiko's three-point swoosh? Or Elly's amazing pass? "My best moment was when everyone sat with me on the bench," said Hani. "So was mine!" "Mine too!" "Same here!" That was it. Everyone agreed.

APPENDIX B

STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Pre-Interview Questions: (refer/show student work and reading passage during interview)

1. **You shared that _____, _____, and _____ describes your personal identity (what makes you, you)**
    a. Can you tell me more about why you think that?
    b. Explain your thought process: why did you pick the things you did?
2. **You shared that _____, _____, and _____ describes your social identity (how others may describe you)**
    a. Can you tell me more about why you think that?
    b. Explain your thought process: why did you pick the things you did?
3. **You said this part of the activity was**_____ *(level of difficulty*).
    a. Tell me more about why you felt it was _____.
    b. Can you provide any additional examples? *(if needed)*
4. **Do you feel like your personal and social identities work together? Why or why not?**
5. **You moved your green star to indicate _____ is something you like about yourself. You described this as an important part of your identity because _____.**
    a. Explain your thought process: why did you pick what you did?
    b. What made you pick _____ rather than the other things you shared in your identity map?
6. **You said this part of the activity was**_____ ***(level of difficulty*).**
    a. Tell me more about why you felt it was _____.
    b. Can you provide any additional examples? *(if needed)*
7. **For section ____ in the passage, you shared that that character was feeling _____ because _____.**
    a. Tell me more about why you think?
    b. Explain your thought process.
    c. Can you provide any additional examples? *(if needed)*
8. **For section ____ in the passage, you shared that that character was feeling _____ because _____.**
    a. Tell me more about why you think?
    b. Explain your thought process.
    c. Can you provide any additional examples? *(if needed)*
9. **You picked when the character was feeling _____ and a time you may have felt similar was when _____.**
    a. Tell me more about your experience.
    b. How do you feel your experience connects to experiences of the character?
    c. Can you provide any additional examples? *(if needed)*
10. **You shared that an injustice or hardship from the story was when _____**
    a. Tell me more about why you think that.
    b. Explain your thought process.
    c. Can you provide any additional examples? *(if needed)*
11. **You shared that a theme of the story was_____**

a. Tell me more about why you think that.
b. Explain your thought process.
c. Can you provide any additional examples? *(if needed)*

12. **Overall, what parts of this reading activity felt easy and challenging? Why?**

Post-Interview Questions: (refer/show student work and reading passage during interview)

1. **You shared that _____, _____, and _____ describes your personal identity (what makes you, you)**
    a. Can you tell me more about why you think that?
    b. Explain your thought process: why did you pick the things you did?
2. **You shared that _____, _____, and _____ describes your social identity (how others may describe you)**
    a. Can you tell me more about why you think that?
    b. Explain your thought process: why did you pick the things you did?
3. **You said this part of the activity was_____** *(level of difficulty*).
    a. Tell me more about why you felt it was _____.
    b. Can you provide any additional examples? *(if needed)*
4. **Do you feel like your personal and social identities work together? Why or why not?**
5. **You moved your green star to indicate _____ is something you like about yourself. You described this as an important part of your identity because _____.**
    a. Explain your thought process: why did you pick what you did?
    b. What made you pick _____ rather than the other things you shared in your identity map?
6. **You said this part of the activity was_____ *(level of difficulty*).**
    a. Tell me more about why you felt it was _____.
    b. Can you provide any additional examples? *(if needed)*
7. **Let's look at your pre-activity and post-activity side by side (read student responses aloud). Overall, how do you feel your thinking may have changed or stayed the same from the pre-activity to the post-activity?**
    a. Why do you think this is?
    b. Can you provide any additional examples? *(if needed)*
8. **Did your feelings about how easy/challenging this activity change between activities?**
    a. Why do you think this is?
    b. Can you provide any additional examples? *(if needed)*
9. **For section ____ in the passage, you shared that that character was feeling _____ because _____.**
    a. Tell me more about why you think?
    b. Explain your thought process.
    c. Can you provide any additional examples? *(if needed)*
10. **For section ____ in the passage, you shared that that character was feeling _____ because _____.**
    a. Tell me more about why you think?
    b. Explain your thought process.

    c. Can you provide any additional examples? *(if needed)*

11. You picked when the character was feeling _____ and a time you may have felt similar was when _____.

    a. Tell me more about your experience.
    b. How do you feel your experience connects to experiences of the character?
    c. Can you provide any additional examples? *(if needed)*

12. You shared that an injustice or hardship from the story was when _____

    a. Tell me more about why you think that.
    b. Explain your thought process.
    c. Can you provide any additional examples? *(if needed)*

13. You shared that a theme of the story was_____

    a. Tell me more about why you think that.
    b. Explain your thought process.
    c. Can you provide any additional examples? *(if needed)*

14. Overall, what parts of this reading activity felt easy and challenging? Why?

15. How do you feel your thinking may have changed (if at all) from the pre-activity to the post-activity?

    a. Why do you think this is? (show student work side by side)
    b. Can you provide any additional examples? (if needed)
    c. Researcher: Provide specific example of something I noticed and ask students to share their thinking.

