Bridging Policy and Practice:

Faculty Perceptions of Social and Emotional Learning Standards Implementation in Oregon Educator Preparation Programs

by

Kristin J. Rush

A dissertation accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the

Requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

in Educational Leadership

Dissertation Committee:

Chris Knowles, Ph.D., Chair

Dianna Carrizales-Engelmann, Ph.D., Core Member

Jeffrey Todahl, Ph.D., Institutional Representative

University of Oregon

Spring 2026

© 2026 Kristin J. Rush

This work is openly licensed via CC BY 4.0.



DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Kristin J. Rush

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

Title: Bridging Policy and Practice: Faculty Perceptions of Social and Emotional Learning Standards Implementation in Oregon Educator Preparation Programs

This study examines how teacher educators in Oregon perceive and enact the state's Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) standards within educator preparation programs (EPPs), with particular attention to adult social-emotional learning. Although SEL is widely recognized as essential to effective teaching and student learning, its integration within educator preparation remains uneven. Oregon's adoption of SEL standards through HB 2166 represents a top-down mandate to embed SEL into preparation programs; however, implementation depends on institutional conditions and faculty sensemaking. Oregon's dual-agency governance structure further complicates alignment between policy expectations and the daily realities of teacher educators' work, where opportunities to develop and sustain adult SEL capacities are often limited. Drawing on frameworks of adult and well-rounded SEL, this study conceptualizes SEL implementation not only as the enactment of standards, but as an embodied and relational process shaped by adult learning conditions. Using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, the study analyzed statewide survey data from teacher educators and teacher candidates, followed by focus groups with teacher educators, to examine patterns of SEL exposure, modeling, and interpretation. Findings highlight how strong endorsement of SEL coexists with variability in visibility and coherence across programs, reflecting differences in professional learning infrastructure and institutional support.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to begin by thanking my advisor, Chris Knowles, for staying alongside me throughout this process. Her guidance, steady feedback, and flexibility, including the many times children joined our meetings, made this work possible. When the project felt overwhelming, she helped me untangle it and find my footing again. I am deeply grateful for her mentorship and for the way she supported my growth as both a scholar and a practitioner. I am also thankful to my committee members, Jeff Todahl and Dianna Carrizales-Engelmann. Jeff's systems lens and methodological clarity strengthened this study in lasting ways, while Dianna's equity-centered perspective and thoughtful questioning pushed me to think more deeply about my scope and purpose. Their engagement sharpened the work and expanded my understanding of what it means to lead with rigor and intention. I am grateful as well to Julie Alonzo, whose early guidance helped anchor the questions and structure that carried the study forward.

I am thankful to my colleagues at TSPC, Susan Boe and Richelle Krotts, whose encouragement, humor, and well-timed pep talks carried me through moments when stopping felt easier than continuing. I am also grateful to the faculty collaborators who shaped Oregon's educator preparation standards, particularly the OCSEP leaders, Deirdre Hon, Lauren Vega O'Neil, and Lina Darwich. Their collective wisdom and commitment to adult learning influenced the policy landscape in which this work lives. And to the educator preparation faculty who participated in this study, thank you for your time, your honesty, and your willingness to reflect on practice. This research exists because of you.

On a more personal note, I am deeply thankful to my dad for his quiet generosity and constant belief in me. His financial support created space for me to pursue this degree. To my husband, Stuart, thank you for your steadiness. Your encouragement and willingness to carry

more than your share at home made it possible for me to finish. And finally, to my daughters: Emmeline, who kept me company during countless online classes and reminded me not to take myself too seriously, and Elodie, who arrived in the middle of this work and gently reshaped my sense of time and what truly matters. You both grounded me in the most important ways.

For my family—

to Stuart, for his tenacity.
Emmeline, for her curiosity.
Elodie, for her wonder.
and Kiki, for her joy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION....11
The Changing Landscape of Teacher Preparation....13
State Policy and Standards Accountability in Oregon....16
Education as a Catalyst for Transformative Systemic Change....19
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE SYNTHESIS....22
An Argument for Systemic SEL....24
SEL in Pre-Service Education....26
The Policy Landscape in Oregon....34
Challenges to Implementing SEL in Oregon's EPPs....36
What We Know....38
What We Need to Know....50
CHAPTER III: METHOD....52
Research Design....52
Positionality Statement....54
Setting and Participants....55
Ethical Considerations....57
Recruitment....58
Study Procedures....59
Sequence and Integration of Study Procedures....63
Data Analysis....64
Validity, Reliability, and Methodological Integrity....69
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS....71
Quantitative Results....71
Transition to Qualitative Phase....79
Overview of Qualitative Results....80
Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings....88
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS....94
Reframing SEL Implementation....96
Study Implications....101
Implications for Research....108

Study Limitations 110
Conclusion 111
APPENDICES 106
A: SEL Survey for Teacher Candidates 112
B: SEL Survey for Teacher Educators 118
C: Teacher Candidate Recruitment Email 123
D: Teacher Candidate Informed Consent 124
E: Teacher Educator Recruitment Email 127
F: Teacher Educator Informed Consent 128
G: Focus Group Protocol 131
H: Focus Group Informed Consent 135
I: Decision-Making Matrix 138
J: IRB Approval Documentation 140
K: Codebook 142
REFERENCES 147

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

1. Example of Top Down and Bottom-Up Approaches in Teacher Education 18

2. The Social and Emotional Learning Conceptual Framework 25

3. The Prosocial Classroom 29

4. A Theory of Action for Adult SEL and Educator Retention 32

5. Timeline of Key SEL Initiatives in Oregon 49

6. Bottom-Up Inputs for the Development of Prepared Teachers 53

7. Explanatory Mixed Method Research Study 54

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

1. Count of Courses by Major Category 40

2. Teacher Candidate Respondent Demographics 72

3. Teacher Educator Respondent Demographics 73

4. Descriptive Statistics for Teacher Candidate Subscales 75

5. Descriptive Statistics for Teacher Educator Subscales 75

6. Joint Display Linking Quantitative and Qualitative Experiences of Teacher Candidate SEL Exposure 90

7. Joint Display Linking Teaching Status and Preparedness to Qualitative Explanations 92

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Since Colonial times in the United States, the need for highly qualified teachers has been a recurring theme in public discourse and policy. In early American history, teachers were often selected informally, based on moral and religious standing rather than intellectual or pedagogical preparation (Center on Education Policy, 2020). Early laws such as Massachusetts' requirement for towns with more than 50 residents to employ a teacher, or Virginia's licensing laws in the 1600s, reflect a growing but inconsistent interest in professionalizing the teaching workforce (LaBue, 1960).

These early efforts reveal the beginnings of a top-down approach to educational reform, where centralized mandates attempted to impose structure on a highly localized and variable system. Yet, implementation remained rooted in local discretion, foreshadowing the enduring tension between policy and practice (Honig, 2006). This policy-practice tension reflects the larger ecological reality of teacher preparation and is reminiscent of Fullan's (2016) call for systemic coherence: Classrooms and institutions are not static systems but living, relational environments shaped by dynamic interactions among students, educators, policies, and community forces—interactions that require emotional awareness, responsiveness, and trust-building to function effectively (Osher et al., 2017).

The 18th and 19th centuries brought increased urgency to define and standardize teacher roles. With Horace Mann's Common School Movement, the idea of public, state-supported education became more widespread, emphasizing standardized instruction in civic responsibility and Western cultural norms. Following the Civil War and amid waves of immigration, the emphasis on assimilating children into U.S. cultural and language norms deepened (Public

Broadcasting System, n.d.). These developments prompted a new emphasis on pedagogical training and consistent instructional standards for new teachers.

Normal Schools: The First Educator Preparation Provider (EPP)

To address the growing demand for teachers to meet student instructional standards, the 19th century saw the rise of Normal Schools, public institutions designed to provide systematic training in pedagogy, child development, and classroom management. The first Normal School in the United States was established in Massachusetts in 1839. The term "normal" derived from the French "école normale," meaning a school intended to serve as a model for others (Labree, 2008). These schools provided systematic training in pedagogy, child development, and classroom management, formalizing teacher preparation at a time when most teachers had little to no formal education themselves.

During this period, authority over teacher licensure increasingly shifted from local communities to state-level entities, embedding teacher education within broader governance frameworks (Public Broadcasting System, n.d.). By 1860, there were 11 Normal Schools in eight states, and many states began requiring completion of such programs for licensure (LaBue, 1960). This period marked the beginning of systematic teacher preparation and state-aligned accountability systems.

The shift toward centralized authority over preparation marked a more assertive top-down approach, as states increasingly dictated the standards of entry into the teaching profession. Yet, Normal Schools were deeply embedded in local contexts and often tailored their programs to meet regional needs. In this way, they functioned as both transmitters of state policy and sites of bottom-up adaptation, illustrating early examples of how local actors mediated policy within their institutional and community contexts (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018). Educator preparation

thus evolved not just through policy, but through localized, relational practice. This evolution exemplifies what Fullan describes as the importance of local meaning-making within broader change frameworks; policy implementation succeeds only when theory of action is co-constructed by those closest to the work (Fullan & Quinn, 2021).

However, as the 20th century progressed, teacher education programs underwent further institutionalization. Normal Schools evolved into teacher colleges, which were eventually absorbed into Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs). These shifts brought a heightened focus on academic rigor, formal coursework, and measurable program outcomes (Labaree, 2008), laying the groundwork for modern national accreditation systems that seek programmatic quality and consistency across states (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005).

The Changing Landscape of Teacher Preparation

Throughout the late 1800s, the growing presence of white, female teachers—many with limited formal training—combined with an influx of immigrant children, raised concerns among oversight agencies about teachers' ability to manage increasingly diverse classrooms. These concerns prompted a pedagogical shift in Normal Schools toward more compliance-focused instruction (LaBue, 1960), often reinforcing assimilationist practices aimed at suppressing immigrant children's languages and cultural identities (Public Broadcasting System, n.d.). At the same time, the increasing racial and cultural diversity of schools placed new institutional demands on women educators—who were expected to serve as both nurturing figures and implementers of top-down mandates around discipline and assimilation. While their daily labor became essential to the operation of the public school system, their professional judgment was constrained by male-dominated leadership structures that prioritized conformity over culturally responsive, community-rooted teaching (Goldstein, 2014; Tyack, 1974). The relational and

emotional dimensions of teaching—long carried by a predominantly female workforce—were treated as informal dispositions rather than professional competencies worthy of structural recognition or investment.

By the 1930s, with the Great Depression, the United States found itself with a surplus of teachers, and expectations for preparation requirements increased. Normal Schools underwent a transformation, becoming teachers colleges that provided expanded teacher education programs. By the 1950s, these teachers colleges had integrated into the higher education landscape as academic departments or schools of education within colleges and universities (Taylor, 2025). This institutional shift elevated academic rigor and accountability, but even though women made up nearly 75% of the teaching force by the early 20th century, they remained largely absent from administrative and policy leadership (Public Broadcasting System, n.d.).

As teacher education programs became part of IHEs, national associations and accrediting bodies became prominent voices in the promotion of classroom management as a key indicator of teacher readiness, focusing heavily on control of student behavior and maintaining order (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Zeichner, 2010). However, this paradigm often overlooked the relational and emotional work that teachers—particularly women—were already doing to build trust, connection, and belonging in their classrooms (Acker, 1992; Goldstein, 2002). This invisible emotional labor helped shape what we now call *classroom climate*, even though it wasn't formally recognized, measured, or supported within policy structures at the time. Although top-down systems set standards for what teaching should look like, they often missed the everyday realities of teachers creating supportive, inclusive environments that would only gain recognition decades later (Noddings, 1984; Zembylas, 2005).

Case Study: Western Oregon University

Western Oregon University (WOU), Oregon's oldest teacher preparation institution, offers a localized lens into the broader evolution of educator preparation across the state. Founded in 1856 as Monmouth University, WOU began as a regional Normal School committed to training teachers for Oregon's developing public school system. In 1882, it became the Oregon State Normal School, formalizing its role in professional teacher education and serving as a hub for preparing educators—many of them women—to work in rural classrooms (Edvalson, 2023).

As expectations for teacher preparation expanded nationally, WOU evolved in tandem. Its transformation from a normal school into a university reflects key moments in the professionalization of teaching. The transition to Oregon College of Education in 1939 marked its formal specialization in educator preparation. Its later evolution—becoming Western Oregon State College in 1981 and Western Oregon University in 1997—aligned the institution with heightened state and national expectations related to licensure, accountability, and accreditation, reflecting broader trends toward academic rigor and professional standards in teacher education.

Despite significant structural changes, WOU has remained grounded in its original mission to prepare educators who can meet the needs of Oregon's diverse communities (Edvalson, 2023; Simmons, 2021). Over time, this mission has required adaptation—not only to formal accountability systems but also to deeper pedagogical changes that emphasize culturally responsive teaching, equity, and relationship-based practice. For example, in response to evolving state standards and calls for equity in teacher preparation, WOU faculty led efforts to strengthen clinical placements and coursework, so they better reflected the linguistic and cultural diversity of Oregon's K–12 population, including partnerships with dual-language and high-needs schools (Simmons, 2021).

Institutions like WOU illustrate how EPPs must navigate layered and often competing demands: meeting licensure and accreditation expectations while remaining responsive to local context and evolving conceptions of effective teaching. These dynamics provide a microcosm of the broader policy and practice conditions that shape educator preparation across Oregon and contribute to ongoing challenges in social-emotional competency implementation.

State Policy and Standards Accountability in Oregon

Efforts to bring greater consistency and rigor to teacher preparation gained momentum nationally in the mid-20th century. In 1954, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) was established to set clear expectations for program quality and educator readiness (NCATE, 2008). This work expanded in 2013, when NCATE merged with the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) to form the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), reinforcing a national commitment to shared standards, accountability, and evidence-based program improvement (CAEP, 2015).

In Oregon, these national shifts aligned with the work of the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC), which has been playing a key role in shaping teacher preparation for decades. Established in 1965 and granted full oversight authority in 1973, one of TSPC's primary responsibilities is approving and monitoring Educator Preparation Providers (EPPs). Oregon formalized its connection to national accreditation in 2015 with the passage of Senate Bill 78, which required all Oregon EPPs to be accredited by a recognized national organization, and Oregon chose CAEP as that accreditor. In response to the need for multiple pathways, the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP) was founded in 2017 and approved by TSPC in 2019 as another accreditation option.

Despite the intent of national accreditation to strengthen consistency and quality, the move also added another layer of oversight to an already complex and top-heavy system. EPPs are required to navigate state-level policy initiatives and national and state accreditation standards, while also meeting internal institutional requirements and addressing local contextual needs. The complexity of aligning these systems within higher education—where curricular changes must pass through teacher educator governance and multiple committees—can slow change (Honig, 2006). This complexity underscores the need for a clear theory of action that identifies drivers of change across system levels. As Fullan (2016) emphasizes, sustainable improvement requires coherence across policies, practices, and beliefs. For EPPs, this means aligning overlapping expectations while remaining responsive to program missions, community needs, and emerging priorities such as equity, social and emotional development, and culturally sustaining pedagogies.

Unique Aspects of Oregon's Structure

As an additional layer of complexity, Oregon is one of 15 states with an educator standards board that operates independently from its state education department (National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification [NASDTEC], 2023). The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) oversees K–12 education through the State Board of Education, including personnel requirements, standards development, and educator evaluation. TSPC, on the other hand, is responsible for educator licensure and the approval and oversight of EPPs through the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission. Each agency develops its own statutes and administrative rules, often working on different timelines and with distinct priorities. This division of authority—one agency overseeing EPPs and another overseeing K–12 schools—has created a disconnect between how teachers are prepared for the realities they face in

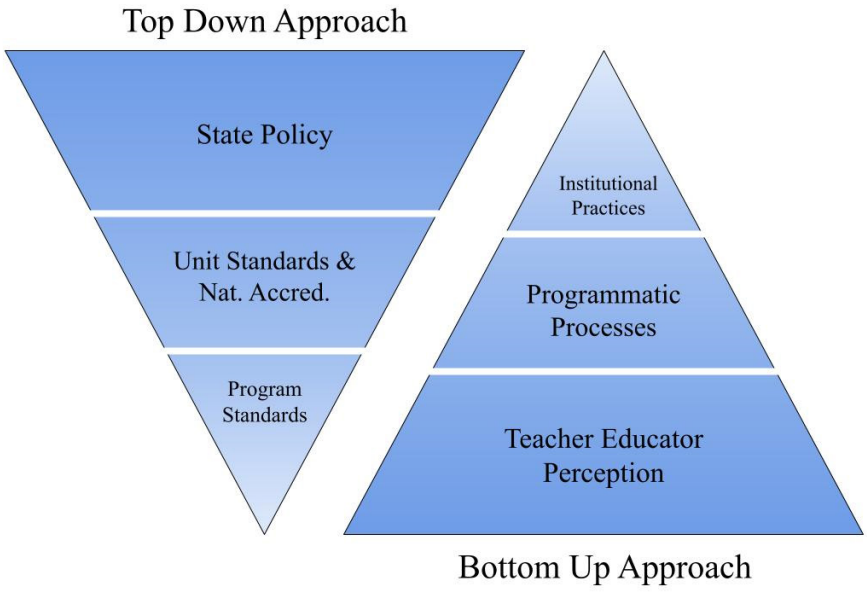
classrooms. This structural misalignment can only be mitigated through a shared vision and interagency coherence strategies that elevate mutual accountability (Fullan, 2010).

Framing Policy Implementation: Top-Down and Bottom-Up Approaches

Understanding how educational policies are implemented requires attention not only to the policies themselves but to the structures and actors that shape their uptake. Classic top-down models of implementation view change as linear and hierarchical, originating from central authorities and filtering downward through institutions (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980). In contrast, bottom-up perspectives (see Figure 1) emphasize the discretion and agency of frontline educators and program leaders, who interpret and apply policies in contextually responsive ways (Honig, 2006; Lipsky, 1980).

Figure 1

Example of Top Down and Bottom-Up Approaches in Teacher Education



Note: Adapted from Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983

EPPs and teacher educators continue to innovate within and around top-down constraints, reinforcing the understanding that implementation is not a linear rollout, but a dynamic interplay between mandates and local interpretation (Honig, 2006; Spillane et al., 2002). Research shows that sustainable change requires more than compliance—it depends on the adaptive, generative work of practitioners who mediate policy through existing beliefs, organizational conditions, and relational dynamics (Fullan, 2010; McLaughlin, 1987). Without this on-the-ground engagement, policy risks superficial adoption, misalignment with context, and resistance from those responsible for enacting it.

Education as a Catalyst for Transformative Systemic Change

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequently the Black Lives Matter movement marked a turning point in public education—not only by exposing deep systemic inequities in access to essential supports for students' basic needs and their ability to fully participate in learning, but also by reigniting a national conversation about race, equity, and the purpose of schooling. Since its inception, the United States education system has been designed to assimilate children into White, Western norms (Anderson, 1988). This model prioritized compliance over connection and often erased students' cultural identities in the name of academic success. Against the political landscape of the early 2020s, many educators, students, and communities have increasingly demanded a shift toward anti-racist, trauma-informed, and human-centered approaches to education. These calls have deep feminist and race-affirming roots, drawing from traditions that center care, emotional resilience, and collective responsibility as pedagogical imperatives (hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Oregon's educator preparation system operates within a broader demographic context characterized by increasing student diversity and a comparatively homogenous educator workforce, underscoring the relevance of SEL-focused preparation.

Over time, these relational and emotional dimensions of teaching—once informal, feminized, and institutionally invisible—began to coalesce into more formalized frameworks within educational policy and research. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), defined as the process through which individuals develop self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, has emerged as a critical framework in this landscape (CASEL, 2020). SEL offers educators and students tools to foster empathy, resilience, and cultural responsiveness. However, early models of SEL were critiqued for promoting individual behavioral regulation without adequately attending to structural inequities or cultural context (Jagers et al., 2019). Recent shifts toward transformative SEL have re-centered the work around identity, agency, and belonging—positioning SEL as not only a policy objective but a critical praxis for resisting compliance-centered models of schooling and cultivating healing-centered, equity-driven classrooms. Rather than framing education solely as academic instruction, SEL emphasizes relationship-building, identity affirmation, and well-being development (Jagers et al., 2021). This cultural and political shift has profound implications for teacher education programs, which are being called upon to move beyond traditional behavior management models and instead prepare future educators to cultivate inclusive, equity-driven classrooms rooted in care, community, and belonging (Markowitz & Bouffard, 2020).

Higher Education Dynamics

The duality of top-down and bottom-up implementation is particularly evident in the integration of SEL, which has emerged not only as a state-mandated competency area but as a field-wide response to historical inequities in education. As the field moves toward a more integrated, equity-driven model of teacher preparation, it becomes increasingly important to view systems change through the lens of both policy implementation and teacher educator agency.

Systems change theory emphasizes that lasting, meaningful change requires shifts not only in policies and structures, but also in the mindsets of those implementing the change (Kania et al., 2018; Kezar, 2014). Systems change involves coordinated efforts across multiple levels in a shared process of inquiry and redesign. In the context of teacher preparation, this means rethinking how programs are structured, how teacher educators are supported, and how content such as SEL is embedded into institutional practices and embodied by teacher educators (Kezar, 2014).

