

**Kansas SBAE Teacher Perceptions of Social, Emotional, and Character Development**

KaCee James

Department of Communications and Agricultural Education

Kansas State University

317 Umberger Hall

Manhattan, KS 66506

785-532-5804

kaceet@ksu.edu

Gaea Hock, PhD.

Department of Communications and Agricultural Education

Kansas State University

315 Umberger Hall

Manhattan, KS 66506

785-532-1166

ghock@ksu.edu

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### **Introduction and Need for Research**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021) reported 29% of high school students experienced poor mental health during the past 30 days. For decades, schools have had students' basic needs added to their responsibilities, such as screening for hearing, dental, and vision (Kansas Office of Revisor of Statutes, n.d.). Today, educators are responsible for considering the mental health of their students as well. Schools have turned to social-emotional learning (SEL) to achieve this. SEL equips students with the skills to effectively navigate interpersonal and intrapersonal situations, enhancing their ability to think, feel, and act (Yopp et al., 2017). This includes critical competencies like teamwork and empathy, which employers highly value (Yoder et al., 2020). School-Based Agricultural Education presents an opportunity to integrate these sought-after skills into existing curricula (Akers et al., 2004; Marlatt et al., 2003).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Kansas Social, Emotional, and Character Development (SECD) Model Standards address the need for students to acquire, practice, and exemplify habits that contribute to their academic, career, and personal success ([Blinded], 2018). These standards draw from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) research, which offers a foundation for schools to integrate social-emotional and character education ([Blinded], 2018). The CASEL framework served as the theoretical framework for this study. CASEL was established to provide evidence-based social-emotional learning as a part of PreK-12 education (CASEL, n.d.). CASEL addresses five interrelated areas of competence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, n.d.).

### **Methodology**

A survey adapted from the CASEL School-based Staff Survey on Schoolwide SEL Implementation containing 20 questions was sent through Qualtrics to all Kansas SBAE teachers ( $N=295$ ) to assess their perceptions and practices related to SECD. Of the teachers recruited, 100 completed the survey. Eighteen of the email addresses were unusable, reducing the sample size to 277, yielding a response rate of 36%. The research questions for this study were (RQ1) what are the perceptions of SECD amongst Kansas SBAE teachers; and (RQ2) do perceptions of social, emotional, and character development differ by gender? Survey questions specifically addressing social, emotional, and character development in SBAE support the five areas of competence of the CASEL framework (CASEL, 2020). Sections of the survey that address teacher challenges in integrating SECD support previous research around teacher barriers (Martinez, 2016). The survey contained six constructs assessing teachers' experiences and perceptions of SECD. The first four constructs used a Likert-type scale to assess levels of agreement (1 = *Strongly Agree*, 2 = *Agree*, 3 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*, 4 = *Disagree*, 5 = *Strongly Disagree*). Data collected from the survey was analyzed in IBM's Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) using descriptive statistics to examine the study's research objectives.

### **Results**

When assessing the overall perceptions towards SECD for the first research question, we found teachers strongly agree that it is important to promote SECD in their teaching practices ( $M = 1.98$ ,  $SD = .68$ ). SBAE teachers had a strong connection between SECD competence and students' academic success ( $M = 1.86$ ,  $SD = .69$ ), civic engagement ( $M = 1.85$ ,  $SD = .72$ ) and career preparation ( $M = 1.92$ ,  $SD = .78$ ). While still positive, SBAE teachers expressed slightly lower agreement that SECD should be taught in the classroom ( $M = 2.19$ ,  $SD = .96$ ).

The second research objective examined the difference in perceptions of SECD between male and female SBAE teachers (Table 1). No statistically significant differences in means between males and females were found in perceptions of SECD.

**Table 1.**

*Perceptions of Kansas SBAE Teachers Toward SECD by Gender*

Construct	Gender	M	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
It is Important to Promote SECD in Teaching Practices	Male	2.06	.73	1.13	.935
	Female	1.89	.65		
SECD Competence is Related to Student Academic Success	Male	2.00	.78	1.51	.700
	Female	1.77	.63		
SECD Competence is Related to Student Civic Engagement	Male	1.87	.72	.41	.350
	Female	1.80	.75		
SECD Competence is Related to Student Career Preparation	Male	2.10	.79	1.65	.584
	Female	1.80	.80		
SECD Should be Taught in the Classroom	Male	2.42	1.06	1.52	.249
	Female	2.09	.92		

*Note.* Mean limits scaling constructs 1 = *strongly agree*, 2 = *agree*, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *disagree*, 5 = *strongly disagree*.

### Conclusions

Kansas SBAE teachers recognize the importance of promoting SECD, acknowledging its role in academic success, civic engagement, and career preparation. While their perceptions are positive, slightly lower agreement regarding explicit SECD instruction in the classroom suggests potential barriers, such as a lack of resources or training, that influence their willingness or ability to integrate SECD. Additionally, no statistically significant differences in perceptions between male and female SBAE teachers indicate a shared recognition of SECD's value across genders.

### Implications and Recommendations

These findings align with the CASEL framework, emphasizing self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. However, the gap between recognizing SECD's importance and implementing it in the classroom suggests that additional support is needed. The Kansas SECD Standards provide a structured approach for integrating these competencies, but teachers may struggle to incorporate these principles without guidance. Addressing these challenges through targeted professional development, accessible resources, and administrative support will ensure that SECD is effectively embedded within SBAE programs.

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