16. Overall (refer to the RASEL texts and activities during interview)

    a. What are some things that you learned from RASEL?
        i. Specifically TSEL? Can you tell me about a moment in class when you feel like you learned this?
        ii. Specifically Narrative Reading Comprehension? Can you tell me about a moment in class when you feel like you learned this?
    b. What was your favorite thing we did during RASEL? Why?
    c. What was your least favorite thing we did during RASEL? Why?
    d. If you could change one thing about RASEL, what would it be and why?
    e. Anything else you would like to share with me?

APPENDIX C

TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Overall

- Tell me about the overall affordances from your experiences implementing RASEL (across all lessons)?
- Tell me about the challenges from your experiences implementing RASEL (across all lessons)?
- Based on your experiences, what suggestions do you have for improving RASEL in the future?

Specific

- How were these lessons similar to and different from the interactive read-alouds and SEL lessons that you typically teach?
- Recall your experience teaching aspects of RASEL instruction focused on emotion vocabulary (show teacher video excerpt, student work, or slides). How do you feel including this supported your students in SEL? Narrative Reading Comprehension?
- Recall your experience teaching aspects of RASEL instruction focused on character perspective-taking (show teacher video excerpt, student work, or slides). How do you feel including this supported your students in SEL? Narrative Reading Comprehension?
- Recall your experience teaching the culminating activity (show teacher video excerpt, student work, or slides). How do you feel the RASEL unit as a whole came together? How do you feel the final culminating lesson (authentic literacy activity) supported students in SEL? Narrative Reading Comprehension?
- Overall, do you feel RASEL was transformative in nature and culturally responsive? Why or why not? Can you provide an example?
- Did you see any signs/examples of student progress (anchor students) in SEL, narrative reading comprehension, or elsewhere?
- Do you think these lessons would fit into your interactive read-aloud block (e.g., pacing, timing?) If so, how would you envision implementing these lessons in the future?

APPENDIX D

POST-INSTRUCTION TEACEHR SURVEY PROMPTS

Lesson Details

- Which text was used, and what was the focus of the lesson (interactive read aloud with text-based discussion OR emotion vocabulary/character perspective-taking)?

Revision

- Tell me about how you feel the implementation went. Also, please rate today's implementation on a scale of 1-5.
    - 5 = I feel today's implementation of RASEL was successful. There were hardly any (0-1) components I would like to revise for next time.
    - 3 = I feel today's implementation of RASEL was somewhat successful. There were some (1-2) components I would like to revise for next time.
    - 1 = I feel today's implementation of RASEL was not successful. There were multiple components (3+) I would like to revise for next time.
- Based on your rating, which components would you like to revise for next time? What is your rationale for these revisions?

Affordances/Challenges

- Share at least one aspect of instruction that you felt enhanced your students' development in SEL and narrative reading comprehension.
- Share at least one aspect of instruction that you felt inhibited your students' development in SEL and narrative reading comprehension.
- Share any additional questions, comments, or concerns you have from your experience so far

APPENDIX E

RASEL LESSON PLANS AND SLIDE LINKS

RASEL Lesson Plans
Lessons #1 &2

Title: *The Year of the Dog (Chapter 16)*
Author: Grace Lin

Lesson 1: Interactive Read-aloud

Overview

- **Lesson Time:** 25-30 Min
- **Lesson Topic:** Self-awareness and Emotion Vocabulary ("I do" - modeling skills for students)
- **Materials**
  - Link to Lesson 1 Slides
  - Student Copies of Feel Wheel
  - The Year of the Dog by: Grace Lin (Chapter 16)
  - Grace Lin Ted Talk Video

Before Reading (10 min)

- While reading today, we will…
  - think about our own emotions
  - practice SEL skills (identifying emotions)
  - better understand the character
- Have you ever watched a movie, show, or played a video game multiple times? You might pick up new things the second or third time that you may have missed the first time….
- Today, we are reading this chapter again so we can identify how Grace was feeling using emotion vocabulary (the words we use to name and describe out feelings).
- Before we re-read, we are going to watch a short video of the author of this book, Grace Lin, talk about her real-life experiences that she used to write this book. While we watch, I want you to think about what hardships Grace was facing as a young Chinese American girl and start thinking about what words you could use to describe how Grace may have been feeling.
- Play Grace Lin Ted Talk (3:40-5:10)