As EPPs confront calls for greater equity and emotional responsiveness in K–12 schools, the emergence of SEL as both a pedagogical and policy priority invites a closer look at how teacher educators are responding. Across Oregon, teacher educators are making choices about how to introduce and model SEL in their programs—decisions shaped by personal beliefs, institutional priorities, and policy expectations. Implementation unfolds through everyday actions and interpretations, shaped as much by local context as by formal guidance. Chapter II turns to this systems-level landscape, with particular attention to Oregon's evolving response to SEL standards.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE SYNTHESIS

The historical development of teacher preparation systems laid the groundwork for today's educator accountability structures, evolving accreditation expectations, and growing recognition of the importance of social and emotional learning (SEL) as a foundation for effective teaching and learning. As teacher education became increasingly standardized in response to calls for measurable outcomes and professionalization, relational and emotional aspects of teaching were often deprioritized or rendered invisible in formal assessments of teacher quality. Over time, a growing research base illuminated the limitations of compliance-centered models, highlighting how student learning, educator well-being, and classroom climate all depend on social and emotional competencies. In this way, the rise of SEL in teacher preparation is not only a product of advancing developmental science—it also reflects a response to the unintended consequences of narrow, accountability-driven reforms. These historical developments also contextualize Oregon's present-day challenges, including a fragmented oversight landscape, growing demands for culturally responsive teaching, and systemic gaps in the integration of SEL into educator preparation programs (EPPs).

This chapter synthesizes literature and evidence across four areas. First, it reviews the emergence of SEL in educator preparation and introduces key definitions related to adult social and emotional competence (SEC) and "SEL-ready" teaching. Second, it examines research on teacher educator modeling and the role of institutional culture in shaping candidate learning and implementation. Third, it summarizes evidence on the social and emotional demands of teaching, including well-being, burn-out, and workforce retention, to underscore why adult SEL must be addressed early in the professional pipeline. Finally, it situates Oregon's SEL standards within

the state's dual-agency policy landscape and summarizes what is currently known from statewide data and implementation efforts, highlighting gaps that motivate the present study.

Recent scholarship defines "SEL-ready" teachers as those who possess strong personal social and emotional skills and feel confident teaching and modeling SEL practices across diverse classroom settings (Hon et al., 2025). In other words, teacher SEL—also referred to as adult SEC—encompasses both the internal capacities and instructional confidence educators need to engage in equity-focused, relational teaching. Effective SEL integration requires more than theoretical knowledge—it depends on relational engagement, emotional regulation, and opportunities for candidates to practice SEL in applied, culturally responsive ways.

Teacher educators' modeling plays a critical role in how teacher candidates internalize SEL. Sauve's (2023) study of Oregon teachers revealed that when SEL was embodied in teacher educators' interactions, not just taught as theory, candidates felt more confident and prepared to implement SEL in practice. Conversely, when SEL was inconsistently modeled or treated as peripheral, candidate perceptions of readiness diminished. These findings align with a broader body of research demonstrating that adult SEC is foundational for educators to manage stress, build strong relationships, and create supportive learning environments. When teachers develop SEC-related skills such as emotional regulation, empathy, and self-awareness, they are more likely to foster trust with students, respond constructively to challenging behavior, and maintain well-being over time (Herman et al., 2020; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Jones et al., 2013; Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

Teacher educator development and institutional culture are central to SEL implementation. Supporting teacher educators in their own SEL development is foundational to any meaningful systems-level integration. When teacher educators are given time, tools, and

community to deepen their own emotional competencies, they are better positioned to embed SEL into course content, model relational teaching, and mentor candidates with authenticity (Hon et al., 2023; Sauve, 2023). Programmatic efforts to scale SEL must be grounded in teacher educators' well-being, professional learning, and alignment with broader institutional values and priorities. Taken together, this literature suggests that SEL integration in educator preparation is best understood as a systemic implementation challenge rather than a stand-alone curricular addition.

An Argument for Systemic SEL

Building on the institutional and policy challenges explored in Chapter I, this chapter introduces SEL as both a pedagogical tool and policy lever in educator preparation. Social and emotional learning has gained prominence in schools and districts, especially as a tool to address social and emotional deficits exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines SEL as a lifelong process through which youth and adults learn 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" (CASEL, 2021, p. 4).

Before the pandemic, research already demonstrated strong connections between SEL and improved student outcomes, including reduced substance use and incarceration, increased academic performance, and improved college and career readiness (Durlak et al., 2011; Greenberg, 2023). However, most early SEL efforts centered on student competencies, especially those within CASEL's five core areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Bridgeland et al., 2013).

A more recent shift in focus acknowledges that SEL outcomes depend not only on student skills and abilities, but also on the broader learning environment, which is shaped by the social and emotional capacities of the adults in the system. Schonert-Reichl (2017) proposed a three-part SEL framework to better describe the scope of influence of SEL that includes: (a) the learning context, (b) student SEL, and (c) teacher SEL. This model reflects the growing consensus that teacher beliefs, mindsets, and well-being are essential for embedding SEL into daily instruction, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

The Social and Emotional Learning Conceptual Framework



Note. From Schonert-Reichl, K. A. (2017a). Social and emotional learning and teachers. *The Future of Children. 27*(1), 137–155.

Rather than treating SEL as a discrete student skillset, this perspective encourages EPPs to emphasize adult modeling of positive skills, relational trust, and the co-construction of caring teaching and learning environments (Berg et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018). This study adopts a "well-rounded" view of SEL, grounded in Schonert-Reichl's (2017)

framework, which includes student SEL, teacher SEL, and the broader learning context. In this study, well-rounded SEL refers to teacher candidates' development of emotional competencies, the use of relational and culturally responsive teaching practices, and the presence of supportive systems and environments that enable SEL integration throughout educator preparation. In this way, SEL becomes both a technical and relational practice that must be cultivated across systems and structures—including adult capacity building, institutional support, and policy alignment (Mahoney et al., 2020).

SEL in Pre-Service Education

Despite its growing relevance in K–12 settings, SEL has not yet been widely or deeply integrated into teacher preparation. A national scan by Schonert-Reichl et al. (2017) found that only 13% of the 304 U.S. EPPs reviewed included any course with a primary focus on SEL, and that in most cases, SEL-related content was limited to one course or embedded inconsistently across the curriculum (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017, p. 45). Programs more commonly emphasized classroom management or school-based relationships, with far less attention given to developing teacher candidates' own social and emotional competencies—skills needed to both model SEL for students and navigate the emotional demands of the teaching profession. Considering these findings and the recognition of the lack of focus on adult SEL development in teacher preparation, Katz et al. (2020) called for a paradigm shift in the way that we prepare teachers, urging programs to support teacher candidates in building their own SEL competencies, including emotional regulation, cultural humility, and reflective self-inquiry. They argue that teacher identity formation is inseparable from SEL development and should be central to pre-service preparation.

> Focus in a pre-service training program must be dedicated to cultivating pre-service teachers' own social and emotional competencies. This includes a) guiding preservice teachers through exploration and strengthening of their own SECs [social and emotional competencies]; b) providing safe spaces to identify, reflect, and unpack their own stereotypes, biases, microaggressions, and c) creating personal care plans and strategies for managing their emotions, well-being, and eliminating culturally insensitive practices from their teaching. (p. 7)

This vision aligns with experiential and clinically grounded models of teacher education, where teacher educators model SEL practices in coursework and mentor candidates in real classroom contexts. However, operationalizing this model presents challenges, particularly when K–12 and higher education systems are overseen by different agencies with competing priorities (Maguth & Daviso, 2018). These cross-system divides mirror the broader tensions between localized autonomy and state accountability mandates. Consistent with national findings, cooperating teachers frequently report poor communication with EPPs and university supervisors, unclear aims for observation and feedback, and limited preparation for mentoring teacher candidates on SEC dimensions of practice (Akcan & Tatar, 2010; Kang, 2021). In a recent NCTQ survey, 60% of districts and 72% of EPPs rated the EPP-district partnership as very important for a strong field experience, yet roughly a third of districts said such partnerships were difficult or impossible (Putnam, 2024).

National guidance reinforces this need for structural coherence in SEL preparation. The National Academy of Education (2024) identifies key features of high-quality teacher preparation programs, including alignment of coursework and clinical experiences, structured teacher educator collaboration, and the intentional cultivation of teacher dispositions such as

empathy, self-efficacy, and cultural competence. These systemic supports, the report argues, are critical not only for candidate learning but for the long-term sustainability of SEL implementation within EPPs.

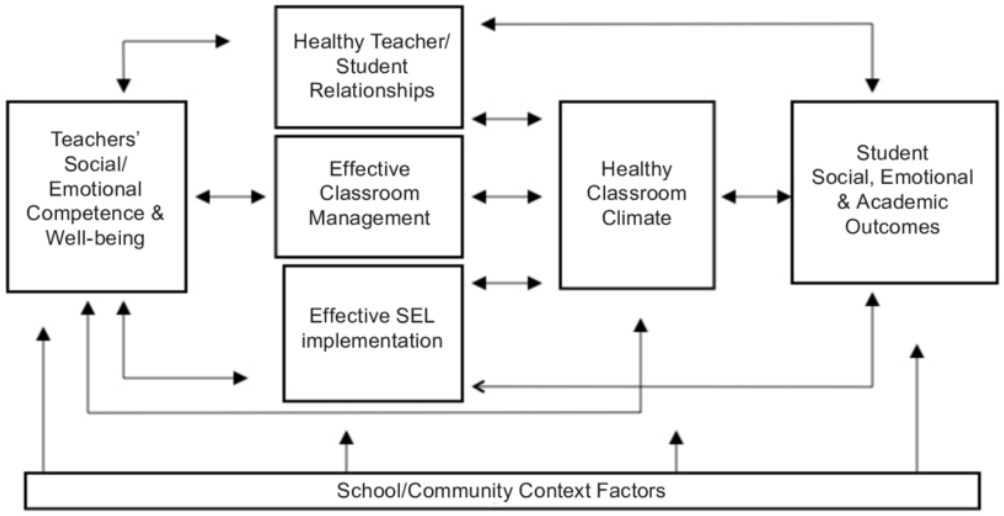
Unique Social and Emotional Needs of Teachers

To address the persistent disconnect between preparation and practice, a shift toward adult SEL development is essential. Decentering the perspective of adults solely as teachers and children solely as learners and instead emphasizing the role of the learning environment in co-construction and mutual growth, represents a meaningful shift in the way many teacher candidates are being prepared. Researchers emphasize that the social and emotional competence of adult educators directly influences the success of school climate initiatives, student-focused SEL programs, instructional quality, and teacher well-being (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Mahoney et al., 2021; Oliveira et al., 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). Recent scholarship similarly highlights that educator social and emotional competence develops within organizational contexts that support adult learning, collaboration, and well-being (Plate et al., 2025).

In the Prosocial Classroom model proposed by Jennings and Greenberg (2009), a teacher's social and emotional competence is foundational to developing strong student-teacher relationships, maintaining effective classroom management, and implementing SEL practices with fidelity, as shown in Figure 3. When educators struggle with burnout, emotional dysregulation, or a lack of supportive professional culture, it can compromise both their own well-being and the learning environment they are responsible for shaping. Stress and burnout have become leading drivers of teacher attrition nationwide.

Figure 3

The Prosocial Classroom



Note. From Jennings, P. & Greenberg, M. (2009) The Prosocial Classroom: Teacher Social and Emotional Competence in Relation to Student and Classroom Outcomes. *Review of Educational Research, 79*(1), 491–525.

A 2022 survey by the National Education Association found that 55% of educators anticipated leaving their positions earlier than planned due to burnout and increasing job demands (Walker, 2022). A 2022 RAND Corporation report similarly found that nearly one in four teachers were likely to leave their jobs by the end of the school year, a rate significantly higher than pre-pandemic levels (Steiner & Woo, 2021). In fact, a separate survey of former public-school teachers revealed that stress was nearly twice as likely to be cited as a reason for leaving the profession compared to insufficient pay (Diliberti et al., 2022). Importantly, this trend extends across all career stages: regardless of years of teaching experience, educators are now more likely to leave the profession than before the pandemic (Fullard, 2021).

In Oregon, the *2024 Educator Equity Report* showed that turnover rates among novice teachers averaged 30.2% annually, with even higher attrition among special education teachers and teachers of color (EAC, 2024). These alarming trends underscore the urgency of addressing adult SEL early in the professional pipeline—not just during in-service, but also during pre-service training. Research indicates that building teachers' social and emotional competence can reduce burnout, foster emotional resilience, and improve teacher retention (Greenberg et al., 2016; Herman et al., 2020; Jennings et al., 2017; Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

Yang et al. (2021) suggest that developing emotional resilience and self-care strategies during teacher preparation can help mitigate stress and promote persistence. Donahue-Keegan et al. (2019) go further, emphasizing that educators "in all types of schools and at all levels" need to develop culturally responsive SEL skills "beginning with preservice training" (p. 151). This growing recognition affirms the critical role of higher education institutions in not only modeling SEL practices but also embedding them into the formal curriculum and learning experiences of teacher candidates.

Recognizing both the high attrition rates among early-career teachers and the emotional demands of the profession, teacher preparation programs are uniquely positioned to integrate SEL development as an essential complement to pedagogical training. Doing so not only helps new teachers avoid burnout—a progression of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment known as the Burnout Cascade (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Maslach & Jackson, 1981)—but also equips them to support student well-being and lead culturally responsive classrooms rooted in empathy, belonging, and care (Colaianne et al., 2020; Gay, 2002; Hammond & Jackson, 2015; Jennings, 2018; Yang, 2021). These findings underscore the need for a more integrated and systems-informed approach to adult SEL, one that extends

beyond individual coping strategies to support long-term sustainability in the profession. This sets the stage for a conceptual framework that links adult SEL development to educator retention at both institutional and policy levels.

Adult SEL and Workforce Retention

Although teacher well-being is increasingly acknowledged as central to student success, its connection to workforce sustainability has received less systematic attention in policy and preparation. Amid rising attrition and burnout, supporting the social and emotional development of educators must be understood not only as a pedagogical concern, but as a strategic investment in the educator workforce. A growing body of research suggests that adult SEL is equally critical to building a stable, emotionally resilient, and committed teaching workforce (Greenberg et al., 2016; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Sutcher et al., 2016). However, most EPPs continue to treat adult SEL as optional, peripheral, or singularly centered around classroom environment and student competency development. In most EPPs, the development of teacher candidates' SEL competencies (e.g., self-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills) is underemphasized and inconsistently embedded, despite compelling evidence that adult SEL can reduce burnout, increase job satisfaction, and improve long-term retention (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019; Jennings et al., 2017; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Building these competencies during pre-service preparation can serve as a protective factor against the stressors of the profession and may reduce new teachers' vulnerability to self-doubt, low motivation, and early attrition (Pikić Jugović et al., 2025; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

To elevate adult SEL from an individualized intervention to a systems-level strategy, it is helpful to conceptualize its role in educator development and workforce sustainability through a theory of action. Figure 4 adapts Mahoney et al.'s (2021) model for student SEL outcomes to the

adult context, emphasizing the institutional conditions, relational practices, and mindset shifts needed to support adult SEL. Grounded in systems change theory (Kania et al., 2018), the model illustrates how coordinated, intentional investment in adult SEL can yield improved professional well-being, emotional resilience, and educator retention. This expanded framing affirms that SEL implementation is not only a pedagogical priority but also a human capital strategy. As such, policies and practices that promote adult SEL within teacher preparation can play a pivotal role in reversing attrition trends and creating emotionally sustainable pathways into the profession.

Figure 4

A Theory of Action for Adult SEL and Educator Retention



Note. Adapted from Mahoney, J. L., Weissberg, R. P., Durlak, J. A., & Domitrovich, C. E. (2021). Systemic social and emotional learning: Promoting educational success for all preschool to high school students. *American Psychologist*, 76(7), 1128–1142. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000701

Perceptions of Preparation and SEL Readiness

New teachers' perceptions of their preparation programs significantly influence how they approach their early teaching experiences, particularly in areas like SEL, where application often depends on how well the content was modeled, practiced, and reinforced during training (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018; Kelchtermans, 2009). Candidate perspectives shed light on how they interpret the quality, coherence, and relevance of their preparation experiences. These perspectives influence how new educators implement SEL practices, respond to classroom stressors, and build relationships with students.

Teacher educators' modeling of SEL competencies shapes candidates' perceptions of what is valued in teaching and what is expected of them (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Markowitz & Bouffard, 2020; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). When SEL is inconsistently embedded in coursework or only indirectly addressed (i.e., presented sporadically through isolated lectures, treated as an add-on rather than as an integrated component, or mentioned without practice opportunities), candidates may perceive a gap between theoretical ideals and the practical realities they encounter in classrooms (Oberle et al., 2019; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). National survey data reinforce this disconnect: many new teachers report feeling underprepared to manage the social and emotional dimensions of teaching, despite recognizing its importance (Hamilton & Doss, 2020; Hon et al., 2024; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). This perceived misalignment can contribute to feelings of under preparedness or disconnection from the relational and emotional demands of teaching (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Exploring these perceptions offers a valuable lens into the broader climate and coherence of EPPs (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006), particularly in relation to SEL implementation. It also provides insight into the extent to which teacher educator and institutional practices shape how teacher candidates perceive their

own preparedness to become emotionally attuned, culturally responsive educators (Weiner, 2009).

The Policy Landscape in Oregon

Oregon's dual-agency structure, a longstanding feature of the state's governance model, reinforces the duality of K–12 and higher education and continues to complicate efforts to implement consistent standards across systems. Gaps often emerge between what teacher candidates are taught and what they encounter in classrooms, a situation exacerbated by local control, agency silos, and limited cross-agency coordination. These disconnects are compounded when EPPs and school districts operate with misaligned expectations and limited shared oversight (Sirotnik, 2001; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Historically, this reflects the dominance of top-down policy mandates without sufficient attention to frontline educator experience and institutional readiness.

In 2017, the Oregon Legislature created the Educator Advancement Council (EAC) to align professional learning and educator development across systems, adding cohesion and consistency between TSPC and ODE (as well as the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, and the Department of Early Learning and Care). However, the EAC could not remove structural barriers stemming from a multi-agency system. Its capacity to fully enact systemic change was limited by overlapping oversight, diffuse lines of authority, and the complexities of coordinating priorities across multiple state entities with interdependent but distinct responsibilities (ODE & TSPC, 2023). In 2021, the Legislature passed House Bill 2166, trying again to bridge K–12 and higher education by establishing SEL standards for K–12 alongside enumerated efforts to recruit and retain diverse educators. The bill identified school climate and adult SEL capacity as critical factors to this work. With the funding of dedicated

staff at ODE and TSPC, HB 2166 marked a significant step in formalizing cross-agency collaboration to support standards implementation across the educator continuum, with SEL elevated as a shared priority for both agencies (Rush et al., 2025; Martinez et al., 2024). This moment marked a transformational shift: a conscious effort to blend top-down policy mechanisms with bottom-up engagement and leadership from the field.

The Creation of SEL Standards for K–12 and Higher Education

To develop a cohesive set of SEL standards across the educator continuum, ODE and TSPC engaged in a parallel and collaborative process. ODE's Advisory Group, focused on K–12 implementation, grounded its work in CASEL's *Transformative* SEL Framework—an approach that expands upon CASEL's core competencies by centering equity and elevating constructs such as identity, agency, belonging, collaborative problem-solving, and curiosity (Jagers et al., 2019, ODE, 2023). TSPC, meanwhile, convened a statewide workgroup to develop educator preparation standards that drew from both the Anchor Competency Framework and the Transformative SEL Framework (TSPC, 2023). The Anchor Competency Framework—a developmental model that identifies a core set of social and emotional competencies serving as anchors from pre-service preparation through professional practice—emphasizes educator growth and introduces a metacognitive layer to support modeling and facilitation of SEL (Markowitz & Bouffard, 2020). Integrating the Transformative SEL lens helped ensure alignment with K–12 priorities and reinforced a shared commitment to equity. Although the two frameworks differ in emphasis, both were selected for their developmental alignment and shared focus on equity. Each workgroup included participants from both K–12 and higher education, facilitating cross-sector dialogue and reinforcing shared priorities.

The development process blended top-down policy mechanisms such as state-level oversight, agency directives, and formal standards with bottom-up strategies including broad stakeholder engagement, teacher educator leadership, and iterative feedback from the field. This dual-agency collaboration and grassroots effort marked a significant intentionality for coherence between pre-service preparation and in-service expectations, while centering the social and emotional development of the adults responsible for implementation as a foundational component of systemic SEL (Hon et al., 2024; Martinez et al., 2024). Oregon's standards development process can be understood as a case study in integrated implementation: melding structural alignment with field-driven insight. For example, both the K–12 and higher education SEL workgroups intentionally included educators from across the continuum—classroom teachers, district leaders, teacher educators, cooperating teachers, and agency staff—who co-constructed guiding principles and vetted draft standards through iterative feedback loops. TSPC and ODE not only aligned timelines and frameworks but also created structures for shared authorship and cross-sector representation throughout the process. This level of co-design is rare in standards development and reflects a deliberate effort to bridge policy and practice from the outset (ODE, 2023; TSPC, 2022).

Challenges to Implementing SEL in Oregon's EPPs

Although EPPs face real constraints, many of these stem from misalignment between policy expectations and institutional conditions. This pattern is reflected in internal TSPC data and in recent research documenting the experiences of Oregon teacher educators navigating SEL standards implementation. Common challenges include limited teacher educators' capacity, siloed agency structures, and a lack of cross-system coherence (Rush et al., 2025; Rush, K., 2025). Positioning implementation challenges solely at the program level obscures the systemic

nature of these barriers. A more integrated top-down and bottom-up approach is needed—one in which agencies such as TSPC not only define standards but also cultivate the conditions for their adoption through relational infrastructure, professional learning, and adaptive support. Implementation should be approached as a shared responsibility across the system, allowing agencies and EPPs to co-construct pathways for meaningful and sustainable SEL integration.

Oregon's EPPs must navigate standards and expectations from a wide range of external bodies including the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC), the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), national accreditors like AAQEP and CAEP, as well as internal university processes such as curricular committees and faculty senates. Making programmatic changes to meet these expectations often requires modifying models, course structures, syllabi, learning objectives, and assessments, each of which must clear multiple layers of review before state-level approval is even possible. This complexity creates friction between innovation and implementation, particularly when timelines and standards are not aligned across agencies and institutions. In addition, educator preparation occurs within a broader sociopolitical context. National discourse surrounding social and emotional learning has introduced increased political scrutiny and debate, which—while not always explicitly reflected in Oregon policy—may still shape how SEL is interpreted, prioritized, and enacted within local contexts.

National research echoes this complexity, emphasizing the need for systemic alignment and institutional support as prerequisites for effective SEL implementation. According to the National Academy of Education (2024), EPPs that successfully integrate SEL are characterized by coherence across coursework, clinical experiences, and culturally responsive pedagogy, alongside sustained teacher educator collaboration. The report also underscores that

programmatic innovation depends on enabling conditions— such as professional learning, stakeholder engagement, and data-informed planning— that support teacher educators' agency rather than assume it. These insights affirm that Oregon's SEL implementation efforts will require more than compliance mechanisms; they will require coordinated investment in the people and systems that make integration possible.

Effective SEL implementation, then, calls for more than compliance. It demands a systems-oriented view of influence, agency, and buy-in. The top-down perspective emphasizes how policy decisions at the institutional, state, or national level shape teacher educator engagement with SEL through structured expectations and resources. In contrast, the bottom-up perspective highlights the role of teacher educators as exercising autonomy and professional judgment in how they interpret and apply SEL within their programs. This includes how they respond to mandates, embed practices in coursework, and model SEL competencies themselves. Equally critical is integrating more opportunities for pre-service educators to learn how to embed SEL into their own developing practice, ensuring that SEL is not only taught about but practiced, reflected on, and adapted for diverse classroom contexts (Markowitz & Bouffard, 2020). By reimagining Oregon's EPP system as both a policy site and a professional learning community, we can better understand the dynamic conditions under which SEL integration is possible.

What We Know

While national conceptual frameworks (e.g., CASEL) provide a foundation for understanding SEL, less is known about how these ideas are translated into practice within educator preparation. The systems-level challenges outlined earlier in this chapter—such as fragmented governance and shifting accreditation requirements—contribute to inconsistent SEL integration across programs. These inconsistencies may reflect deeper issues, including limited

funding, inadequate training or professional learning opportunities, and uneven leadership support for embedding SEL in meaningful ways. Together, these conditions raise important questions about how teacher educators and candidates experience SEL in Oregon's EPPs. As the state's policy agency charged with program standards and oversight, TSPC has played a dual role: setting expectations for SEL implementation and supporting the field in understanding and applying those expectations. To explore these questions, this section presents findings from a variety of data sources: a statewide EPP survey, a follow-up survey of new teachers (defined here as teachers within their first 5 years of practice, a period recognized as critical for teacher development and retention; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Ingersoll, 2003), and case study interviews with teacher educator participants involved in SEL implementation efforts. Together, these sources illuminate how top-down mandates and bottom-up interpretation function within Oregon's educator preparation ecosystem.

Perceptions of Teacher Educators and Teacher Candidates

Before examining how Oregon's EPPs integrate SEL, it is essential to understand how teacher educators and candidates themselves perceive current preparation practices. Research consistently shows that teacher educators' beliefs, modeling, and program design decisions shape candidates' opportunities to learn SEL, while candidates' perceptions provide insight into how program structures are experienced in practice. Together, these perspectives illuminate both the strengths and gaps within existing preparation systems and establish a foundation for understanding how the new SEL standards are being enacted across institutions.

Educator Preparation Provider Survey. As implementation of HB 2166 began, TSPC recognized the need to understand and support SEL integration not only as a compliance requirement, but as a developmental process grounded in current educator preparation practices.

At the time, despite regional and national accreditation, Oregon's EPPs varied widely in their approaches to teacher preparation, with little consistency in how and where SEL-related content appeared (Sauve, 2023). To establish a baseline, a statewide survey was sent to all 15 EPPs requesting information about where SEL-supporting concepts and strategies were embedded within their programs. Qualitative responses from 10 EPPs were coded into minor categories and then organized into broader thematic areas. As outlined in Table 1, key areas included teaching methods and classroom management, environment, and behavior (Rush et al., 2024).

Table 1

Count of Courses by Major Category

Major Category	Conceptual Framework Area	Count
Teaching Methods	Learning Context	11
Classroom Management/Environment/Behavior	Learning Context	10
Cultural/Diversity/Inclusive Practices	Student SEL	6
Humanistic Theory/Whole Child Practices/Wellness	Student SEL	6
Learning Theory	Learning Context	5
Field Experience	Learning Context	5
SEL Integrated into All Coursework	All	1
Educator SEL	Teacher SEL	1

Note: From Rush, K., Mondragon, S., Bahr, R., Plumeau, K., Boe, S., Hon, D., Sauve, J., & Darwich, L. (2024). *Strengthening social, emotional, and culturally sustaining teaching practices: A study of Oregon educator preparation and new teacher perceptions.* Myers Education Press.

An additional layer of analysis aligned Oregon EPP courses to Schonert-Reichl's (2017) conceptual framework. Most courses aligned with the Learning Context and Student SEL domains. However, a notable gap emerged in Teacher SEL, indicating a lack of explicit focus on adult emotional development and well-being in preparation programming (Rush et al., 2024). This finding elevated the need for support structures to help EPPs not only meet standards but internalize them in meaningful ways. Recognizing that coursework content does not always translate into applied classroom practice (Rovio-Johansson, 2019), and that syllabi alone may not capture critical elements like teacher educators modeling or relational learning, TSPC partnered with research institutions to investigate how well new teachers felt prepared to implement SEL upon entering the profession.

New Teacher Survey. While the EPP survey provided insights into how SEL is embedded structurally within program coursework, the *New Teacher Survey* offered a complementary lens, focusing on how candidates perceived their preparation and felt equipped to implement SEL in real classroom settings. Jointly developed by the University of Portland, Lewis & Clark College, and TSPC, the survey reflected a collaborative approach to understanding the early career teacher experience. The survey included 43 questions about new teachers' experiences with SEL in their Oregon EPP, including their exposure to SEL content, perceptions of teacher educators modeling, and feelings of preparedness to support students' SEL, regulate their own behavior under stress, manage teaching-related challenges, and reflect on their cultural background to promote equity (Hon et al., 2024). Most questions asked candidates to rate their preparation using a five-point Likert scale (e.g., 0 = *Very Poorly Prepared* to 4 = *Very Well Prepared*), with a few additional questions requesting qualitative information about their experiences.

Although overall participation was low, (n = 276; 6.75% participation rate), all Oregon EPPs were represented, and rates of participation reflect the proportion of completers from each program. Three of the survey questions align to the conceptual framework components proposed by Schonert-Reichl (2017) and are outlined below:

As you began your teaching career, how well do you feel your teacher preparation program prepared you to:

1. Know how to develop and maintain a caring and supportive learning environment where the social and emotional development of students is nurtured? (e.g., Learning Context).
2. Develop your own social and emotional skills and capacity so that you can successfully manage the challenges and stressors of teaching? (e.g., Teacher SEL).
3. Know how to provide SEL–based instruction to students? (e.g., Student SEL).

Overall, about 70% of individuals surveyed (n = 196) indicated that they felt, at minimum, prepared (*Prepared*, *Well Prepared*, or *Very Well Prepared*) to create an SEL-supportive learning environment. However, only about half the individuals who completed the survey (48%, n = 132) reported feelings of at least *Prepared* to develop their own SEL skills to manage the challenges and stressors of teaching and provide SEL-based instruction to students (49%, n = 135; Rush et al., 2024). These findings mirror national patterns indicating that many new teachers enter the field without adequate SEL preparation (Hamilton & Doss, 2020; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017). Given the central role teachers play in creating emotionally supportive classrooms, these gaps raise important questions about how teacher candidates perceive their readiness and how teacher educators perceive their role in supporting that development. Presenting these findings helps ground the study's focus on perception—not only what SEL is

taught, but how it is experienced and internalized by those preparing to enter or support the profession.

Key Insights from EPP-Led SEL Implementation Efforts

To complement the survey data and deepen understanding of how SEL policy is being enacted in educator preparation, this section highlights key learnings from a series of teacher educators- and program-led implementation efforts across Oregon. Rather than offering a static inventory of activities, the goal is to surface insights about what supports or hinders meaningful SEL integration at the institutional and instructional levels. The following subsections focus on three illustrative efforts: strategic planning through Educator Equity Plans, cross-institutional collaboration via OCSEP, and capacity-building through the Teacher Educator Institute (TEI). Each provides a window into the conditions, challenges, and enablers of SEL-focused systems change in higher education.

Leveraging Institutional Planning for SEL Implementation. Originally developed to meet state equity mandates (Oregon Legislature, 2015), Educator Equity Plans outline EPP's institutional strategies for recruiting and retaining a diverse teacher workforce. Increasingly, these plans have evolved into mechanisms for embedding relational and culturally sustaining practices aligned with SEL. For example, Eastern Oregon University's 2024–2026 plan includes a Mentor Teacher Training with an Equity Lens, designed to build adult SEL competencies such as relational trust, reflective practice, and bias awareness among those supervising teacher candidates (Eastern Oregon University, 2024). Oregon State University's plan for the same period centers on improving the learning environment for teacher candidates of color, linking teacher educators' development in culturally responsive teaching to student retention and belonging (Oregon State University, 2024).

Shared Understanding Through Cross-Institutional Collaboration. OCSEP was founded in 2022 by three higher education faculty members to foster cross-institutional dialogue about SEL implementation in teacher preparation. Today, it includes 60 members representing all 15 EPPs in Oregon. Interviews with five OCSEP members conducted in 2024 examined their perspectives on what facilitates or hinders implementation of Oregon's SEL standards in EPPs. Findings suggest that teacher educators with a strong grounding in SEL—through personal experience, prior training, or research—report greater confidence and effectiveness in supporting implementation (Rush et al., 2025). Targeted professional learning, including cross-institutional collaboration, was also identified as a key facilitator.

Of the findings, three teacher educators emphasized the significance of a deep understanding of the value of SEL, either from research, background, or personal experience (Rush et al., 2025). Teacher educators who have a well-established grounding in SEL or similar areas reported greater effectiveness in supporting its implementation. Targeted professional learning, including collaboration with teacher educators from other institutions, was also identified as a facilitator. Research suggests that the social nature of communities of practice allows participants to gain increased confidence and motivation and to think about and apply new ideas to their teaching (Vescio et al., 2008; Wenger, 1998; Wilson et al., 2020). Other factors were elevated as both a facilitator and a challenge. Leadership buy-in was identified as a facilitator when the leader engaged fully in the process of implementation, but when leaders were noted to be passively supportive, they were seen as a barrier, causing the work to remain siloed within a single program or teacher educator member (Rush et al., 2024).

Strengthening Teacher Educator Practice Through Targeted Professional Learning. Building on the foundational work of OCSEP and under the facilitation of the Center for

Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child (CRTWC), the Teacher Educator Institute (TEI) was launched to provide Oregon teacher educators with sustained, high-impact professional learning in culturally responsive SEL. The TEI takes an experiential, hands-on approach to cultivating teacher educators' SEL competencies and asset-based mindsets, as well as equipping them with practical strategies to support teacher candidates' SEL competency development and enactment of culturally responsive SEL practices in their teaching. Its central aim is to embed culturally responsive SEL across coursework and program design in support of whole-teacher development.

The TEI engaged 32 teacher educators, with representatives from all 15 Oregon EPPs through a yearlong community of practice, anchored in CRTWC's Anchor Competencies Framework (Markowitz & Bouffard, 2022). Program components included a two-day in-person launch retreat, monthly virtual sessions, and a culminating capstone retreat. Participants explored a research-informed framework designed to make culturally responsive SEL tangible and to help provide a common language for embedding a focus on culturally responsive SEL throughout educator preparation.

Early Evidence of Impact. A qualitative analysis of TEI participant reflections, conducted as part of a program evaluation (Rush, 2025), surfaced three central themes: collaborative learning, modeling and reflection, and practical application. Participants noted that the TEI fostered deeper professional connection, increased confidence in implementing SEL practices, and encouraged both mindset and instructional shifts. Many described a reconceptualization of SEL—not solely as a student-facing skillset, but as a relational and internal practice to be modeled throughout teacher preparation. Engagement with the Anchor Competencies Framework provided a common structure and shared language, supporting teacher

educators in embedding SEL more intentionally within their institutional and instructional contexts.

Analysis of TEI Action Plans. To examine SEL implementation across Oregon EPPs, 13 EPP-specific action plans were submitted as a Capstone project by the various EPP faculty participating in the TEI. I conducted a qualitative content analysis of the 13 submitted action plans, categorizing them based on the presence and depth of key SEL implementation components. Coding drew on established implementation frameworks (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Fixsen et al., 2005) and considered both specificity of actions and the institutional conditions supporting SEL integration. Plans were then grouped into three implementation stages—e*arly, moderate,* and *advanced*—aligned with the exploration, installation, and initial implementation phases described by Fixsen et al. (2005). Of the 13 action plans, five reflected *early-stage implementation*, six reflected *moderate-stage implementation*, and two reflected *advanced-stage implementation*.

Early-stage implementers emphasized exploratory efforts such as teacher educators' development, developing shared language, and planning for future integration—characteristics aligned with the exploration and installation phases described by Fixsen et al. (2005), where institutions build readiness. These efforts often relied on individual initiative rather than systemic structures. Barriers most noted in early-stage plans included limited time, uncertainty about how to begin, and difficulty engaging adjunct teacher educators. One plan stated that "time continues to be a major challenge for meaningful implementation," while another cited "varying levels of readiness among faculty" and a need for "a common starting point."

Moderate-stage implementers, in contrast, described plans that blended early-stage activities with more advanced systems thinking. While barriers such as adjunct engagement and

limited capacity persisted, these plans documented concrete innovations such as piloting SEL-aligned assignments, initiating faculty learning communities, and redesigning syllabi to align with SEL frameworks. These hybrid profiles reflect programs in active transition—building coherence, but not yet at scale (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Fullan, 2016).

Advanced-stage implementers demonstrated deeper systems-level integration. These plans described curriculum mapping, alignment of field placements, governance structures to support SEL implementation, and mechanisms for ongoing monitoring. Facilitators cited by these teams included leadership support, protected collaboration time for curriculum planning and framework alignment, and coherence with institutional values such as "relational pedagogy" and "equity-centered practice." One team shared that "our dean has supported dedicated work time for SEL curriculum mapping," indicating tangible institutional commitment.

Across institutions, several key barriers and facilitators emerged. Barriers included time constraints, unclear frameworks (e.g., confusion between K–12 SEL standards and EPP-specific expectations), lack of external accountability or enforcement mechanisms from state agencies such as TSPC, and limited engagement from adjunct faculty who often lacked access to institutional PD. Facilitators included alignment with institutional mission (e.g., one HSI emphasized culturally sustaining SEL as part of its strategic plan), access to shared tools such as the Anchor Competencies Framework, and bottom-up faculty initiative (e.g., one faculty team initiated monthly "SEL lab" discussions across departments).

These findings echo conditions emphasized in implementation research. Durlak and DuPre (2008) highlight the importance of organizational capacity—including time, leadership, and professional development—as well as a supportive climate. Bryk et al. (2015) emphasizes coherence and shared meaning as foundational for sustainable change. Institutions with

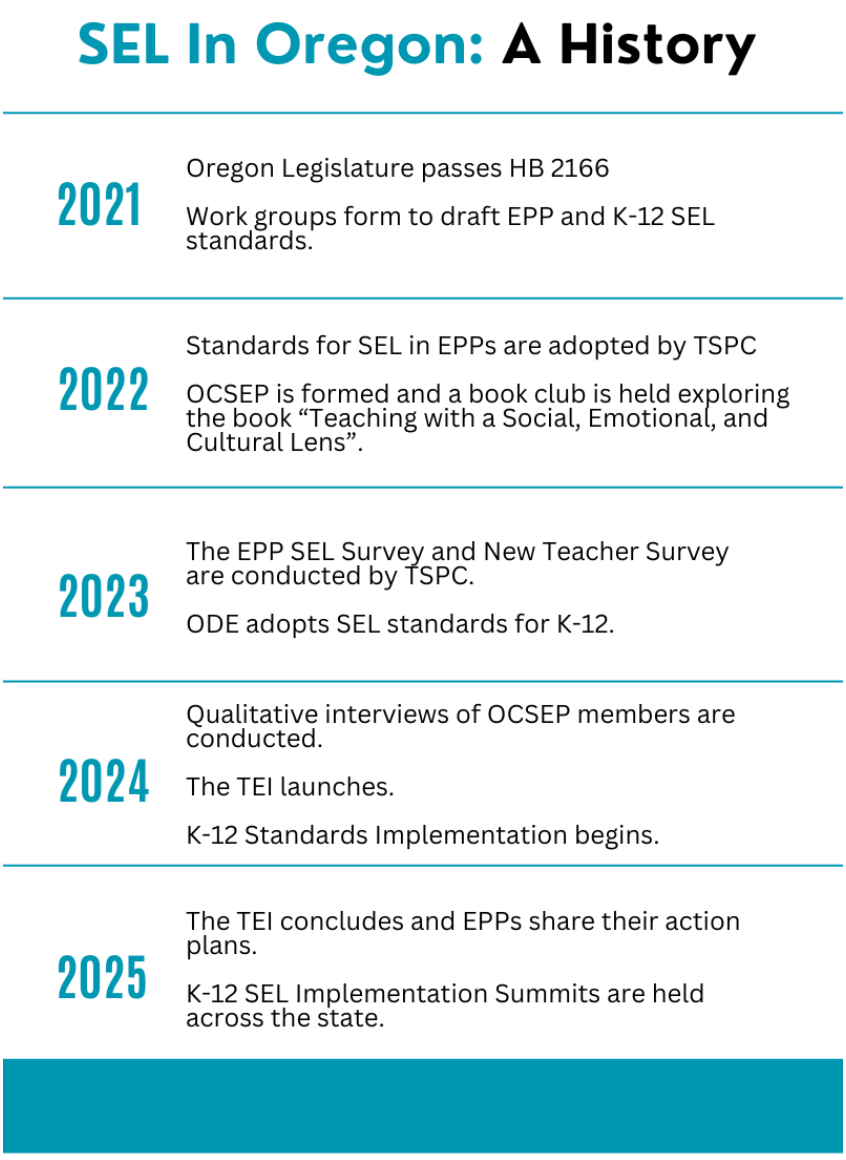
advanced-stage plans more consistently exhibited these enabling conditions, while early-stage institutions reflected fragmented or siloed efforts.

A Complex Integration of Systems

Taken together, these data sources and initiatives reveal a dynamic but uneven landscape of SEL implementation across Oregon's educator preparation system. Although policy mandates such as HB 2166 have established clear state-level expectations, the translation of those standards into preparation and practice is shaped by a complex interplay of top-down directives, institutional responses, and the extent and nature of faculty-driven efforts. Initiatives like the TEI highlight the power of professional learning communities to drive bottom-up change, but they operate within broader systems of accountability, resourcing, and local context. The following timeline (see Figure 5) synthesizes these key milestones, illustrating how policy, institutional activity, and practitioner agency have intersected to shape Oregon's evolving SEL implementation landscape.

Figure 5

Timeline of Key SEL Initiatives in Oregon 2021–2025



Note. This figure synthesizes the progression of SEL policy mandates, institutional efforts, and educator-led initiatives, illustrating how statewide and program-level actions have intersected to support SEL implementation.

What We Need to Know

Taken together, the EPP and new teacher surveys, alongside insights from OCSEP and the TEI, point to both promise and persistent gaps in SEL implementation across Oregon's EPPs. While many programs include SEL-aligned content, there remains a noticeable lack of emphasis on educator SEL and teacher educator modeling. As Schonert-Reichl (2017) asserts, "teachers do not just need to know how to explicitly teach social and emotional skills; they also need the knowledge, dispositions, and skills for creating a safe, caring, supportive, and responsive school and classroom community." This includes the ability to manage stress, build relational trust, and navigate emotionally complex work environments—all capacities that are cultivated through intentional preparation, not assumed as inherent traits.

With Oregon's EPP and K–12 SEL standards now in place, EPPs are increasingly expected to model and embed SEL practices systemically. Yet much of the existing work remains driven by individual teacher educators rather than coordinated institutional efforts. This bottom-up innovation, while powerful, often unfolds in the absence of sustained infrastructure, strategic alignment, or policy-enabling conditions. In recent years, TSPC has begun to play a more active role in supporting implementation—not only by setting standards, but by initiating faculty-facing tools, convening learning communities, and embedding SEL into program review and professional learning structures. These efforts reflect a shift toward a more relational and capacity-building stance. Still, questions remain: how can agencies like TSPC deepen their role as connectors, creating conditions that enable EPPs to translate SEL policy into daily practice? The challenge is not simply whether standards exist, but whether coherent supports, aligned expectations, and institutional capacity are in place to bring them to life.