During Reading

(5 min)

- While I read, use your feel wheels to think about emotions Grace might be feeling during this chapter
- Read *The Year of the Dog (Chapter 16)*

After Reading

(10 min)

- Give me a thumbs up if you were able to think of some emotional vocabulary words to describe how Grace was feeling in this chapter.
- Now we are going to zoom in on one moment in this chapter:
  - P. 70 "Do you think I could be Dorothy?" I asked Becky. Becky looked at me in shock. "You can't be Dorothy," she said. "Dorothy's not Chinese."
- Together (using our Feel Wheels) let's list the emotions Grace might have been feeling in this moment? Why do you think Grace felt that way?
  - Provide Sentence Stem: I think Grace was feeling ____ because _____.
- Model and complete the Post Reading Activity: What Makes You, You? (Grace) together as a class.

Lesson 2: Referring back/Re-reading portions of the Text

Overview

- **Lesson Time:** 25-30 Min
- **Lesson Topic:** Social Awareness and Perspective-taking ("I do" - modeling skills for students)
- **Materials**
  - Link to Lesson 2 Slides
  - *The Year of the Dog by: Grace Lin (Chapter 16)*
  - Post Reading Activity Page

Before Reading

(5 Min)

- Remember last time, we talked about the emotion vocabulary Grace might have been feeling and why we thought Grace felt that way.
- While reading today, we will…
  - think about the perspectives of others
  - practice SEL skills (like empathy)
  - better understanding the story
- Introduce character perspective-taking (considering the viewpoints of the characters' thoughts, emotions, and motivations). When we practice taking the perspective with characters in a story, it helps us practice SEL skills like empathy (thinking about how someone else is feeling).

During Reading

(5 Min)

- In the previous lesson, we said Grace was feeling _____ because _____.
- Let's re-read that moment in the story.
  - P. 70 "Do you think I could be Dorothy?" I asked Becky. Becky looked at me in shock. "You can't be Dorothy," she said. "Dorothy's not Chinese."

- Now, let's think about: If we were in Grace's shoes, how would that have made us feel? Have you ever felt this way before? What can this teach you?

After Reading (15 Min)

- Let's practice character perspective-taking together
- Model and complete the Post Reading Activity: Character Perspective-taking together as a class.

RASEL Lesson Plans
Lessons #3 & 4

Title: *Flying High: The Story of Gymnastics Champion Simone Biles*
Author: Michelle Meadows

Lesson 3: Interactive Read-aloud

Overview

- **Lesson Time:** 25-30 Min
- **Lesson Topic:** Self-awareness and Emotion Vocabulary ("We do" - guided practice for students)
- **Materials**
  - Link to Lesson 3 Slides
  - Student Copies of Feel Wheel
  - Sticky Notes
  - The Story of Gymnastics Champion Simone Biles
  - Simone Bile Video Clip
  - Post Reading Activity Page

Before Reading (10 min)

- Remember last time, we practiced identifying emotion vocabulary and character-perspective taking with the character, Grace, from The Year of the Dog. We also discussed themes of the text and identified injustices or hardships the character was facing. Today, we will be continuing this work with a new character.
- While reading today, we will…
  - think about our own emotions
  - practice SEL skills (identifying emotions)
  - better understand the character
- Have you ever heard of Simone Biles? Let's watch Simone Biles at the US Olympic Trials

During Reading

(5 min)

- While I read, use your feel wheels to stop and jot on a sticky note about emotions Grace might be feeling during this chapter. Remember this is called emotion vocabulary (the words we use to name and describe our feelings).
- *Read The Story of Gymnastics Champion Simone Biles*

After Reading

(10 min)

- Now we are going to zoom in on one moment in this chapter:
  - "Simone comes so close in the fourteenth slot, missing the team by only one spot."
  - On your sticky notes, circle or add the emotion vocabulary Simone might have been feeling at this moment.
- Turn and Talk → What emotions was Simone feeling in this moment? Why do you think Simone felt this way? Then we will share out.
  - Provide Sentence Stem: I think Simone was feeling ____ because _____.
- Together (using our Feel Wheels) let's list the emotions Grace might have been feeling in this moment? Why do you think Grace felt that way?
- Students complete the Post Reading Activity: What Makes You, You? (Simone) with a partner. Then review thinking together.