Building on these systemic challenges and emerging state-level supports, the current study seeks to explore how teacher educators across Oregon perceive their preparedness to integrate well-rounded SEL into their courses and programs, and how those perceptions are shaped by institutional structures, programmatic processes, and educator experiences—including individual beliefs, identities, and broader sociopolitical contexts that shape how educators interpret and engage with SEL. Framed within a top-down/bottom-up implementation lens, it aims to identify the conditions and mindsets that influence implementation. In particular, it examines the extent to which internal EPP structures such as leadership engagement, curricular decision-making, and professional learning systems enable or constrain teacher educators' ability to implement the state's SEL vision. By illuminating both the facilitators and barriers at the educator preparation level, Chapter III outlines the study's explanatory sequential mixed-methods design.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

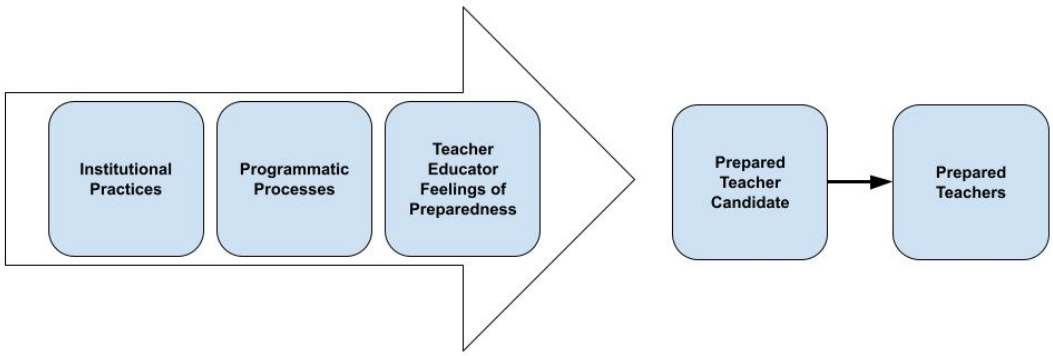
This study examined how teacher educators and teacher candidates across Oregon experience the implementation of state-level social and emotional learning (SEL) standards within educator preparation programs (EPPs). Although many teacher educators are committed to integrating SEL into coursework and clinical practice, implementation is often shaped by local interpretation, institutional capacity, and alignment between state directives and program structures. Grounded in a bottom-up approach to policy implementation (Honig, 2006; Lipsky, 1980), this study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (quan → QUAL), reflecting the assumption that SEL policy implementation is socially constructed through educator sensemaking within institutional contexts. Quantitative survey data were collected first to identify statewide patterns in SEL-related preparation and policy perceptions, followed by qualitative focus groups designed to explain, elaborate on, and contextualize those patterns (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. What factors characterize teacher candidates' SEL-related preparation—including learning experiences, exposure, and perceived preparedness—across Oregon EPPs?
2. How do teacher educators describe the conditions that shape their ability to implement Oregon's SEL standards within their programs and courses?
3. How do teacher educator reflections help explain quantitative patterns observed in teacher candidate SEL preparation across programs?

Figure 6 illustrates the bottom-up inputs shaping the development of prepared teachers within this policy context.

Figure 6

Bottom-Up Inputs for the Development of Prepared Teachers



Research Design

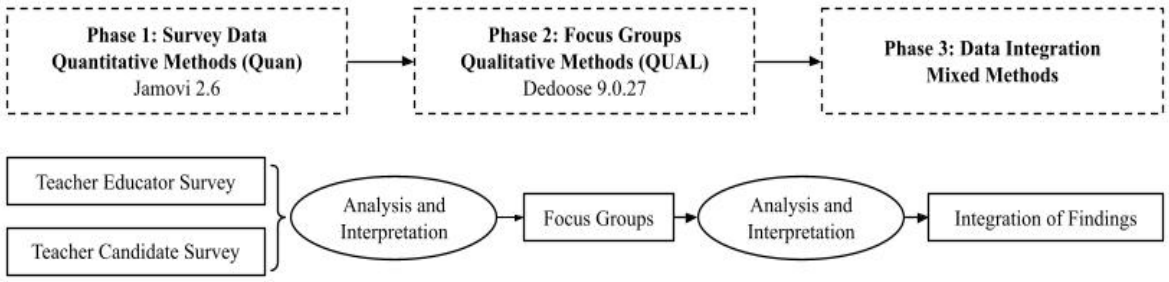
A mixed-methods approach was used to capture both broad patterns in SEL preparation across programs and the contextual factors influencing how those patterns were experienced and enacted by teacher educators. Survey data were collected from two participant groups: teacher candidates and teacher educators within Oregon EPPs. The teacher candidate survey focused on perceptions of preparation to model, integrate, and apply SEL practices in K–12 classrooms, while the teacher educator survey examined instructional practices, institutional supports, and policy sensemaking related to SEL standards implementation.

Following quantitative analysis, focus groups with teacher educators were conducted to explore facilitators, barriers, and sources of variation identified in the survey results. Findings from the quantitative phase directly informed the development and refinement of the qualitative phase, including the prioritization of constructs for deeper exploration and the wording and emphasis of focus group questions. Quantitative results were used to identify patterns demonstrating variability, subgroup differences, or ambiguity that warranted further explanation through qualitative inquiry. This structure reflects the logic of an explanatory sequential mixed-

methods design, in which quantitative findings establish patterns that are subsequently explained and contextualized through qualitative inquiry (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

Explanatory Mixed Method Research Study



Note. Adapted from Creswell & Plano Clark (2018).

Positionality Statement

My professional background as a former teacher and school psychologist, as well as my current role at the Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC), shaped the focus and framing of this study. My work with children who experienced trauma informed my interest in SEL as a foundational component of educator preparation, particularly as it relates to perceptions of preparedness and professional learning in higher education. I approach SEL not as a discrete intervention, but as a relational and pedagogical orientation that supports equity, reflection, and educator growth. At the same time, I recognize that my professional commitments and experiences may influence how I interpret data related to SEL implementation. To address this, I engaged in ongoing reflexivity throughout the research process, including documenting analytic decisions, engaging in peer consultation, and grounding interpretations in systematic analysis of the data. These strategies were intended to support transparency and minimize the influence of personal assumptions on study findings. Because of my employment at TSPC, I also acknowledge the potential for perceived power dynamics in studying EPPs within Oregon.

Recruitment and consent materials emphasize voluntariness, anonymity, and the separation of this research from accreditation or regulatory processes. While these steps were taken to mitigate potential influence, the implications of the researcher's dual role are considered further in the discussion of study limitations.

Setting and Participants

Because the implementation of Oregon's SEL standards occurs within a diverse educator preparation landscape, attention to setting and participant characteristics is essential for interpreting both the quantitative patterns and the qualitative explanations that follow. Consistent with the study's bottom-up policy implementation framework, the setting and participants were conceptualized not simply as background variables, but as central sources of variation shaping how SEL standards were understood, enacted, and experienced across EPPs.

Setting

This study was conducted within Oregon EPPs. At the time of data collection, Oregon was home to 15 nationally accredited EPPs offering pathways to preliminary teacher licensure through undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, and graduate-level programs. These programs vary in institutional type (public and private), size, and program structure, preparing candidates across multiple licensure areas. Because implementation of state-level SEL standards occurs within institutionally diverse preparation contexts, variation across EPPs was anticipated and treated as an important backdrop for interpreting findings. Differences in program organization, faculty roles, and clinical partnerships shaped how SEL was integrated into coursework and field experiences. Accordingly, this study focused on capturing statewide patterns in educator and candidate experiences while attending to institutional variability as a contextual influence rather than as a primary analytic variable.

Institutional Context

Participants in this study were drawn from EPPs within the state of Oregon. Eligible participants included (a) teacher candidates currently enrolled in approved teacher licensure programs and (b) teacher educators involved in coursework, supervision, or program leadership within those programs. Participants represented a range of institution types, including public and private programs, and varied in program size and organizational structure. Participation in the quantitative phase was open to all eligible teacher candidates and teacher educators who received the survey invitation. Following completion of the teacher educator survey, respondents were invited to indicate interest in participating in a follow-up focus group. Focus group participants were selected from this pool using convenience sampling, with the goal of including educators from varied institutional contexts. Eligibility for focus group participation required completion of the teacher educator survey and consent to participate in the qualitative phase.

Participants

Teacher Candidates. Teacher candidates were defined as individuals currently enrolled in an approved teacher licensure program within an EPP in Oregon. Eligible participants included candidates pursuing preliminary teaching licensure across endorsement areas, including Elementary-Multiple Subjects and secondary endorsements. Candidates enrolled in non-teaching programs (e.g., administration or personnel services) were excluded from the study. Participation in the teacher candidate survey was voluntary. Because the researcher did not have direct access to candidate contact information, eligibility was determined by enrollment status in a teacher licensure program at the time of survey distribution. Final response counts and descriptive characteristics of teacher candidate participants are reported in Chapter IV.

Teacher Educators. Teacher educators were defined as faculty or instructional staff involved in coursework, supervision, mentoring, or program leadership within approved EPPs in Oregon. Eligible participants included individuals who taught courses, supervised clinical experiences, or held formal roles related to teacher preparation. Faculty whose primary roles were outside of teacher preparation were excluded. Participation in the teacher educator survey was voluntary and open to all eligible individuals who received the survey invitation. Teacher educators who completed the survey were given the option to indicate interest in participating in a follow-up focus group. Final response counts and descriptive characteristics of teacher educator participants are reported in Chapter IV.

Ethical Considerations

Several steps were taken to protect participants' rights and minimize potential risks. All participants received an informed consent form that described the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the measures taken to protect confidentiality. Survey data were collected anonymously; no identifying information about individuals or specific programs was requested, and IP addresses were not stored. For focus groups, participants were assigned pseudonyms during transcription, and identifying details were removed from analytic documents and reporting. Audio files and transcripts were stored on password-protected devices accessible only to the researcher. Given the researcher's dual role as a TSPC employee and doctoral researcher, recruitment materials and consent forms explicitly emphasized that participation or non-participation would have no impact on accreditation, regulatory processes, or professional evaluation.

Institutional Review Board Approval

This study received approval from the University of Oregon Institutional Review Board (Protocol No. STUDY00001857), on May 16, 2025, with an expiration date of July 31, 2026. The study was reviewed and determined to qualify for exemption under Title 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2)(ii) for research involving educational tests, surveys, interviews, or observations with minimal risk. All procedures involving human participants were conducted in accordance with institutional and federal ethical guidelines. Participants were provided with informed consent prior to participation. The IRB approval letter is provided in Appendix J.

Recruitment

Recruitment procedures were designed to ensure voluntary participation, protect confidentiality, and minimize potential power dynamics. Separate recruitment processes were used for teacher candidates and teacher educators. Teacher candidates were recruited indirectly through EPPs. Teacher educators were asked to forward a standardized recruitment email to candidates enrolled in teacher licensure programs, as the researcher did not have direct access to candidate contact information. The recruitment email included a brief description of the study and a link to the online survey and informed consent form. Teacher educators were recruited through direct email invitations sent using an educator preparation contact list. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained electronically prior to survey completion. Teacher educators who completed the survey were given the option to indicate interest in participating in a follow-up focus group. While these procedures were designed to reduce potential pressures to participate, they do not eliminate the possibility of self-selection bias. Individuals who chose to participate may have had greater interest in or engagement with SEL, or stronger perspectives on program implementation. As such, findings should be interpreted as reflecting the perspectives of

participants rather than representing all teacher candidates or teacher educators across Oregon's EPPs.

Study Procedures

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design in which quantitative data collection preceded qualitative data collection. Data were collected using surveys and focus groups, with each phase described below.

Quantitative Data Collection Procedures

To address RQ1, teacher candidates and teacher educators were invited to complete an online survey examining perceptions of SEL preparation, instructional practices, and implementation of SEL standards within EPPs. The quantitative phase was designed to identify statewide patterns, areas of variation, and constructs requiring further explanation through qualitative inquiry.

Teacher Candidate Survey. The *Teacher Candidate Survey* was adapted from the 2022 *New Teacher Survey* (Hon et al., 2024), which was developed following established best practices in survey design recommended by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2012). The original survey was constructed through a systematic process that included defining survey objectives and the target population, drafting items patterned after prior surveys examining SEL and teacher preparation, and soliciting feedback from content experts and practicing educators prior to final refinement. This process provided evidence of face validity and content relevance for use in studies of SEL preparation and perceived readiness among educators.

For the present study, items were adapted to align with Oregon's SEL standards and the study's research questions. These adaptations included modifying item language to reflect the

roles and experiences of teacher candidates within educator preparation programs, aligning items with programmatic contexts such as coursework and field placements, and attending to constructs related to policy interpretation and implementation as reflected in the study's research questions. Items adapted from in-service teacher instruments, such as the New Teacher Survey, were revised to reflect pre-service contexts by shifting references from independent classroom practice to supported teaching experiences, including clinical placements, supervision, and coursework. For example, items related to instructional decision-making or classroom management were reframed to capture candidates' opportunities to learn, observe, and practice these skills rather than their full responsibility for implementation. Items were also adjusted to reflect Oregon-specific terminology and frameworks, including references to state SEL standards and culturally responsive practices.

Additional steps were taken to support measurement quality in the adapted instrument, including pilot testing with a small group of educators, refinement of item wording and sequencing, and examination of internal consistency reliability for constructed subscales within the analytic sample. The survey included 50 items organized into seven sections: (a) Background and Demographics, (b) SEL Content Provided, (c) SEL-Based Experiences, (d) Perceptions of SEL Preparedness, (e) Perceived Readiness to Implement SEL, (f) Perceptions of SEL Policy Implementation, and (g) Open-Ended Reflections. Items were adapted from or informed by prior research on SEL in pre-service teacher education (e.g., Hamilton & Doss, 2020; Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Yoder, 2014) as well as implementation and self-efficacy literature (e.g., Bandura, 2006; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Lipsky, 1980). The survey used primarily four-point Likert scales, ranging from 1 (e.g., *Very Poorly Prepared*, *No Confidence*, or *Strongly Disagree*) to 4 (e.g., *Very Well Prepared*, *Very Confident*, or *Strongly Agree*), with three open-ended items allowing

participants to elaborate on factors that contributed to or limited their SEL preparation. The instrument captured candidate experiences with SEL coursework and field placement, perceived alignment with Oregon's SEL standards, and individual confidence and preparedness to use SEL in culturally responsive and equity-focused ways. The survey was distributed electronically via Qualtrics between September and November 2025 to teacher candidates enrolled in EPPs. It required approximately 20–25 minutes to complete (see Appendix A).

Teacher Educator Survey. The *Teacher Educator Survey* was designed to examine teacher educator practices, perceptions, and institutional processes related to the implementation of SEL standards in educator preparation. Building on a prior instrument developed for the TEI (Hon et al., 2024), this revised tool incorporated constructs relevant to policy interpretation, teacher educator leadership, and programmatic coherence—key dimensions of bottom-up policy enactment (Honig, 2006; Spillane et al., 2002). The survey included six sections: (a) Background and Role, (b) Teacher Educator Practices in SEL Instruction, (c) Mindsets about SEL Standards, (d) Top-Down and Bottom-Up Policy Perceptions, (e) Program and Institutional Climate for SEL, and (f) Open-Ended Reflections. Most items used four-point Likert-type scales, coded from 1 (e.g., *Strongly Disagree* or *Not at All Well*) to 4 (e.g., *Strongly Agree* or *Very Well*) to assess perceptions of instructional capacity, teacher educator agency, institutional alignment, and cross-role collaboration. Three open-ended questions invited participants to reflect on facilitators and barriers to SEL implementation, as well as needed support. The survey was distributed electronically via Qualtrics between September and November 2025 and took approximately 20–25 minutes to complete (see Appendix B).

Qualitative Data Collection Procedures

To address RQ2, qualitative data were collected through focus groups with teacher educators. Teacher educators were selected as the qualitative participant group because the research questions focused on how SEL standards are interpreted, enacted, and supported within EPPs. As faculty and program leaders, teacher educators are positioned to describe instructional decision-making, institutional conditions, and programmatic processes that shape candidate experiences. Teacher candidates were not included in the qualitative phase because they are less directly involved in policy interpretation and program-level implementation decisions, which were the primary focus of the qualitative inquiry.

Focus Groups. The qualitative phase consisted of three focus groups with a total of eight participating teacher educators. Focus groups were designed to explain and elaborate on patterns observed in the quantitative survey results, particularly areas demonstrating variation, ambiguity, or divergence across programs. Focus groups explored facilitators and barriers to SEL implementation from the perspective of teacher educators, providing insight into how policy was experienced and enacted within educator preparation contexts. Participants were recruited from among teacher educators who completed the survey and indicated interest in participating. Focus groups were scheduled based on participant availability to maximize participation, while maintaining variation in institutional context. Each focus group included two to three participants and lasted approximately 45–60 minutes. Participants represented a range of professional roles, including coursework instruction, clinical supervision, field mentoring, and program design.

Focus groups followed a semi-structured protocol consisting of nine guiding questions. An initial protocol was drafted prior to survey administration and then refined following analysis of the quantitative data to ensure alignment with constructs requiring deeper exploration.

Consistent with an explanatory sequential design, protocol revisions were guided by predetermined decision rules prioritizing constructs that demonstrated (a) low mean scores, (b) high response variability, (c) meaningful subgroup differences, (d) evenly divided responses, or (e) patterns that contradicted existing literature or state-level expectations. These criteria targeted probing related to placement climate, mentor modeling, teacher educator preparedness, and institutional coherence. The final protocol is included in Appendix G, and a decision-tracking matrix documenting protocol revisions is provided in Appendix I.

Sequence and Integration of Study Procedures

Quantitative data were collected and analyzed first and were used to inform the design and focus of the qualitative phase. Specifically, quantitative findings guided the selection of focus group participants, the refinement of focus group questions, and the prioritization of constructs requiring deeper exploration. Integration was planned through a connecting strategy in which quantitative results shaped key features of the qualitative phase, allowing qualitative data to explain and contextualize patterns observed in the survey results.

Subscale Development and Data Preparation

Composite variables were developed to represent key constructs related to SEL preparation and policy implementation. Survey items were grouped into preliminary subscales based on conceptual alignment with the study framework and the intended analytic use of each construct. Prior to subscale construction, data were screened for missing responses, scale directionality, and item functioning. Internal consistency reliability analyses were conducted to assess item coherence within each proposed subscale and to guide refinement decisions. Based on these analyses, minor item adjustments were made to the Teacher Educator Policy

Perceptions and Program Support subscales prior to analysis. Final subscales were computed as mean scores of retained items and used in subsequent quantitative analyses.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a structured, multi-step process aligned with the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. Analytic procedures were adapted from Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) and Ivankova et al. (2006) and are outlined below.

- First, quantitative survey data from teacher candidates and teacher educators were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to summarize perceptions of SEL preparation, institutional supports, and readiness. Quantitative patterns demonstrating strength, variability, subgroup differences, or ambiguity were identified as candidates for further qualitative explanation.
- Second, a subset of teacher educators who indicated interest in follow-up participation were selected for the qualitative phase. Selection prioritized variation across institution types and professional roles to support interpretive depth.
- Third, qualitative data were collected and analyzed through a deductive-inductive thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Focus group transcripts were initially coded using a structured codebook informed by quantitative constructs and the study's conceptual framework (see Appendix K). A subsequent inductive coding cycle identified emergent themes not fully captured by the deductive codes.
- Fourth, joint displays were developed to support integration of quantitative and qualitative findings. Joint-display matrices aligned quantitative patterns with qualitative themes to highlight areas of convergence, divergence, and expansion (Fetters et al., 2013).

Finally, qualitative findings were interpreted in relation to the quantitative results to explain, contextualize, and elaborate on observed patterns. These integrated interpretations informed the presentation of results and the development of meta-inferences.

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using Jamovi (Version 2.6). Data screening procedures included checks for missing responses, scale directionality, and item recoding where necessary. Items originally scored on a 1-2-4-5 format were recoded to a 1-2-3-4 scale to ensure consistency across constructs. Missing data were examined prior to analysis. Overall levels of missing data were modest, with approximately 12% of data points missing in the teacher candidate dataset and approximately 6% missing in the teacher educator dataset. Missingness varied by item and was often associated with role-specific or condition-dependent variables. Missing data were not assigned value-based interpretations; however, patterns of missingness were examined descriptively to identify whether non-response clustered around particular items or respondent groups. In several cases, missing responses appeared to correspond with participants' limited exposure to specific experiences, suggesting that non-response may reflect absence of opportunity rather than omission alone.

Pairwise deletion was therefore used to retain available data for each analysis while ensuring that subscale scores were computed only from complete item responses. Subscale construction followed standard psychometric procedures. Correlational matrices were examined to assess conceptual coherence and shared variance among items, and predetermined decision rules guided item retention prior to subscale formation. Retained items were averaged to create composite subscale scores. Descriptive statistics and internal consistency reliability estimates (Cronbach's α) were calculated for each subscale. Welch's analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were

conducted to examine group differences across contextual variables, including program focus, placement SEL climate, mentor teacher modeling, and teaching status. Open-ended survey responses were analyzed inductively and used to inform refinement of the focus group protocol, supporting alignment with the study's explanatory sequential mixed-methods design.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data were analyzed using a deductive-inductive analytic approach informed by thematic analysis procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and qualitative coding guidance from Saldaña (2013). An initial coding cycle applied a structured codebook derived from quantitative constructs, the study's conceptual frameworks, and the mixed-methods integration plan. This deductive phase ensured that qualitative data were explicitly linked to survey findings and to key theoretical constructs related to SEL implementation and policy enactment.

Development of the Qualitative Codebook. The qualitative codebook was developed through a deductive-inductive process designed to support the explanatory purpose of the qualitative phase. Initial codes were generated deductively from multiple sources, including (a) constructs measured in the quantitative surveys, and (b) the study's conceptual frameworks related to SEL implementation and policy enactment. These deductive codes were defined a priori to ensure alignment between the qualitative analysis and the quantitative findings that prompted qualitative follow-up.

Following initial codebook development, transcripts were reviewed iteratively to assess code clarity, boundary definition, and analytic fit. While the overall structure of the codebook remained stable, inductive refinement occurred through attention to contextual variation in teacher educators' perspectives, differences in programmatic and institutional conditions, and nuances in how participants described SEL implementation. Codes were applied to analytic

segments using a primary-code, best-fit approach, consistent with Saldaña's (2016) guidance emphasizing analytic clarity. Analytic memos were used to document coding decisions and emerging relationships across codes and cases. The finalized codebook, including code definitions, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and representative data excerpts for each code, is provided in Appendix K.

A subsequent inductive analytic phase allowed for attention to contextual influences, variation in teacher educators perspectives, and nuances not fully anticipated by the initial codebook. Pattern coding was then used as a second-cycle analytic method to examine relationships among codes and support higher-order analytic synthesis across individual, programmatic, and systemic levels (Miles et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2016). Rather than collapsing findings into topic-based themes alone, this process supported the development of analytic assertions that articulated patterned relationships across codes and cases, consistent with the explanatory purpose of the qualitative phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Throughout analysis, qualitative findings were examined in relation to the quantitative results to determine how they explained, elaborated on, contradicted, or extended survey patterns, consistent with recommendations for explanatory sequential mixed methods designs (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Fetters et al., 2013). Analytic memos documented coding decisions, alternative interpretations, and connections to quantitative results, supporting reflexivity and transparency throughout the analytic process. The resulting analytic assertions, grounded in patterned qualitative evidence, are presented in Chapter IV.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

To address RQ3, integration in this study occurred by intentionally linking selected quantitative findings with qualitative follow-up designed to explain why those patterns occurred.

In this study, survey results were first examined to identify areas where teacher candidates' and teacher educators' responses showed substantial variation, unexpected patterns, or tension between reported endorsement of SEL and reported instructional experience. For example, constructs such as placement SEL climate and mentor teacher modeling showed strong relationships with candidate preparedness but also varied widely across respondents. These findings guided decisions about which teacher educators to invite for focus groups, which constructs to probe more deeply, and how focus group questions were refined to elicit explanatory insight.

Integration followed guidance for explanatory sequential mixed-methods designs (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) and occurred at two levels: (a) methods-level integration through connecting procedures and (b) interpretation-level integration through explanatory synthesis across phases (Fetters et al., 2013; Ivankova et al., 2006). The qualitative phase was explicitly connected to the quantitative phase and functioned as a purposeful extension of the initial analysis rather than as an independent strand. Methods-level integration occurred through predetermined decision rules used to identify quantitative findings that warranted deeper qualitative explanation. These decision rules prioritized survey constructs that demonstrated substantial variability across contexts, meaningful subgroup differences, or tensions between endorsement and reported experience, as well as patterns that raised questions not fully addressable through survey data alone. These criteria guided focus group sampling, question development, and analytic emphasis. A decision-making matrix documenting each connection between quantitative findings and qualitative follow-up is provided in Appendix I.

Interpretation-level integration occurred following qualitative analysis, when qualitative themes were used to explain, contextualize, and deepen understanding of selected quantitative

patterns. Joint displays were used as analytic tools to align key survey constructs (e.g., SEL exposure, preparedness, placement SEL climate, mentor modeling, policy alignment) with qualitative explanations of underlying mechanisms and contextual conditions. Rather than comparing two independent datasets, integration focused on how teacher educator perspectives illuminated the sources of variation observed in the quantitative phase. The final stage of integration involved the development of meta-inferences synthesizing insights across phases. Through this process, qualitative findings added depth, nuance, and contextual meaning to quantitative patterns, allowing the study to move beyond description toward explanation of how SEL standards are interpreted and enacted within EPPs.

Validity, Reliability, and Methodological Integrity

Multiple strategies were employed to strengthen the methodological integrity of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study and to address potential threats to validity, credibility, and trustworthiness across quantitative and qualitative phases. Consideration of these issues informed decisions related to study design, data collection, instrumentation, and analysis.

History as a Threat to Validity

Given the evolving national policy context related to equity-oriented initiatives in education during the data collection period, potential history effects were monitored throughout the study. During early 2025, federal communications related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives prompted shifts in public discourse relevant to SEL and educator preparation. To account for this context, focus group protocols allowed space for participants to reflect on external policy conditions influencing their work, ensuring that contemporaneous factors could be surfaced rather than implicitly shaping interpretation.

Potential Sampling Bias as a Threat to Validity

Participation in surveys and focus groups was voluntary, introducing the possibility of self-selection bias. To mitigate this risk, recruitment procedures emphasized anonymity, voluntariness, and the separation of the study from accreditation or regulatory evaluation. Recruitment efforts aimed to reach participants across EPPs differing in size, mission, and institutional context, supporting diversity of perspectives within the sample.

Instrumentation as a Threat to Internal Validity

Both survey instruments were adapted from previously developed tools used in educator preparation research. Although the final configurations had not undergone independent validation, steps were taken to strengthen measurement quality. Instruments were pilot tested using think-aloud protocols with a small group of educators, resulting in refinements to item wording, sequencing, and response scaling. Composite subscales were constructed using established psychometric procedures, including examination of inter-item correlations and internal consistency reliability.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter presents the quantitative findings of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study examining how teacher educators (TEs) and teacher candidates (TCs) across Oregon understand and experience the implementation of new social and emotional learning (SEL) standards within educator preparation programs (EPPs). Consistent with the study design, quantitative patterns establish the foundation for subsequent qualitative exploration and integration. The chapter is organized into three sections. First, I present quantitative findings from the teacher candidate and teacher educator surveys, including descriptive statistics, reliability indicators, and results from group-difference analyses. Second, I summarize the open-ended survey responses, which provide explanatory context for these statistical patterns and identify areas requiring deeper exploration. Finally, I conclude with a summary of findings that directly informed the qualitative phase.

Quantitative Results

The purpose of this phase was to describe patterns in SEL-related preparation and practice, examine variation across contextual factors, and identify areas requiring further explanation. Consistent with an explanatory sequential design, the quantitative strand provides a broad descriptive picture while also highlighting questions that survey data alone cannot fully address (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Morse, 2010).

Participant Demographics

A total of 82 participants completed the surveys, including 22 teacher educators and 60 teacher candidates. All responses were collected electronically.

Teacher Candidate Participants. Teacher candidates represented a range of licensure pathways (undergraduate, graduate, and post-baccalaureate), program lengths, and program stages. Table 2 summarizes TC respondent demographics.

Table 2

Teacher Candidate Respondent Demographics

Variable & Category	n	%
Institution Type		
Public	49	81.7
Private	11	18.3
Program Type		
Undergraduate	26	43.3
Graduate	33	55.0
Postgraduate	1	1.7
Endorsement Area		
Elementary	37	61.7
Secondary	17	28.3
ESOL	6	10.0
Program Stage		
Just beginning	54	90.0
Nearing student teaching	4	6.7
Currently student teaching	2	3.3

Note. $N = 60$. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Categories reflect self-reported program characteristics. n = number of respondents; % = percentage of respondents within each category.

Teacher Educator Participants. Teacher educators represented both public and private institutions and varied widely in years of experience. Most had participated in at least one SEL-related community of practice such as OCSEP or TEI. Table 3 summarizes TE respondent demographics. Their varied roles and institutional contexts position them well to comment on both local implementation conditions and system-level supports. Although EPPs varied by geographic location, institutional size, and mission, these characteristics describe programs rather than individual respondents and were therefore treated as contextual features rather than

respondent-level demographic variables. As a result, they are described in Chapter III and considered qualitatively in later sections rather than included as grouping variables in quantitative analyses.

Table 3

Teacher Educator Respondent Demographics

Variable & Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Institution Type		
Public	11	50.0
Private	11	50.0
Years of Teaching in EPPs		
1–3 years	1	4.5
4–7 years	6	27.3
8–10 years	6	27.3
11–15 years	5	22.7
16+ years	4	18.2
Participation in Communities of Practice		
No CoP participation	3	13.6
OCSEP or TEI	16	72.7
Different CoP	3	13.6

Note. $N = 22$. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Categories reflect self-reported program characteristics. n = number of respondents; % = percentage of respondents within each category.

SEL Context and Belief Indicators

Single-item indicators captured beliefs about SEL and perceptions of the SEL climate in candidates' field placements. Among teacher candidates, 82.7% agreed or strongly agreed that SEL is essential and should be integrated with academic instruction ($n = 52$). Agreement was similarly high among teacher educators (90.9%, $n = 20$). In contrast, reports on SEL enactment within field placement contexts showed substantial variation. Only 19.2% of teacher candidates reported that SEL practices were consistently modeled in their placement settings. An additional

44.2% reported rare or minimal modeling, while 36.5% indicated occasional or frequent modeling. Mentor teacher SEL modeling followed a similar pattern, with 26.9% of candidates reporting strong SEL modeling by their mentor teacher. Together, these indicators demonstrate strong conceptual endorsement of SEL alongside uneven opportunities for candidates to observe SEL enacted in clinical settings.

Descriptive Statistics for SEL Subscales

Descriptive statistics and internal consistency reliability estimates were calculated for all TC and TE subscales.

Teacher Candidate Subscales. Teacher candidate responses were analyzed across five constructs: Opportunity to Learn, SEL Exposure, Preparedness, Readiness, and Policy Alignment. All subscales demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's α values ranging from .850 to .934. Mean scores across teacher candidate SEL constructs ranged from 2.88 to 3.34. Given the four-point response scale used across these measures, values near 3.0 correspond to responses such as *moderately, often, or somewhat prepared*, while values above 3.0 indicate more frequent or stronger endorsement of SEL-related experiences and preparedness. Descriptive statistics and reliability values for the teacher candidate subscales are presented in Table 4.

Teacher Educator Subscales. TE responses were analyzed across Practices, Mindsets, Policy Perceptions, and Program Support. Reliability values ranged from .712 to .932. Mean scores were highest for Mindsets (3.62) and lower for Policy Perceptions and Program Support (both 3.04). Descriptive statistics and reliability values for the TE subscales are presented in Table 5.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Teacher Candidate Scales

Construct	*n*	*M*	*SD*	Range	Cronbach's α
Opportunity to Learn	58	3.32	0.61	1.50–4.00	.934
SEL Exposure	58	2.88	0.64	1.75–4.00	.850
Preparedness	57	3.22	0.58	1.58–4.00	.934
Readiness	56	3.18	0.59	1.38–4.00	.883
Policy Alignment	56	3.34	0.56	2.00–4.00	.906

Note. All constructs were measured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 4. Higher scores indicate stronger endorsement of the construct. n reflects the number of respondents with complete data for each scale. Cronbach's α represents internal consistency reliability. M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Teacher Educator Scales

Construct	*n*	*M*	*SD*	Range	Cronbach's α
Practices	22	3.33	0.50	2.40–4.00	.932
Mindsets	21	3.62	0.28	3.00–4.00	.712
Policy Perceptions	21	3.04	0.30	2.22–3.56	.781
Program Support	19	3.04	0.37	1.86–3.57	.849

Note. All constructs were measured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 4. Higher scores indicate stronger endorsement of the construct. *n* reflects the number of respondents with complete data for each scale. Cronbach's α represents internal consistency reliability. M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

Group Difference Analyses

Group-difference analyses were conducted to examine associations between selected contextual variables and teacher candidate SEL-related preparation outcomes. Because several TC subgroups were small, findings should be interpreted cautiously. For teacher educators, subgroup sizes were too small to permit inferential testing; therefore, TE results are presented descriptively.

Teacher Candidate Group Differences. Results below summarize observed differences in mean SEL outcomes across program-related groups, with statistical tests used to identify patterns warranting further qualitative exploration.

Programmatic Differences. Program focus significantly predicted SEL Exposure, with elementary and ESOL candidates reporting higher exposure than secondary candidates, Welch's $F(2, 12.68) = 6.20$, $p = .013$. SEL Exposure scores were higher among elementary and ESOL candidates than among secondary candidates.

Field Placement SEL Climate. Placement SEL climate was strongly associated with SEL Exposure, Welch's $F(4, 6.43) = 12.31$, $p = .004$. Candidates in placements where SEL was "prioritized and consistently modeled" reported the highest exposure; those in placements where SEL "was not a visible focus" reported the lowest.

Mentor Modeling of SEL. Mentor SEL modeling significantly predicted SEL Exposure, Welch's $F(3, 8.55) = 5.53$, $p = .021$. Strong mentor modeling corresponded with higher exposure, underscoring the central role of mentors in shaping candidates' clinical SEL learning.

Teaching Status. Teaching status predicted differences in Preparedness, Welch's $F(3, 16.56) = 4.71$, $p = .015$. Candidates not yet in placements reported higher preparedness than those working in emergency or temporary teaching roles, who reported the lowest preparedness.

Beliefs About SEL. Stronger beliefs in the value of SEL were associated with higher SEL Exposure, Welch's $F(3, 3.62) = 12.04$, $p = .023$. Although uneven subgroup sizes warrant caution, this suggests beliefs may influence the degree to which candidates notice or enact SEL opportunities.

Summary of Teacher Candidate Findings. No statistically significant differences were observed by public/private institution type, enrollment status, or for additional outcomes associated with placement climate, mentor modeling, or SEL Beliefs. Across analyses, the contextual factors most consistently associated with variation in teacher candidate SEL Exposure, Preparedness, and Readiness were Program Focus, Placement SEL Climate, Mentor Teacher SEL Modeling, and Teaching Status. Specifically, differences by Program Focus highlighted variation in reported SEL Exposure across endorsement areas, while patterns related to Placement SEL Climate and Mentor Teacher SEL Modeling underscored uneven opportunities for candidates to observe SEL enacted in clinical settings. Differences associated with Teaching Status suggested that candidates balancing full instructional responsibility experienced SEL preparation differently than those in more traditional preparation pathways. Quantitative patterns were used to prioritize constructs for qualitative follow-up, shape the selection of focus group participants, and guide the development of focus group questions aimed at understanding how program structure, clinical context, and instructional responsibility influence SEL preparation experiences. The qualitative phase was designed to explain why these patterns occurred and how they were experienced and interpreted by teacher educators.

Teacher Educator Group Differences. Teacher educator subgroup analyses were conducted for exploratory purposes; however, extremely small and uneven group sizes made inferential analyses inappropriate. Descriptive patterns highlighted variation in perceptions of

policy clarity and institutional support. These descriptive trends informed qualitative sampling and protocol refinement by identifying areas where clarification, sensemaking, or organizational support may play a central role in implementation efforts.

Explanatory Insights from Open-Ended Survey Responses

Open-ended responses provided explanatory context for the quantitative findings and served as a preliminary bridge to the qualitative phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Fetters,). Curry, & Creswell, 2013

Teacher Candidate Perspectives. Teacher candidates' open-ended responses provided important explanatory context for the quantitative trends. Many described feeling most confident using SEL when instructors modeled SEL authentically and when coursework provided opportunities to practice strategies. One candidate captured this sentiment, noting that exposure across multiple courses made SEL feel "second nature." Others emphasized the importance of explicit teacher educator modeling, describing foundational courses that demonstrated "what SEL looks like in practice."

Candidates also elaborated on challenges reflected in the quantitative results, particularly the influence of placement SEL climate. Several expressed concern about fitting SEL into crowded instructional schedules or sustaining SEL practices under stress. Some referenced broader environmental constraints, including school contexts where SEL was deprioritized or where families might resist SEL instruction.

Finally, many candidates requested more applied learning examples across grade levels and content areas. While they valued the theoretical grounding provided in coursework, they wanted additional demonstrations and concrete strategies—particularly for managing challenging

behaviors or embedding SEL meaningfully within academic lessons. These insights provided preliminary context for quantitative patterns and informed the design of the qualitative phase.

Teacher Educator Perspectives. Teacher educators' open-ended responses highlighted organizational and contextual factors shaping SEL implementation. Many emphasized collaboration—especially involvement in statewide communities of practice such as OCSEP or TEI—as essential support. As one educator noted, participating in these communities "makes this work feel possible" and helps teacher educators avoid working in isolation.

Teacher educators also described structural barriers that limited deeper SEL integration, including heavy workloads, competing accreditation demands, and limited time for program redesign. One participant summarized this challenge by noting the difficulty of integrating SEL meaningfully "when there are hundreds of standards" competing for attention.

Variation in teacher educator understanding of the new SEL standards was also evident. Some educators described colleagues who viewed SEL primarily as a compliance task, while others recalled early confusion between Oregon's EPP SEL standards and the K–12 Transformative SEL standards. These narratives illuminate the variability seen in Policy Perceptions and Program Support subscales.

Finally, educators described notable shifts in program practices following the adoption of the new standards. Some credited the policy change with catalyzing deeper engagement, while others connected SEL growth to broader institutional redesign efforts. These reflections informed the development of focus group questions and sampling priorities for the qualitative phase.

Transition to Qualitative Phase

The quantitative findings presented above provide a descriptive overview of how teacher candidates and teacher educators across Oregon experience SEL preparation and policy

implementation within EPPs. Across both groups, survey results indicated strong endorsement of SEL as an essential component of teaching, alongside notable variation in reported SEL exposure, placement SEL climate, mentor modeling, and perceptions of preparedness. Among teacher candidates, variation in SEL-related outcomes was most consistently associated with program focus, clinical context, mentor modeling, and teaching status. While these findings identified where variation existed, they did not fully explain why such differences occurred or how SEL standards were interpreted and enacted within programs. In particular, the contrast between strong endorsement of SEL and uneven opportunities to observe SEL in practice highlighted the need for deeper examination of instructional, programmatic, and institutional conditions shaping implementation. The qualitative phase was therefore used to explore these patterns in greater depth. The following section presents qualitative findings from teacher educator focus groups, organized to explain and contextualize the quantitative results.

Overview of Qualitative Results

Qualitative findings draw on focus group data from eight teacher educators across three focus groups and provide explanatory context for the quantitative patterns identified earlier. Across all three focus groups, most participants described SEL primarily as a pedagogical stance embedded within instructional practice rather than as discrete content. This framing was raised in each focus group and was discussed as both a strength—supporting integration across coursework—and a challenge, as it often reduced the visibility of SEL and limited the development of shared language across programs. Participants consistently attributed variation in teacher candidate SEL exposure to program structure, endorsement pathways, and clinical placement contexts, rather than to resistance to SEL or lack of commitment. Across focus groups, participants emphasized the importance of clinical placements in shaping candidates'

opportunities to observe SEL enacted in practice, with educators noting that placement scarcity and variability constrained consistent modeling.

Mentor teacher modeling emerged as a salient influence in some focus groups but not others. Participants in FG1 and FG2 identified mentor modeling as a particularly influential factor in candidates' SEL learning, while this theme did not arise in FG3. Although not raised uniformly, mentor modeling functioned as a conceptually central mechanism through which candidates interpreted relational norms and instructional expectations during clinical experiences. Participants across focus groups also described how survival-oriented teaching conditions—especially for candidates serving as teachers of record—limited candidates' ability to apply SEL practices in real time, even when conceptual understanding was strong. Finally, participants emphasized institutional capacity, coherence, workload, and competing initiatives as key conditions shaping the consistency and sustainability of SEL implementation, particularly in contexts managing multiple concurrent reforms.

Teacher Educator Descriptions of SEL Enactment and Implementation Conditions

SEL is Commonly Enacted as Pedagogy Rather Than Discrete Content. Across all three focus groups, teacher educators consistently described SEL as embedded within instructional practice rather than as a discrete curricular component. Participants emphasized relational approaches, instructional stance, and responsiveness to students as central to SEL, often framing it as inseparable from how content is taught. One teacher explained, "It's really not like we're teaching social emotional learning and that we're teaching reading or math" (Teacher Educator, FG1). Another similarly noted, "It's truly like how you teach the content" (Teacher Educator, FG1).

Teacher educators across groups described modeling SEL through their own instructional practices in higher education settings. Rather than relying on explicit lessons or standalone activities, participants emphasized demonstrating relational norms, flexibility, and reflective practice in real time with candidates. As one teacher educator shared, "It's our job as teacher educators to show them how they can weave it in" (Teacher Educator, FG1). In this way, SEL was most often enacted through lived practice and instructional modeling rather than through isolated content delivery. Participants described modeling as most impactful when it included explicit practices such as naming relational moves, demonstrating emotional regulation in real time, and making instructional decision-making visible. Opportunities for co-observation, guided practice, and feedback were also identified as critical for helping candidates translate what they observed into their own practice. Without this level of explicitness, modeling may remain implicit, making it more difficult for candidates to recognize, name, and replicate SEL practices across contexts.

At the same time, participants noted that this integrated approach could make SEL less visible to candidates. When SEL was embedded but not explicitly named, candidates were described as sometimes struggling to recognize when they were engaging in SEL-related learning. One teacher educator captured this concern succinctly, stating, "Maybe it's masked there" (Teacher Educator, FG1). Others noted that candidates "don't always know that is related to SEL" (Teacher Educator, FG2), particularly when shared language or consistent framing was absent across courses and programs.

Program Structure, Placement Contexts, and Variation in SEL Exposure. Across focus groups, teacher educators described variation in candidates' SEL exposure as closely tied to program structure, endorsement pathways, and clinical placement contexts rather than to

philosophical disagreement about the value of SEL. This explanation surfaced across multiple discussions and was framed as a structural feature of preparation rather than an individual or ideological difference. As one teacher educator noted, “There is vast variation across endorsements as to how SEL is treated and taught and incorporated” (Teacher Educator, FG1).

Participants representing both elementary- and secondary-focused programs explicitly contrasted preparation contexts by endorsement area. Elementary preparation was described as more explicitly oriented toward relational practice and developmental responsiveness, while secondary preparation was framed as more content-centered. One teacher educator reflected, “Elementary is very much of a caretaking model first,” whereas “secondary is still very much a disciplinary-based model first” (Teacher Educator, FG3). These distinctions were described as shaping how explicitly SEL was addressed within coursework and field experiences across endorsement areas.

Across all three focus groups, participants identified the availability and quality of clinical placements as a persistent constraint on consistent SEL exposure. Teacher educators noted that programs often prioritized securing placements over ensuring alignment with SEL expectations. As one participant stated, “We all know that finding placements is a challenge,” while another added, “We are just grateful to have partners, wherever they are” (Teacher Educator, FG1). As a result, candidates’ opportunities to observe SEL-aligned practices were described as highly dependent on the specific classrooms and schools in which they were placed. One participant offered a concrete estimate to illustrate this variability, noting that consistent SEL modeling was visible in only a small proportion of classrooms: “We easily only see those practices maybe in about 20 percent of classrooms” (Teacher Educator, FG1). While this estimate reflects an individual perspective, it underscores broader concerns raised across groups

about uneven placement quality and limited opportunities for candidates to observe SEL enacted in practice.