Lesson 4: Referring back/Re-reading portions of the Text

Overview

- **Lesson Time:** 25-30 Min
- **Lesson Topic:** Social Awareness and Perspective-taking ("We do" - guided practice for students)
- Materials
  - Link to Lesson 4 Slides
  - *The Story of Gymnastics Champion Simone Biles*
  - Post Reading Activity Page

Before Reading

(5 Min)

- Remember last time, we talked about the emotion vocabulary Simone might have been feeling and why we thought Simone felt that way.
- While reading today, we will…
  - think about the perspectives of others
  - practice SEL skills (like empathy)
  - better understanding the story
- Review character perspective-taking (considering the viewpoints of the characters' thoughts, emotions, and motivations). When we practice taking the perspective with characters in a story, it helps us

practice SEL skills like empathy (thinking about how someone else is feeling).

During Reading

(5 Min)

- In the previous lesson, we said Simone was feeling _____ because _____.
- Let's re-read that moment in the story.
  - "Simone comes so close in the fourteenth slot, missing the team by only one spot."
- Now, let's think about: If we were in Simone's shoes, how would that have made us feel? Have you ever felt this way before? What can this teach you?

After Reading (15 Min)

- Let's fill in Question 1 together. Then, try questions 2 and 3 with a partner! Then we will share our ideas together.
- Guide students to complete the Post Reading Activity: Character Perspective-taking in partners then review as a class.

RASEL Lesson Plans

Lessons #5 & 6

Title: *I Talk Like a River*
Author: Jordan Scott

Lesson 5: Interactive Read-aloud

Overview

- **Lesson Time:** 25-30 Min
- **Lesson Topic:** Self-awareness and Emotion Vocabulary ("You do" - independent practice for students)
- **Materials**
  - Link to Lesson 5 Slides
  - Student Copies of Feel Wheel
  - Sticky Notes
  - *I Talk Like a River*
  - Author's Note Video Clip
  - Post Reading Activity Page

Before Reading

- Remember last time, we practiced identifying emotion vocabulary and character-perspective taking with the characters Grace and

(10 min)	Simone. We also discussed themes of the text and identified injustices or hardships the character was facing. Today, we will be continuing this work with a new character.
	• While reading today, we will…
	  o think about our own emotions
	  o practice SEL skills (identifying emotions)
	  o better understand the character
	• We are going to continue this work today with another story that celebrates a character's unique strengths as he undergoes a hardship in his life. Ask students "What is a stutter?" Before I read the story, I am going to show you a video clip from the author to help us better understand why Jordan Scott wrote this book. In this clip, Jordan Scott talk about why he wrote this book. Jordan talks with a stutter.
	• Author's Note Video Clip (0:50-2:05)

During Reading **(5 min)**	• While I read, use your feel wheels to stop and jot on a sticky note about emotions Jordan might be feeling during this chapter. Remember this is called emotion vocabulary (the words we use to name and describe our feelings). • Read *I Talk Like a River*

After Reading
(10 min)
	• Now we are going to zoom in on one moment in this chapter:
	  o "Today is my turn, but my mouth just isn't working, and I want to go home" "I feel a storm in my belly; my eyes fill with rain"
	  o On your sticky notes, circle or add the emotion vocabulary Simone might have been feeling at this moment.
	• Let's share out
	  o Provide Sentence Stem: I think Jordan was feeling ____ because _____.
	• Together (using our Feel Wheels) let's list the emotions Jordan might have been feeling in this moment.
	• Students complete the Post Reading Activity: What Makes You, You? (Jordan) independently. Then review thinking together.

Lesson 6: Referring back/Re-reading portions of the Text

Overview	• **Lesson Time:** 25-30 Min • **Lesson Topic:** Social Awareness and Perspective-taking ("We do" - guided practice for students) • Materials o Link to Lesson 6 Slides

	o The Story of Gymnastics Champion Simone Biles o Post Reading Activity Page
Before Reading **(5 Min)**	• Remember last time, we talked about the emotion vocabulary Jordan might have been feeling and why we thought Jordan felt that way. • While reading today, we will… o think about the perspectives of others o practice SEL skills (like empathy) o better understanding the story • Review character perspective-taking (considering the viewpoints of the characters' thoughts, emotions, and motivations). When we practice taking the perspective with characters in a story, it helps us practice SEL skills like empathy (thinking about how someone else is feeling).
During Reading **(5 Min)**	• In the previous lesson, we said Simone was feeling _____ because _____. • Let's re-read that moment in the story. o "Today is my turn, but my mouth just isn't working, and I want to go home" "I feel a storm in my belly; my eyes fill with rain" • Now, let's think about: If we were in Jordan's shoes, how would that have made us feel? Have you ever felt this way before? What can this teach you?
After Reading **(15 Min)**	• Try this work on your own today. • Students independently complete the Post Reading Activity: Character Perspective-taking in partners then review as a class. Provide individual student support as needed.