The Role of Mentorship in Candidate SEL Learning. Teacher educators described mentor teachers as central influences on candidates' SEL learning during clinical experiences in FG1 and FG2, where mentor modeling emerged as a salient theme. Participants emphasized that mentors' instructional practices strongly shaped how candidates understood SEL in practice, particularly when candidates were navigating complex classroom dynamics for the first time. When mentor teachers demonstrated SEL-aligned relational practices, candidates were described as more likely to integrate similar approaches in their own teaching. Educators returned to this pattern across discussions, including references to the importance of mentors' prior SEL training. As one teacher educator explained, "If the teacher candidate is placed with a cooperating teacher that has been trained in SEL, it makes it so much easier" (Teacher Educator, FG1). In these cases, candidates were described as having clearer examples of how SEL practices could be embedded within daily instruction and classroom routines.

At the same time, participants also described inconsistency in mentor modeling as a significant constraint on candidate learning. When mentors relied on punitive or compliance-oriented approaches, candidates were often described as adopting those practices as normative. As one participant noted, "If it's more punitive, they take that on as their style" (Teacher Educator, FG2). This pattern was discussed as a mechanism through which placement contexts shaped candidate SEL learning regardless of candidates' prior beliefs or coursework exposure. Notably, mentor modeling did not emerge as a theme in FG3, highlighting variation across contexts in how mentorship was conceptualized as part of SEL learning.

In addition to instructional modeling, relational dynamics between mentors and candidates were raised as an important—but less frequently discussed—dimension of SEL learning. These comments emphasized that adult SEL—defined as the development and ongoing use of adults' social and emotional competencies to support their own well-being and to effectively model, teach, and sustain social and emotional practices for children—was modeled not only through classroom practices but also through how mentors interacted with candidates. One teacher educator reflected, "I worry about the relationship between the mentor and the teacher candidate," adding that "that adult SEL that happens between the two of them" was a critical component of the learning environment (Teacher Educator, FG1). In a small number of cases, participants described placements in which mentors expressed discomfort or insecurity related to teacher candidates, shaping the relational climate of the placement and influencing candidates' learning experiences.

Preparedness Under Survival-Oriented Teaching Conditions. Across focus groups, teacher educators described candidate preparedness for SEL as closely tied to the conditions under which candidates were learning to teach. This theme emerged across all three focus groups, with particular emphasis from educators working with candidates serving as teachers of record. Participants emphasized that candidates teaching under emergency or temporary licensure were often managing full instructional responsibility while simultaneously completing coursework, with limited opportunities for reflection or support. As one teacher educator noted, candidates in these roles were "immediately dealing with the full weight of teaching responsibilities" (Teacher Educator, FG2).

Teacher educators described these conditions as overwhelming and characterized candidates as operating in "survival mode," a descriptor that surfaced across focus groups.

Participants explained that when candidates were cognitively and emotionally overloaded, it became difficult for them to draw on SEL strategies they had learned. One teacher educator explained, “The farther you get to overwhelm, the harder it is to remember the tools,” adding that “when you’re overwhelmed, it’s hard to remember your tools” (Teacher Educator, FG1). Educators also returned to the importance of normalizing struggle during the early stages of teaching, describing candidates as holding unrealistic expectations of themselves and experiencing shame when they were unable to meet those expectations. As one teacher educator stated, “You are normal,” while additionally reflecting, “The first year is very challenging” (Teacher Educator, FG1).

A related but less frequently raised subtheme concerned the need for explicit instruction in adult regulation and growth. Some participants emphasized that candidates needed support in developing their own regulation strategies before they could consistently enact SEL with students. As one participant noted, “We need to teach teachers how to regulate,” while another reminded candidates that “you don’t just wake up and become a great teacher” (Teacher Educator, FG1). Finally, teacher educators described structural limitations that compounded these challenges, noting that candidates often lacked consistent access to mentoring or coaching and had little time or space for reflection. As one teacher educator explained, “They don’t have that consistent presence of a coach or mentor,” and in many cases, “there’s no opportunity for reflection” (Teacher Educator, FG2). These conditions were described as limiting candidates’ ability to translate conceptual understanding of SEL into practice under high demand teaching conditions.

Institutional Capacity, Coherence, and SEL Implementation Consistency. Across focus groups, teacher educators described institutional capacity and program coherence as

influential factors shaping the consistency of SEL implementation within EPPs. This theme surfaced across all three focus groups, with the most sustained discussion occurring in FG3, where participants worked in contexts experiencing multiple concurrent reform efforts. Participants emphasized that while there was broad conceptual support for SEL, implementation was constrained by organizational conditions and competing initiatives, which limited time for collective sensemaking and shared attention to SEL. Initiative overload and competing reforms—particularly early literacy standards—were discussed as persistent constraints. As one teacher educator explained, "The early literacy standards consumed everyone for months," adding that new initiatives "dropped into the curriculum like a ton of bricks" (Teacher Educator, FG3). Others echoed this sense of saturation, noting that "you can only pay attention to so many things" and that faculty "don't have bandwidth" to fully engage in every initiative simultaneously (Teacher Educator, FG3).

Participants also described challenges related to coherence across initiatives and shared language. Across discussions, teacher educators noted that while there was substantial conceptual overlap among SEL, UDL, and other instructional frameworks, this overlap was not consistently articulated for faculty or candidates. As one participant observed, "The overlap is high, but each one has its own labels," while another reflected, "We are not doing a good job of creating a Rosetta Stone between these initiatives" (Teacher Educator, FG3). These comments emphasized how fragmented language and parallel frameworks limited shared understanding and coordinated implementation. At the same time, teacher educators identified conditions that supported more cohesive SEL work, including the presence of faculty leadership and internal champions, who were described as helping move the work forward despite structural constraints. One teacher educator noted, "Having a champion has completely reshaped the work," while also

acknowledging the limits of policy-driven change, stating, “You can’t mandate passion” (Teacher Educator, FG3). In addition, participants emphasized the need for protected time and space for collective reflection, with one participant stating, “We need space to retreat and reflect” (Teacher Educator, FG3). These enabling conditions were described as necessary for sustaining SEL work amid competing institutional demands.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings presented in the previous section represent patterns identified within the focus group data, organized around key areas of inquiry including how SEL is enacted in practice, variation in program structure and clinical experiences, and the institutional conditions shaping implementation. These themes describe how teacher educators made sense of SEL within their local contexts. In contrast, the integrated findings presented in this section extend beyond the qualitative phase by bringing together survey results and qualitative insights to examine how these patterns converge, diverge, or expand across data sources. Consistent with the explanatory sequential (quan → QUAL) design described in Chapter III, qualitative findings are used to explain and contextualize patterns identified in the survey data rather than to compare independent datasets (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Integration focuses on areas where quantitative results showed the greatest variability, particularly SEL exposure, preparedness, and clinical learning conditions—and where tensions emerged between strong endorsement of SEL and uneven opportunities to observe and enact it in practice. Teacher educator perspectives illuminate how program structure, clinical placements, mentor modeling, and institutional conditions help explain these patterns and clarify why SEL implementation varies across educator preparation contexts.

Quantitative Patterns Requiring Further Explanation

Explaining Variation in Teacher Candidate SEL Exposure. When considered alongside qualitative findings, variation in teacher candidate SEL exposure reflects how program structure, placement context, and mentoring relationships shape what candidates can notice, name, and practice. Teacher educators' descriptions suggest that SEL is frequently enacted as an embedded pedagogical stance rather than as explicitly identified content. While this approach supports integration across coursework, it can limit candidates' recognition of SEL learning when shared language or consistent framing is absent.

Qualitative findings further indicate that exposure is mediated by structural features of preparation, including endorsement pathways and the availability of SEL-aligned clinical placements. Differences between elementary and secondary preparation contexts, combined with placement scarcity and variability in mentor practices, shape candidates' opportunities to observe and enact SEL. Exposure is influenced not only by whether SEL is present, but by whether it is made visible and legible across learning contexts. A joint display illustrating these integrated findings is presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Joint Display Linking Quantitative and Qualitative Experiences of Teacher Candidate SEL Exposure

Quantitative Pattern	Quantitative Finding	Qualitative Explanation	Integrated Interpretation
Program focus	Secondary candidates reported lower SEL exposure	Most teacher educators (n = 6) described SEL as embedded within pedagogy rather than taught explicitly in secondary coursework, where disciplinary coverage was prioritized	Lower exposure among secondary candidates reflects program structure and instructional emphasis rather than resistance to SEL
Placement SEL climate	Strong placement SEL climate was associated with higher SEL exposure	Most participants (n = 6) noted that limited placement availability often required prioritizing access over alignment with SEL-rich environments	Clinical context mediates candidates' opportunities to observe and practice SEL, shaping exposure regardless of program intent
Mentor modeling	Strong mentor SEL modeling was associated with higher SEL exposure	Several participants (n = 5) emphasized that candidates closely mirror mentors' relational and disciplinary norms during clinical practice	Mentor preparation represents a key leverage point for strengthening candidate SEL learning in clinical settings

Note. Qualitative descriptors (e.g., most, several) reflect the number of teacher educator participants (n = 8) who raised a given explanation across focus groups, not code frequency.

Across phases in the study, SEL exposure emerges as contingent on visibility and modeling rather than endorsement. Embedded but unnamed practices, inconsistent placement contexts, and variation in mentor preparation collectively shape candidates' opportunities to recognize and enact SEL, even in programs where conceptual support is strong.

Explaining Preparedness Under Survival-Oriented Teaching Conditions. Integrated findings also clarify why preparedness to implement SEL varied by teaching status. Teacher educator perspectives suggest that candidates learning to teach under survival-oriented conditions—such as emergency or temporary licensure—experience reduced capacity to enact SEL despite strong conceptual understanding and endorsement. High workload, emotional strain, and limited opportunities for reflection or mentoring constrain candidates' ability to access and apply SEL strategies in practice were all reported. Across phases, preparedness emerges as a context-sensitive capacity rather than a stable outcome of coursework alone. When candidates lack relational stability, instructional support, or time for sensemaking, opportunities to enact SEL are diminished. These integrated explanations help clarify the quantitative association between teaching status and preparedness. A joint display linking these patterns and explanations is presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Joint Display Linking Teaching Status and Preparedness to Qualitative Explanations

Quantitative Pattern	Quantitative Finding	Qualitative Explanation	Integrated Interpretation
Teaching status	Candidates teaching under emergency or temporary licensure reported the lowest levels of SEL preparedness	Most teacher educators (n = 6) described these candidates as operating in "survival mode," balancing full instructional responsibility with program demands	Preparation occurring under full teaching responsibility constrains candidates' capacity to enact SEL, even when conceptual understanding is present
Preparedness and belief	Strong endorsement of SEL coexisted with lower reported preparedness	Several teacher educators (n = 5) observed that overwhelm and cognitive load limited candidates' ability to translate beliefs into practice	Belief in SEL is necessary but insufficient; structural conditions and instructional supports mediate whether beliefs can be enacted

Note. Qualitative descriptors (e.g., most, several) reflect the number of teacher educator participants (n = 8) who raised a given explanation across focus groups, not code frequency.

Integrated Interpretation Across Phases

Across phases in the study, the findings indicate that SEL standards are enacted most consistently when structural coherence, placement alignment, and relational support make SEL visible and sustainable within EPPs. Differences in SEL preparation reflect organizational and clinical conditions rather than differences in commitment or belief. This variation is also shaped by individual dispositions and lived experiences, including factors such as race, gender, cultural identity, and prior professional context, which may influence how educators interpret and engage with SEL. In addition, the microsystems in which candidates are situated—including specific classrooms, mentor relationships, and school environments—shape how SEL is experienced, reinforced, or disrupted in practice. These layered influences highlight the importance of attending to both individual and contextual variation when examining implementation. By linking quantitative patterns with qualitative explanations, this integrated analysis clarifies how SEL standards are interpreted and enacted across EPPs and identifies key conditions shaping implementation. These findings provide a foundation for Chapter V, which considers implications for policy, practice, and future research related to SEL implementation in educator preparation.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter interprets the integrated findings of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study through a higher education and adult social and emotional learning (SEL) lens. Educator preparation in Oregon operates within a layered accountability environment marked by evolving expectations for equity-centered teaching and increasing demands on educators' relational and emotional labor. In addition, national political discourse surrounding SEL has introduced increased scrutiny and, in some contexts, resistance to SEL implementation. Although not as prominently reflected in Oregon policy, this broader context may still shape how educators interpret, prioritize, or approach SEL within local settings, contributing to variation in implementation. While SEL standards articulate aspirations for candidate learning, findings from this study indicate that implementation is shaped by adult capacity, sensemaking, and institutional learning conditions within higher education contexts.

Drawing on conceptualizations of adult and well-rounded SEL, and Oregon's policy framework—which positions faculty and staff as learners and models of social and emotional competence—this chapter frames SEL implementation as an embodied and relational process. While SEL is often framed in contemporary policy as a new area of emphasis, this work builds on longstanding traditions that center care, connection, and emotional development as foundational to teaching, including traditions rooted in feminist, community-based, and culturally grounded approaches to education (hooks, 1994; Noddings, 1984). SEL implementation is understood as taking shape through how teacher educators regulate stress, engage reflectively with candidates, and sustain relational practice amid competing institutional demands. Extending this, recent scholarship defines "SEL-ready" teachers as those who possess

strong personal social and emotional skills and feel confident teaching and modeling SEL practices across diverse classroom settings (Hon et al., 2025). In this study, readiness is not developed through exposure alone, but through conditions that make SEL visible, supported, and actionable in practice. Across findings, faculty modeling, program coherence, and clinical experiences emerge as central mechanisms through which candidates begin to develop this readiness, making SEL visible, supported, and actionable within the complexity of real teaching contexts.

Statewide survey patterns integrate with teacher educator perspectives to explain why strong endorsement of SEL coexists with uneven visibility and articulation across programs. Candidates reported strong belief in the importance of SEL alongside notable variation in exposure to SEL-related learning experiences and perceived preparedness to enact SEL in practice. Teacher educator focus group reflections help illuminate how these patterns take shape, pointing to differences in adult learning conditions, shared language, and coherence across coursework and clinical environments. The analytic areas that structure this chapter—adult SEL capacity, educator sensemaking, adult learning conditions, clinical placement contexts, and cognitive load—represent points of convergence between quantitative patterns and qualitative explanations. Together, these areas reflect the interaction of individual capacity, institutional learning environments, and policy expectations, aligning with broader scholarship on adult learning, implementation, and systems change. Framing interpretation through these lenses positions the findings as interconnected features of preparation systems rather than isolated implementation challenges and underscores a shift away from compliance-centered models toward approaches that prioritize capacity-building, relational practice, and continuous learning.

Recent national calls to strengthen educator workforce systems further underscore the relevance of the findings presented in this study. In a 2026 call to action, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) argued that the United States lacks a coherent educator workforce strategy and emphasized the need for stronger coordination among educator preparation programs, state agencies, and K–12 systems. The Oregon context examined in this study reflects emerging efforts toward this type of coordination. Recent policy initiatives have involved cross-agency collaboration among TSPC, ODE, and EPPs to implement new standards related to social-emotional learning, culturally responsive teaching, and literacy. Findings from this study illuminate how such policy initiatives are interpreted and enacted within EPPs, highlighting both the potential of coordinated policy approaches and the conditions that shape whether policy goals translate into practice within higher education. Taken together, these findings suggest that strengthening SEL implementation in educator preparation depends less on expanding requirements and more on intentionally designing the conditions that support adult learning, coherence, and practice-based development across systems.

Reframing SEL Implementation

Prior scholarship on adult learning, implementation, and systems change suggests that policy enactment is shaped not only by formal expectations, but by educator sensemaking, professional learning conditions, and the alignment between beliefs, practices, and institutional structures (Fullan, 2010; Kezar, 2014; Spillane et al., 2002). Work on adult and well-rounded SEL similarly emphasizes that adults' social and emotional capacities shape how learning environments are experienced, sustained, and modeled (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Integrated findings indicate that while SEL is widely endorsed, its visibility and articulation vary across programs. The analytic areas that follow—adult SEL capacity, educator

sensemaking, adult learning conditions, clinical placement contexts, and cognitive load—highlight how policy expectations intersect with adult capacity and institutional learning environments to shape how SEL is taken up in practice.

Adult SEL Capacity

A central contribution of this study is the reframing of SEL implementation in educator preparation as adult SEL work rather than as a technical or compliance-oriented policy task. While SEL standards articulate expectations for candidate learning, the findings indicate that whether SEL is consistently enacted depends largely on teacher educators' own social and emotional capacities, reflective practices, and access to supportive professional learning environments. Schonert-Reichl's adult SEL framework emphasizes that adults' social and emotional competence underpins their ability to create psychologically safe learning environments, model self-regulation and empathy, and engage in reflective, relational practice (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). When applied to educator preparation, this framework suggests that SEL is enacted not only through curriculum or standards alignment, but through the quality of teacher educator–teacher candidate interactions and the ways care, curiosity, and emotion regulation are modeled in everyday instructional practice (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). This interpretation is supported by integrated findings across data sources in this current study. Research on systems change further reinforces that sustainable improvement depends on coherence among beliefs, practices, and structures (Fullan, 2016; Kania et al., 2018). Variation aligned with differences in how teacher educators were supported to develop shared language, engage in collective reflection, and sustain the emotional labor associated with SEL-aligned teaching.

Teacher Educator Sensemaking

While adult SEL capacity shapes how relational practices are enacted, sensemaking informs how it is interpreted and communicated. Findings from this study suggest that sensemaking plays a critical role in whether SEL becomes visible and coherent for candidates. Teacher educators expressed strong philosophical alignment with SEL and described relational, responsive teaching as central to their professional identity. Interpreted through an adult SEL lens, these practices reflect embodied competencies such as awareness of identity and emotion, relational attunement, and ethical decision-making enacted within higher education pedagogy. Teacher educators frequently described attending to classroom climate, modeling regulation, and fostering trust and belonging—often without explicitly naming these practices as SEL. These findings suggest that SEL was commonly embodied but inconsistently articulated. Candidates' reports of variable SEL exposure and preparedness align with teacher educators' descriptions of SEL as embedded practice shaped by individual faculty language, course context, and program-level shared understanding. Teacher educators often framed SEL as a pedagogical stance rather than a clearly delineated instructional domain, reflecting constructivist traditions in higher education where meaning emerges through participation and modeling. From a sensemaking perspective, teacher educators navigated ongoing interpretation of how integrated relational pedagogy aligned with policy expectations emphasizing visibility, coherence, and articulation (Honig, 2006; Spillane et al., 2002). While embodiment can support adult learning, reliance on implicit modeling that is not explicitly named or collectively reflected upon carries risk. Without shared language or intentional articulation, SEL practices may remain invisible to candidates, unevenly distributed across courses, or interpreted as individual faculty preferences rather than program commitments. This pattern aligns with McLaughlin's (1987) foundational work on

policy implementation, which demonstrated that reforms lacking shared meaning and collective sensemaking are often enacted unevenly and experienced as individual discretion rather than organizational commitment. These findings reinforce a core insight of the study: the embodiment of SEL through adult practice and modeling supports learning, but articulation and shared meaning-making are necessary for equitable and consistent preparation.

Teacher Educator Learning Conditions

Sensemaking depends on the learning conditions available to teacher educators. The extent to which SEL was embedded within educator preparation was closely tied to the adult learning ecology of EPPs. Teacher educators described navigating heavy workloads, multiple concurrent reform initiatives, and limited protected time for collaboration. From an adult SEL perspective, these conditions constrain metacognitive reflection, emotional regulation, and collective sensemaking. These capacities are foundational for sustained SEL integration and explicitly outlined in the EPP SEL Standards (Schonert-Reichl, 2017; TSPC, 2023). Integrated findings suggest that when faculty collaboration time and structured professional learning were constrained, coherence in SEL integration across courses was more difficult to sustain, and candidates' reported exposure to SEL learning opportunities was more uneven. In these contexts, SEL tended to rely on individual faculty commitment rather than shared infrastructure, increasing variability across courses and programs. When teacher educators lacked institutional support to reflect, learn together, and attend to their own well-being, SEL was more likely to remain fragmented or implicit rather than systematically embedded. This pattern reflects a broader gap in implementation-focused research on SEL in educator preparation, where adult SEL development and faculty learning conditions have received comparatively limited attention (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Kezar, 2014). Coursework analyses further reinforced this

interpretation. While programs emphasized learning context and student-focused SEL, explicit attention to teacher educator SEL was limited. This misalignment reflects broader system patterns in which adults are expected to model relational practices without parallel structures to develop or sustain their own social and emotional capacities (Fullan, 2010).

Clinical Placement Contexts

Clinical placements emerged as a critical site where SEL-aligned practices were either reinforced or disrupted. Findings indicate that clinical contexts function as key mediators between programmatic intentions and school-based practice, often amplifying or constraining candidates' ability to enact SEL. Teacher educators described limited control over placement environments and substantial variability in mentor teachers' relational approaches, shaping candidates lived experiences of SEL during clinical preparation. When mentors modeled SEL-aligned practices, candidates experienced continuity between coursework and field-based learning. In contrast, placements characterized by punitive or compliance-oriented approaches introduced dissonance that constrained enactment, even among candidates who strongly endorsed SEL. This variability helps explain why candidates reported high valuing of SEL alongside uneven preparedness: field environments either reinforced or disrupted the relational norms modeled in coursework. Research on clinical preparation similarly emphasizes the importance of coherence between coursework and field experiences (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Zeichner, 2010). These findings highlight that clinical coherence depends not only on curricular alignment, but on alignment in adult relational practices across higher education and school-based actors. Clinical experiences therefore represent a shared responsibility embedded within broader adult learning systems, rather than a feature of placements alone. Candidates' SEL learning is shaped by the alignment—or misalignment—

between coursework, mentor modeling, and the relational norms operating across preparation and school-based environments.

Teacher Candidate Cognitive Load

Findings from clinical contexts highlight the importance of coherence across systems, as patterns related to candidates teaching under emergency or temporary licensure illuminate the limits of SEL enactment under conditions of high cognitive and emotional load. Teacher educators described these candidates as operating in survival mode, where immediate instructional and classroom management demands left little "mental bandwidth" for reflection or observation. As one participant explained, candidates were often overwhelmed by the demands of teaching, noting that they lacked "the mental bandwidth to think about, how do I want to respond in this moment," and that the absence of partnership in these contexts created a "sink or swim" environment with "no opportunities for reflection on how they want to enact the social, emotional strategies that they've learned." Under these conditions, opportunities to observe and internalize SEL modeling were constrained. This interpretation aligns with survey patterns showing lower reported preparedness among candidates teaching under emergency or temporary licensure, alongside teacher educators' descriptions of the cognitive and emotional demands associated with assuming full instructional responsibility while still developing intentional SEL practice. Policy shifts that expand access to licensure without parallel attention to adult capacity risk reproducing the very misalignments SEL seeks to address (Fullan, 2010; McLaughlin, 1987). When adult capacity is exceeded, SEL shifts from an actionable practice to an aspirational goal.

Study Implications

Study findings have implications for policy, practice, and future research related to SEL in educator preparation. The results highlight that SEL implementation is shaped not only by standards or curricular expectations, but by the adult learning conditions, relational practices, and institutional structures through which those expectations are interpreted and enacted. The sections that follow translate the study's integrated findings into implications intended to inform the design of educator preparation programs, the development of supportive policy environments, and ongoing scholarly inquiry. These implications are offered to guide reflection and improvement across systems rather than to prescribe uniform solutions.

Implications for Policy

SEL implementation in educator preparation cannot be understood or supported through standards and compliance mechanisms alone. While Oregon's SEL standards articulate clear expectations for candidate learning, adult learning conditions function as a policy-relevant determinant of implementation quality. SEL policy operates less as a directive and more as a catalyst whose impact depends on the capacity, coherence, and relational infrastructure of EPPs. Consistent with research on policy implementation and sensemaking (Honig, 2006; Spillane et al., 2002; Fullan, 2016), teacher educators in this study interpreted and enacted SEL standards through their existing instructional beliefs, relational practices, and institutional contexts. The implications that follow attend to policy design features that shape those conditions of enactment.

Policy Design That Centers Adult SEL Capacity. Policy approaches that position adult SEL development as core implementation infrastructure rather than ancillary professional development are more likely to support sustained enactment. Participants described how faculty access to shared language, protected collaboration time, and opportunities for collective

reflection supported more visible and coherent implementation of SEL. In contrast, when adult learning supports were limited, SEL was more likely to remain implicit, uneven, or individualized. Effective policy design therefore attends not only to candidate competencies, but also to the conditions under which teacher educators learn, collaborate, and model social and emotional practice. Emerging research similarly emphasizes that educator social and emotional competence develops within organizational contexts that support adult learning, collaboration, and well-being (Plate et al., 2024). For example, state agencies or institutions might support standards adoption through funded faculty learning communities or cross-institutional convenings that provide protected time for educators to examine standards, share instructional artifacts, and engage in guided reflection on how SEL is modeled in coursework and clinical supervision. In Oregon, faculty-led initiatives such as the Teacher Educator Institute (TEI) and the Oregon Collaborative for SEL in Preparation (OCSEP) illustrate how state-supported, cross-institutional learning spaces can function as implementation infrastructure without imposing prescriptive mandates. These efforts, often supported through time-limited stipends or external funding, highlight both the potential and the sustainability challenges of relying on short-term resources to support adult learning. Such structures make adult SEL learning explicit and collective, reflecting its developmental nature and dependence on working conditions.

Coherence Across Concurrent Initiatives. Participants consistently described navigating multiple concurrent reform efforts, particularly early literacy standards, which shaped faculty attention and capacity. Initiative overload functioned as a persistent constraint, influencing how much time and energy faculty could devote to SEL-specific work. These patterns align with implementation research emphasizing coherence, pacing, and alignment as critical conditions for change (Fullan, 2016; Kezar, 2014). Policy approaches that intentionally

align language, timelines, and expectations across initiatives may reduce fragmentation and support more coherent enactment. For example, participants described navigating concurrent implementation of early literacy standards and SEL expectations, often with overlapping but misaligned timelines for course revision, data reporting, and accreditation review. When initiatives are introduced on compressed or parallel timelines without coordinated guidance or protected faculty time, SEL work may be experienced as an additional demand rather than an integrated component of instructional practice. Without such alignment, even well-designed standards risk being experienced as competing demands rather than mutually reinforcing priorities.

Tools That Support Visibility and Shared Meaning. While standards served as an important signal of SEL's value, participants noted that without explicit articulation and shared frameworks, SEL practices often remained "masked." Reliance on implicit modeling alone limited candidates' ability to recognize, name, and transfer SEL practices across contexts. This points to a role for policy tools that support visibility and shared meaning-making rather than compliance alone. Guidance documents, exemplars, videos, reflection prompts, and implementation look-fors—particularly those that foreground adult modeling and relational practice—may help bridge the gap between embodied enactment and shared understanding. Participants emphasized the value of faculty-designed tools developed through collaborative learning spaces, noting that these resources were more likely to be taken up and adapted across programs than externally imposed templates. Such tools can support coherence while allowing flexibility across programs and disciplinary contexts.

State-Level Responsibility for Clinical Partnerships. Clinical partnerships emerged as an underdeveloped policy lever for SEL implementation. Variation in mentor teacher modeling

significantly shaped candidates' learning experiences, yet placement alignment was often constrained by availability rather than instructional coherence. Although mentor modeling surfaced more strongly in some contexts than others, its influence on candidates' interpretation of SEL norms was clear. Policy approaches that support mentor preparation, shared expectations, or SEL-aligned partnership criteria may strengthen coherence between preparation and practice without imposing rigid mandates. For example, state agencies or institutions might provide optional mentor orientation resources, SEL-aligned reflection tools, or partnership guidance that articulates expectations for adult modeling and relational practice in clinical settings. Rather than requiring participation, such support could be paired with incentives such as professional learning credit, stipends, or formal recognition for mentor teachers—approaches that participants described as effective, though often dependent on short-term or non-recurring funding. Attending to clinical placement contexts as part of the SEL implementation ecosystem acknowledges that policy enactment extends beyond coursework into relational, school-based environments.

Implications for Practice

The integrated findings point to a coherent storyline: candidates value SEL and recognize its importance, yet their reported exposure and preparedness vary depending on the visibility of SEL in coursework; shared language and sensemaking among teacher educators; adult learning conditions that support faculty alignment; and clinical practice coherence. These interacting conditions shape whether SEL becomes a transferable component of professional preparation or remains uneven and context dependent. The implications that follow are offered as interpretive insights grounded in participant experiences and adult learning theory rather than as evaluative judgments of individual programs or educators. Rather than advancing abstract prescriptions,

these implications focus on observable design features and practices that can be enacted within EPPs.

Educator Preparation Program Design. Strengthening SEL in educator preparation requires intentional investment in adult SEL infrastructure rather than reliance on individual faculty embodiment alone. Across data sources, teacher educators described SEL as frequently enacted through relational stance and instructional practice but not always explicitly named. When SEL was modeled but left implicit, candidates often struggled to recognize, transfer, or apply those practices across contexts. Programs can address this gap by deliberately pairing embodied modeling with explicit articulation—making visible when and how SEL is enacted within coursework, instruction, and clinical supervision. Program-level design features that support coherence include embedding shared SEL language and reflection prompts across courses so that candidates encounter consistent framing even when instructional approaches vary. For example, programs can incorporate common reflection questions across methods, foundations, and clinical seminars that ask candidates to identify where SEL is being modeled, how adults respond to stress or conflict, and how relational decisions shape learning environments. Structured opportunities for faculty sensemaking, such as cross-course alignment conversations or faculty learning communities, further support coherence by creating space to examine how SEL shows up across disciplinary contexts. In these settings, faculty might review syllabi, assignments, or observation tools together to surface where SEL is already present and where articulation could be strengthened. Coursework and assignments that explicitly ask candidates to identify, name, and reflect on observed SEL practices reduce reliance on exposure alone and strengthen candidates' ability to transfer learning into practice. Examples of such design features include annotated lesson reflections, structured clinical debrief protocols, or

observation assignments that prompt candidates to connect specific instructional moves to SEL competencies modeled by instructors or mentor teachers. Faculty learning communities, shared frameworks, and protected collaboration time functioned as key mechanisms for reducing fragmentation and supporting collective alignment. When these structures were absent, SEL implementation depended heavily on individual faculty capacity, increasing variability across programs and endorsement pathways.

Teacher Educator Practice. At the instructional level, effective SEL enactment depends not only on what teacher educators' model, but on how that modeling is surfaced for candidates. Participants consistently described SEL as enacted through relational stance, responsiveness, and self-regulation under pressure—practices that may remain invisible without intentional naming. Making SEL visible also involves educators modeling appropriate openness about decision-making and emotional regulation, including moments of uncertainty or challenge, while maintaining professional boundaries. Such modeling supports psychological safety and clarifies SEL as an intentional instructional practice. Teacher educators can strengthen candidate learning by surfacing SEL enactment in real time during instruction and clinical debriefs. Illustrative examples include pausing instruction to name how an educator is managing frustration or uncertainty, explicitly acknowledging moments of relational repair after classroom tension, or explaining why a particular response was chosen to maintain psychological safety. Inviting candidates into reflective dialogue about adult SEL, including how stress and workload shape instructional decision-making, further supports transfer. For example, educators might briefly narrate their thinking during challenging instructional moments, invite candidates to discuss alternative responses during debriefs, or use structured reflection prompts that ask candidates to consider how institutional expectations influenced instructional choices. Modeling reflective

sensemaking by making visible how educators interpret policy expectations, balance competing demands, and adapt practice in context reinforces SEL as a professional competency. Illustrative practices include discussing how course requirements, licensure expectations, or accountability pressures shape instructional decisions, or transparently explaining how educators navigate tensions between ideal practice and real-world constraints. Together, these practices position adult SEL capacity as a prerequisite for sustainable SEL enactment, particularly in high-demand or resource-constrained environments.

Clinical Partnerships. Clinical placements play a central role in shaping candidates' SEL learning. When mentor teachers modeled SEL-aligned practices, candidates experienced clearer and more transferable learning; when placements relied on punitive or compliance-oriented approaches, candidates often adopted those norms regardless of coursework exposure. These patterns underscore clinical coherence as a shared responsibility across preparation systems. Programs can strengthen clinical alignment by improving communication with clinical partners around SEL expectations, even when placement availability is limited. Supporting mentor teachers in understanding their role as models of adult SEL—not only instructional technique—may further enhance coherence. Incorporating structured reflection on clinical experiences, particularly when candidates encounter misalignment between coursework values and field practices, helps candidates make sense of competing norms and sustain SEL-aligned practice.

Implications for Research

This study contributes to scholarship on SEL and educator preparation by integrating three bodies of research that have often remained siloed: (a) SEL in pre-service and in-service teacher preparation, (b) adult learning and professional capacity in higher education, and (c)

policy implementation and sensemaking in education systems. Prior research has documented the importance of modeling, relational pedagogy, and program coherence for candidate SEL learning (e.g., Hon et al., 2024; Sauvé, 2023; Schonert-Reichl, 2017), while parallel literatures emphasize faculty agency, institutional culture, and adult learning conditions as drivers of instructional change (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Kezar, 2014). This study brings these strands together by positioning teacher educators as adult SEL learners working within accountability-driven policy contexts. Conceptually, the findings extend adult SEL frameworks by situating them within implementation processes. Rather than treating adult social and emotional competence solely as a contributor to well-being or instructional quality (Schonert-Reichl, 2017), this study identifies adult SEL as a mechanism of policy enactment—shaping how standards are interpreted, embodied, and made visible in preparation settings. In doing so, the study deepens sensemaking-oriented policy research by illustrating how faculty beliefs, relational practices, and institutional conditions influence whether policy expectations translate into practice (Fullan, 2016; Honig, 2006; Spillane et al., 2002).

Methodologically, this study builds on mixed-methods research in educator preparation by demonstrating the value of an explanatory sequential design for examining not only whether patterns exist, but why they emerge. Prior survey-based studies have documented variability in candidates perceived SEL preparedness (e.g., Hon et al., 2024; Sauvé, 2023)) yet have been limited in their ability to explain how institutional and relational conditions shape those perceptions. By integrating statewide survey data with teacher educator focus groups, this study illustrates how embodiment, shared language, clinical contexts, and adult learning conditions interact to produce uneven implementation—thereby extending the analytic potential of mixed-methods approaches in SEL research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Future research should continue to examine adult SEL development across the educator continuum, including mentor teachers, clinical supervisors, and higher education leaders, whose roles were identified in this study as influential yet unevenly supported. Longitudinal designs may be particularly valuable for tracing how adult SEL capacity develops over time and how it influences coherence between preparation and early-career practice. In addition, participatory and design-based research approaches could support deeper investigation of how EPPs intentionally build adult SEL infrastructure and how those efforts shape both faculty practice and candidate learning. Collectively, such research would further advance understanding of SEL implementation as a relational, developmental, and systemically situated process rather than a discrete curricular intervention.

Study Limitations

There are several study limitations to address within the interpretation of findings. First, findings are situated within Oregon's educator preparation and policy context and are not intended to be generalized beyond similar systems or reform environments. In addition, participation in this study was voluntary and self-selected, which may have resulted in overrepresentation of teacher educators and candidates already engaged with or positively oriented toward SEL. Survey instruments were adapted from previously validated measures but were not independently validated within this study, which may limit claims related to construct precision. Finally, the researcher's dual role as a doctoral student and state agency employee represents a potential limitation, as participants may have perceived power dynamics despite clear communication regarding the separation of research activities from regulatory or oversight functions. Efforts to mitigate this limitation included voluntary participation, anonymized survey

responses, and the use of focus groups that emphasized collective reflection rather than program evaluation.

Conclusion

This study suggests that variation in SEL preparation across EPPs reflects differences in adult SEL capacity, professional learning conditions, and institutional coherence, rather than resistance or lack of commitment. By reframing SEL implementation as embodied adult work within higher education, this chapter highlights the central role of teacher educators in shaping how SEL lives—or fails to live—within preparation programs. Supporting adult SEL is foundational to sustaining relationally grounded educator preparation systems and to ensuring that SEL preparation is coherent, transferable, and sustainable over time.

APPENDIX A: SEL SURVEY FOR TEACHER CANDIDATES

For the purpose of this survey, we will be using the following definition for SEL:
Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) as an integral part of education and human development across the lifespan. SEL is 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 (CASEL, 2020).

Section A: Background and Demographics

1. Which university are you enrolled in?
    - Bushnell University
    - Corban University
    - Eastern Oregon University
    - George Fox University
    - Lewis and Clark College
    - Linfield University
    - Oregon State University - Corvallis
    - Oregon State University - Cascades
    - Pacific University
    - Portland State University
    - Southern Oregon University
    - University of Oregon
    - University of Portland
    - Warner Pacific College
    - Western Oregon University
2. In what type of program are you enrolled?
    - Undergraduate (leads to a bachelor's degree)
    - Post-Baccalaureate (Between a Bachelor's and Master's)
    - Graduate (EPP requires master's degree to earn a teaching license)
    - Post-Graduate (after completing a master's degree and a teacher preparation program)
    - Other (please describe):
3. How long is your teaching preparation program?
    - 1 year
    - 18 months
    - 2 years
    - 3 years
    - 4 years
    - 5 years
    - Other (write in):
4. What is your program's focus area? Check all that apply.

    - Elementary Multiple Subjects
    - Dual Endorsement (e.g. Elementary and Special Education)
    - Special Education
    - Other (please describe):
    - Secondary Single Subject (please describe):
5. What is your current enrollment status in your teacher preparation program?
    - Full-time (taking a full course load)
    - Part-time (taking fewer classes than a standard full-time load)
    - Other (please describe):
6. Where are you in your program?
    - Just beginning (first term or semester)
    - Early coursework (first half of program)
    - Mid-program
    - Nearing student teaching
    - Currently student teaching
    - Completed student teaching
    - Other (please describe):
7. What is your current teaching status?
    - I am not currently in a school placement
    - I am a student teacher in a classroom
    - I am a practicum student in an early field experience
    - I am working as the main teacher on an emergency or restricted license
    - I am teaching on another type of temporary license (please describe)
    - Other (please describe):
8. (Skip Logic) What grade are you primarily working with (check all that apply)?
    - K
    - 1
    - 2
    - 3
    - 4
    - 5
    - 6
    - 7
    - 8
    - 9
    - 10
    - 11
    - 12
    - Other (please describe):
9. (Skip Logic) What type of school are you placed in or currently teaching in?

- Public School
- Alternative School (public or private)
- Public Charter School
- Private School
- Therapeutic or treatment-based school (e.g., day treatment or residential setting)
- Other (please describe):
- Prefer not to say
- I am not currently in a school placement

10. (Skip Logic) How would you describe your teaching placement's approach to SEL?
    - SEL is clearly prioritized and consistently modeled throughout the school day
    - SEL is clearly prioritized (e.g. morning meetings happen, curriculum is taught) but not always modeled throughout the school day
    - SEL is discussed (e.g. referenced during lessons), but not explicitly taught or modeled throughout the school day
    - SEL is not a visible focus
    - I'm not sure about the school's SEL priorities
    - I am not in a placement
    - Other (please describe):
11. (Skip Logic) My mentor, supervisor, or cooperating teacher actively supports SEL modeling and integration. *(e.g., by using restorative practices, co-creating classroom agreements, reflecting on their own emotional responses, or adapting instruction to affirm students' cultural identities)*
    - Strongly Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Agree
    - Strongly Agree
12. (Skip Logic) Which of the following best describes your personal beliefs about SEL?
    - I believe SEL is essential for good teaching and should be woven into academics
    - I believe SEL is just as important as academic instruction
    - I believe SEL is important, but it should come after core academics
    - I'm not sure how I feel about SEL in schools
    - I do not believe SEL should be emphasized in schools
    - Other (please describe):

Section B: SEL Content Provided

Adapted from Hon et al., 2024; Hamilton & Doss, 2020; Schonert-Reichl, 2017

1. How much opportunity where you given to explicitly learn about each of the following? (1 = None, 4 = Quite a Bit)
    - Definitions and basic ideas of SEL
    - Examples of SEL programs, lessons, or classroom activities

- Ways to include SEL in lessons (like during math, reading, or science)
- Ways to create a positive classroom and build strong teacher-student relationships
- Ways to partner with families and the school community
- How to adjust SEL to reflect students' cultures and backgrounds
- How to support students with diverse learning needs using SEL
- Ways to help students build positive peer relationships
- Using information about students' SEL needs to shape teaching
- Ways to grow your own SEL skills as a future teacher
- Ideas for improving the overall feeling and culture of the school
- Learning about SEL guidelines like CASEL or Oregon's SEL standards

Section C: SEL-Based Experiences

Adapted from Hon et al., 2024; Yoder, 2014

2. To what degree were you provided the following opportunities and experiences during your educator preparation program?
   (1 = Not at All, 4 = A Great Deal)
   - SEL topics and strategies were clearly taught in required courses
   - Instructor(s) modeled SEL practices during teaching
   - There was enough time and attention given to SEL across my courses and field experiences
   - I attended SEL-related workshops or trainings (either required or optional)
   - I received support from my school or district to manage stress and well-being during student teaching
   - I was encouraged to think about my teaching through an SEL perspective
   - I had chances to reflect on equity, race, and culture through SEL activities or discussions
   - I received feedback on how I used SEL during student teaching or practicum

Section D: Perceptions of SEL Preparedness

Adapted from Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Hon et al., 2024

3. How well do you feel your program prepared you to:
   (1 = Very Poorly, 4 = Very Well Prepared)
   - Teach SEL skills to students
   - Create a positive and supportive classroom environment
   - Include SEL in everyday classroom routines
   - Manage stress and understand the emotional demands of teaching
   - Support students' SEL across different cultures and languages
   - Modify core content to support the unique needs of students in your classroom
   - Reflect on your own background to support fair and inclusive teaching
   - Build strong, trusting relationships with students

- Understand how teachers help shape school climate and equity
- Support students' sense of identity, voice, and belonging
- Recognize and plan for real-world challenges to using SEL in schools
- Use SEL even when it's not already part of your school's culture or expectations

Section E: Perceived Readiness to Implement SEL

Adapted from Bandura, 2006; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009

1. How confident are you in your ability to:
   (1 = No Confidence, 4 = Very Confident)
   - Help a student who is feeling overwhelmed or upset
   - Lead an SEL activity that reflects students' identities and cultures (e.g., reading a story about emotions, leading a morning meeting, guiding peer conflict resolution)
   - Use SEL strategies to manage your own stress and well-being as a teacher (e.g., mindful breathing, journaling, setting boundaries, connecting with peers)
   - Build real, caring relationships with students who come from different backgrounds than you
   - Use SEL to support fairness, inclusion, and student voice
   - Include SEL practices in your teaching alongside academics
   - Use SEL in high-stress or under-resourced school environments
   - Work through challenges at your school and speak up for SEL supports when needed

Section F: Perceptions of SEL Policy Implementation

Adapted from Lipsky, 1980; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980

1. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your program's alignment with SEL standards and support for SEL preparation?
   (1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Strongly Agree)
   - I understand Oregon's K–12 SEL standards
   - I understand the SEL expectations for teacher preparation programs in Oregon
   - My program connects our coursework to Oregon's SEL standards
   - What I'm learning in my program matches what's expected in K–12 schools
   - My program shows that adult SEL (for teachers) is important for success
   - My program gave me support—like advising, mentoring, or modeling—to help me feel ready to use SEL
   - I feel ready to meet the SEL expectations in the school district where I plan to teach
   - I believe it's part of my role to bring SEL into schools—even if the school doesn't already focus on it

Section G: Open-Ended Reflections

1. What experiences during your program have helped you feel most confident using SEL?
2. What challenges do you think you might face when trying to use SEL in your classroom?
3. How could your program or school placement better support your learning and use of SEL?

Follow-up to be included in the drawing for one of two $25 gift cards

- Name
- Email
- I would like to be contacted for future SEL research

APPENDIX B: SEL SURVEY FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS

For the purpose of this survey, we will be using the following definition for SEL:
Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development across the lifespan. SEL is 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 (CASEL, 2020).

Section A: Background and Role

1. Which university are you affiliated with?
    - Bushnell University
    - Corban University
    - Eastern Oregon University
    - George Fox University
    - Lewis and Clark College
    - Linfield University
    - Oregon State University - Corvallis
    - Oregon State University - Cascades
    - Pacific University
    - Portland State University
    - Southern Oregon University
    - University of Oregon
    - University of Portland
    - Warner Pacific College
    - Western Oregon University
2. What is your current title or role?
3. Which of the following describe your role in your educator preparation program? (Check all that apply)
    - Teach required coursework (e.g., foundations, methods, content-area courses)
    - Supervise field placements
    - Mentor or advise teacher candidates
    - Participate in program-level meetings or decision-making
    - Collaborate with colleagues on program design or standards integration
    - Other (please specify):
4. How many years have you worked in educator preparation?
    - Less than a year
    - 1-3 years
    - 4-7 years
    - 8-10 years
    - 11-15 years
    - 16+ years

5. Which student level do you instruct or supervise?
    - Undergraduate (leads to a bachelor's degree)
    - Post-Baccalaureate (Between a Bachelor's and Master's)
    - Graduate (EPP requires master's degree to recommend for licensure)
    - Post-Graduate (after master's degree and completion of an EPP)
    - Other (please describe)
6. What subjects or content areas do you typically teach?
7. Which of the following best describes your personal beliefs about SEL?
    - I believe SEL is foundational to effective teaching and learning and should be integrated with academic instruction
    - I believe SEL is equally important as academic instruction
    - I believe SEL is important but should remain secondary to core academic goals
    - I am unsure about SEL's role in education
    - I do not believe SEL should be emphasized in schools
    - Other (please describe):
8. Have you participated in any communities of practice around SEL?
    - Yes, the Oregon Collaborative for SEL in Educator Preparation (OCSEP)
    - Yes, the Teacher Educator Institute (TEI)
    - Yes, another community of practice (please describe)
    - No, I have not participated in a community of practice around SEL
9. Do you supervise student teachers or influence placement decisions?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Other (please describe)
10. Would you like to be contacted to participate in a focus group about your experiences implementing SEL?
    - Yes (add your email address below)
    - No

Section B: Teacher Educator Practices in SEL Instruction

Adapted from Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009

1. To what extent do you feel capable and prepared to use available tools and resources to support the following SEL practices with your teacher candidates?
   (1 = Not at All Well, 4 = Very Well)
    - Define SEL and its core components
    - Lead a culturally responsive SEL activity
    - Integrate SEL into academic instruction
    - Model SEL practices consistently across coursework and discussions
    - Model SEL self-care and well-being strategies
    - Support candidates' stress management and resilience

- Facilitate reflection on identity, bias, and equity
- Teach culturally responsive SEL
- Help candidates build relationships with diverse learners
- Help candidates anticipate barriers to SEL implementation
- Use the CASEL competencies and Anchor Competency Framework in instruction
- Implement SEL in high-stress or under-resourced schools

Section C: Mindsets about SEL Standards

Adapted from Hon et al., 2024; Brackett et al., 2011

1. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
   (1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Strongly Agree)
   - I feel equipped to help candidates meet Oregon's EPP SEL standards.
   - I believe SEL must be taught in ways that affirm candidates' and students' cultural identities.
   - I can engage in incorporating these SEL standards without the need for significant support or funding from the state or my EPP.
   - Teacher candidates should be prepared to advance SEL even in schools that do not currently prioritize it.
   - I am able to use the SEL standards to advocate upward—bringing ideas, feedback, and practices to leadership to support the meaningful and realistic integration of SEL expectations within my institution.
   - Oregon's EPP SEL standards support high-quality teaching.
   - The EPP SEL standards are adaptable to different institutional and programming contexts.
   - The EPP SEL standards reflect educator input and professional realities.
   - The EPP SEL standards promote equity and educator well-being.
   - Accreditation and program review have influenced our integration of SEL.
   - Our SEL work explicitly addresses systemic inequities in education.

Section D: Top-Down and Bottom-Up Policy Perceptions

Adapted from Lipsky, 1980; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980

1. Please identify where your leadership is on the continuum of support regarding expectations related to SEL implementation:
   (1 = No Support, 2 = Communicates, 3 = Facilitates, 4 = Models, 5= Embodies)

2. To what extent are the following statements true of your program or institution?
   (1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Strongly Agree)
   - Faculty input was used in shaping our SEL implementation approach
   - Faculty have flexibility in how they incorporate SEL into their coursework
   - Our SEL approach blends state agency guidance with faculty-driven innovation

- There is ongoing dialogue between leadership and faculty about SEL
- Guidance from ODE and TSPC is aligned with our local program needs
- There is a gap between state expectations for SEL and our program's readiness to meet them
- SEL implementation is driven more by compliance than by belief in its value
- I understand the key policy drivers behind Oregon's EPP SEL standards
- It is clear how TSPC guidance relates to our SEL expectations

3. How easy is it for faculty to make curricular changes that incorporate SEL into their coursework?
    - Very difficult
    - A little hard
    - Somewhat easy
    - Very easy
4. If no, what is the major barrier(s)? (check all that apply)
    - Burdensome university curriculum processes
    - Burdensome college curriculum processes
    - Multiple layers of administrative review
    - Differences in value among faculty
    - Other (please describe)

Section E: Program and Institutional Climate for SEL

Adapted from Olivier, 2009; PLCA-R; Hon et al., 2024

1. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your educator preparation program's support for SEL integration and faculty collaboration? (1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Strongly Agree)
    - Faculty regularly discuss SEL-related practices in meetings
    - There is a shared commitment among faculty to integrate SEL into teacher preparation
    - I feel supported by leadership in my efforts to integrate SEL
    - Our program prioritizes SEL in planning, resources, and faculty development
    - There are collaborative opportunities to co-develop SEL curriculum or assessments
    - We have revised syllabi, course maps, or key assessments in response to Oregon's EPP SEL standards
    - Our field placement schools model SEL practices aligned with program expectations
    - District partners are engaged in our SEL implementation efforts
    - I feel encouraged by colleagues to prioritize SEL
    - SEL is consistently and intentionally integrated across multiple courses in the program

- I feel isolated in my efforts to integrate SEL (reverse-scored)
- Our program is in the early stages of integrating SEL into coursework and clinical experiences
- Our program has a well-established, multi-year SEL implementation plan
- I have enough time to incorporate the standards.
- I feel supported in determining how to prioritize these expectations into the curriculum among competing institutional expectations.

Section F: Open-Ended Reflections

1. What has helped you most in supporting SEL implementation in your program?
2. What challenges have you experienced in aligning your teaching to Oregon's EPP SEL standards?
3. What resources or supports would strengthen your ability to integrate SEL into your coursework?
4. How do you help candidates navigate placements where SEL is not embedded or valued?
5. How has your program's approach to SEL evolved over the past few years, if at all?

APPENDIX C: TEACHER CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT EMAIL

If you work with teacher candidates preparing for elementary-age licensure, would you kindly consider forwarding the message below to your candidates? Your support in helping to share this opportunity is deeply appreciated.

Subject line: Invitation to Participate in a Study on SEL Preparation

Dear Teacher Candidate,

You are invited to participate in a research study about how social and emotional learning (SEL) is integrated into Oregon educator preparation programs. This study is part of a doctoral dissertation at the University of Oregon.

If you choose to participate, you will complete an online survey (about 8–10 minutes) about your experiences learning about SEL during your program. Participation is voluntary, and your responses will be kept confidential. As a thank you, participants will be entered into a drawing to win one of two $25 Amazon gift cards. Winners will be selected at random after the survey closes.

If you have questions, you can contact the researcher:
Kristin Rush
krush3@uoregon.edu
(619) 504-5223

To participate, please click the survey link here:
https://oregon.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_51mgBDTtYme4CyO

Thank you!

Kristin Rush
Doctoral Candidate, Educational Leadership
University of Oregon

APPENDIX D: TEACHER CANDIDATE INFORMED CONSENT

Consent for Research Participation

Title:	Bridging Policy and Practice: Faculty Perceptions of Social-Emotional Learning Standards Implementation in Oregon Educator Preparation Programs
Researcher(s):	Kristin Rush, Doctoral Candidate, University of Oregon
Researcher Contact Info:	619-504-5223 krush3@uoregon.edu

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The box below highlights key information about this research for you to consider when making a decision whether or not to participate. Carefully consider this information and the more detailed information provided below the box. Please ask questions about any of the information you do not understand before you decide whether to participate.

Key Information for You to Consider

- **Voluntary Consent**. You are being asked to volunteer for a research study. It is up to you whether you choose to participate or not. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled if you choose not to participate or discontinue participation.
- **Purpose**. The purpose of this study is to understand how teacher candidates perceive their preparedness to integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) into future classrooms. This study also examines institutional and policy factors that may influence SEL integration.
- **Duration.** It is expected that your participation will last 8-10 minutes for the survey.
- **Procedures and Activities.** You will be asked to complete an online survey about your perceptions of preparation for integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) into your educator preparation program. The survey will ask about your confidence, institutional support, and awareness of policy expectations.
- **Risks.** Some of the foreseeable risks or discomforts of your participation include feeling uncomfortable or self-conscious when answering questions about your professional experiences or institutional practices. You may skip any question or stop participating at any time. There are no physical risks associated with this study.
- **Benefits**. There is no direct benefit to you from participating in this research. However, the researchers hope to learn more about how social-emotional learning is integrated into educator preparation programs and how faculty and candidates perceive their preparation, which may help inform improvements to programs and policy implementation.
- **Alternatives.** Participation is voluntary, and the only alternative is to not participate in the study.

What happens to the information collected for this research?

The information you provide will be used for research purposes only. Although the survey may collect certain information that could potentially identify you when combined, your responses will be handled with strict confidentiality. Any data points that could reasonably lead to identification will be reviewed and reported in

aggregate form only (e.g., combined totals or averages). No individual participant will be identified in any reports, presentations, or publications resulting from this study.

How will my privacy and data confidentiality be protected?

We will take multiple steps to protect your privacy:

- Survey responses will be collected anonymously. No names, email addresses, or directly identifying information will be linked to your survey.
- The drawing entry form is hosted separately and cannot be connected to your survey responses.
- Survey data will be stored securely on a password-protected computer accessible only to the principal investigator.
- Responses will be reviewed to remove or generalize any comments that could inadvertently identify an individual.
- Findings will be reported only in aggregate (e.g., totals or averages) to further protect individual identities.

While these precautions greatly reduce the risk, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. There is always a small, foreseeable risk of a confidentiality breach when collecting data. Appropriate safeguards are in place to minimize this risk.

Individuals and organizations responsible for overseeing research integrity may be permitted access to study records for monitoring purposes. For the University of Oregon, this includes the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

What if I want to stop participating in this research?

Taking part in this research study is your decision. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to take part in this study, but if you do, you can stop at any time. You have the right to choose not to participate in any study activity or completely withdraw from continued participation at any point in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the researchers or the University of Oregon.

Will I be paid for participating in this research?

You will not be paid for participating in this study. However, by completing the survey, you may choose to enter a drawing to receive one of two $25 Amazon gift cards. Winners will be selected at random and notified via email after the data collection period ends.

To maintain your anonymity, the survey will not ask for your name or contact information. At the end of the survey, you will be given the option to click a separate link that takes you to a different form where you may enter your name and email address for the drawing. This second form is not linked to your survey responses in any way and will be used only for the purpose of administering the drawing. Once gift cards are distributed, this information will be deleted.

Who can answer my questions about this research?

If you have questions, concerns, or have experienced a research related injury, contact the research team at:

Kristin Rush, Doctoral Candidate
619-504-5223
krush3@uoregon.edu

An Institutional Review Board ("IRB") is overseeing this research. An IRB is a group of people who perform independent review of research studies to ensure the rights and welfare of participants are protected. UO Research Compliance Services is the office that supports the IRB. If you have questions about your rights or wish to speak with someone other than the research team, you may contact:

Research Compliance Services
5237 University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403-5237
(541) 346-2510
ResearchCompliance@uoregon.edu

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I have had the opportunity to read and consider the information in this form. I have asked any questions necessary to make a decision about my participation. I understand that I can ask additional questions throughout my participation.

I understand that by checking the box below I volunteer to participate in this research. I understand that I am not waiving any legal rights. I have been provided with a copy of this consent form. I understand that if my ability to consent or assent for myself changes, either I or my legal representative may be asked to re-consent prior to my continued participation in this study.

☐ I consent to participate in this study.

APPENDIX E: TEACHER EDUCATOR RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Subject line: Invitation to Participate in a Study on SEL in Oregon Educator Preparation

Dear Teacher Educator,

My name is Kristin Rush, and I am a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at the University of Oregon. I am inviting you to participate in a research study about how social and emotional learning (SEL) is being implemented in Oregon's educator preparation programs. This study is part of my doctoral dissertation.

I am specifically seeking teacher educators who work with candidates preparing for elementary-age licensure—including those who teach, supervise, or mentor candidates in elementary-focused programs.

If you agree to participate, you will complete an online survey (about 8–10 minutes) about your experiences integrating SEL into your coursework and programs. At the end of the survey, you may also choose to indicate your interest in joining a follow-up focus group.

Participation is voluntary, and your responses will be kept confidential.

In the coming days, I will also send a follow-up email asking for your support in forwarding a separate survey invitation to teacher candidates in your program. Your support in helping reach candidates is an essential part of this study.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me:
Kristin Rush
krush3@uoregon.edu
(619) 504-5223

To participate in the survey, please click the link below:
https://oregon.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9Aefuq3jE0ektdI

Thank you so much for your time and support.

Warm regards,
Kristin Rush
Doctoral Candidate, University of Oregon

APPENDIX F: TEACHER EDUCATOR INFORMED CONSENT

Consent for Research Participation

Title:	Bridging Policy and Practice: Faculty Perceptions of Social-Emotional Learning Standards Implementation in Oregon Educator Preparation Programs
Researcher(s):	Kristin Rush, Doctoral Candidate, University of Oregon
Researcher Contact Info:	619-504-5223 krush3@uoregon.edu

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The box below highlights key information about this research for you to consider when making a decision whether or not to participate. Carefully consider this information and the more detailed information provided below the box. Please ask questions about any of the information you do not understand before you decide whether to participate.

Key Information for You to Consider

- **Voluntary Consent**. You are being asked to volunteer for a research study. It is up to you whether you choose to participate or not. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled if you choose not to participate or discontinue participation.
- **Purpose**. The purpose of this study is to understand how teacher educators perceive their preparedness to integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) into educator preparation programs. This study also examines institutional and policy factors that may influence SEL integration.
- **Duration.** It is expected that your participation will last 8-10 minutes for the survey.
- **Procedures and Activities.** You will be asked to complete an online survey about your perceptions of preparation for integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) into your educator preparation program. The survey will ask about your confidence, institutional support, and awareness of policy expectations. At the end of the survey, you may optionally provide your email address if you are interested in participating in a follow-up focus group. This information will not be linked to your survey responses.
- **Risks.** Some of the foreseeable risks or discomforts of your participation include feeling uncomfortable or self-conscious when answering questions about your professional experiences or institutional practices. You may skip any question or stop participating at any time. There are no physical risks associated with this study.
- **Benefits**. There is no direct benefit to you from participating in this research. However, the researchers hope to learn more about how social-emotional learning is integrated into educator preparation programs and how faculty and candidates perceive their preparation, which may help inform improvements to programs and policy implementation.
- **Alternatives.** Participation is voluntary, and the only alternative is to not participate in the study.

What happens to the information collected for this research?

The information you provide will be used for research purposes only. Although the survey may collect certain information that could potentially identify you when combined, your responses will be handled with strict confidentiality. Any data points that could reasonably lead to identification will be reviewed and reported in

aggregate form only (e.g., combined totals or averages). No individual participant will be identified in any reports, presentations, or publications resulting from this study.

How will my privacy and data confidentiality be protected?

We will take multiple steps to protect your privacy:

- Survey data will be stored securely on a password-protected computer accessible only to the principal investigator.
- Findings will be reported only in aggregate to protect individual identities.
- No names or personal identifiers will be linked to survey responses.
- At the end of the survey, you may optionally provide your email address if you are interested in being contacted for a follow-up focus group. This is entirely voluntary.
- Any email addresses collected for follow-up contact will be stored in a separate data file and will not be connected to your survey responses during analysis or reporting.
- Contact information will be used solely for the purpose of scheduling the focus group and will be deleted after recruitment is complete.

While these precautions greatly reduce the risk, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. There is always a small, foreseeable risk of a confidentiality breach when collecting data. Appropriate safeguards are in place to minimize this risk.

Individuals and organizations responsible for overseeing research integrity may be permitted access to study records for monitoring purposes. For the University of Oregon, this includes the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

What if I want to stop participating in this research?

Taking part in this research study is your decision. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to take part in this study, but if you do, you can stop at any time. You have the right to choose not to participate in any study activity or completely withdraw from continued participation at any point in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the researchers or the University of Oregon.

Will I be paid for participating in this research?

You will not receive any payment or compensation for completing the survey.

Who can answer my questions about this research?

If you have questions, concerns, or have experienced a research related injury, contact the research team at:

Kristin Rush, Doctoral Candidate
619-504-5223
Krush3@uoregon.edu

An Institutional Review Board ("IRB") is overseeing this research. An IRB is a group of people who perform independent review of research studies to ensure the rights and welfare of participants are protected. UO Research Compliance Services is the office that supports the IRB. If you have questions about your rights or wish to speak with someone other than the research team, you may contact:

Research Compliance Services
5237 University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403-5237
(541) 346-2510

ResearchCompliance@uoregon.edu

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I have had the opportunity to read and consider the information in this form. I have asked any questions necessary to make a decision about my participation. I understand that I can ask additional questions throughout my participation.

I understand that by checking the box below I volunteer to participate in this research. I understand that I am not waiving any legal rights. I have been provided with a copy of this consent form. I understand that if my ability to consent or assent for myself changes, either I or my legal representative may be asked to re-consent prior to my continued participation in this study.

☐ I consent to participate in this study.

APPENDIX G: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Title of the Study
Faculty Perceptions of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Implementation in Oregon EPPs

Researcher
Kristin Rush, Doctoral Candidate
University of Oregon
krush3@uoregon.edu
(619) 504-5223

IRB Protocol
STUDY00001857

Purpose
You are invited to participate in a research study about how social-emotional learning (SEL) is being implemented in Oregon educator preparation programs. The purpose of this study is to understand how faculty experience the implementation of new SEL standards, including the facilitators and barriers that influence feelings of preparedness to integrate SEL into coursework and programs.

This focus group represents the qualitative phase of an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, in which insights will help explain, deepen, and contextualize initial quantitative survey findings. These conversations will explore how local practices, institutional conditions, and faculty perspectives shape SEL policy enactment within a top-down/bottom-up implementation context.

Research Questions
1. What patterns characterize teacher candidates' SEL-related learning experiences, exposure, and perceived preparedness across Oregon educator preparation programs?
2. How do teacher educators describe the institutional, programmatic, and instructional conditions that shape their ability to implement Oregon's SEL standards within their courses and programs?
3. How do teacher educator reflections help explain the quantitative patterns observed in teacher candidate SEL preparation, including variation in SEL exposure, modeling, and perceived preparedness across programs?

Methods/Interview Prompt:
Faculty participants were recruited from Oregon EPPs, including those who participated in OCSEP and the TEI. Three focus groups will be held, with faculty grouped primarily based on shared scheduling availability, while still ensuring variation across institutional types.

This protocol reflects revisions made in response to initial quantitative findings. Patterns related to SEL exposure, placement climate, mentor modeling, faculty preparedness, institutional support, workload, and collaboration were used to identify areas requiring qualitative follow-up. These items guided the refinement of the questions below.

Focus groups will consist of 2–3 participants per group, last approximately 45–60 minutes and be conducted via Zoom.

Introduction:
"Hello, my name is _____, and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program at the University of Oregon.

Thank you for being here. I'm exploring how Oregon's educator preparation programs are making sense of and implementing the new SEL standards. Today's conversation helps explain patterns from survey data that I collected— especially variation in candidate experiences and the institutional conditions shaping this work. I'm most interested in your own experiences, perspectives, and observations."

There are no right or wrong answers. Your perspectives are valuable and will remain confidential to the greatest extent possible. The session will be recorded for transcription purposes, but your comments will be de-identified, and pseudonyms will be used in all reports. Please avoid naming specific colleagues, institutions, or programs during the discussion to protect confidentiality.

Do you have any questions before we begin?"

Questions:

1. **To start, can you briefly share your role in your educator preparation program and how SEL shows up in your work?**

2. *Our survey found significant variation in how much SEL exposure candidates reported, especially across endorsement areas. Elementary and ESOL candidates reported notably higher exposure than secondary candidates.*

   In your experience, what contributes to some candidates having rich SEL exposure and modeling, while others seem to encounter less?

   - What patterns have you personally noticed in how SEL exposure varies across the candidates you work with?
   - From your perspective, what course, program, or instructional experiences seem to influence that variation?

3. *Survey results also showed that candidate SEL exposure was strongly associated with the SEL climate of their clinical placements—some candidates described consistent modeling, while others reported very little.*

   How have you experienced the alignment—or misalignment—between what candidates learn about SEL in coursework and what they encounter in placements?

   - What have candidates shared with you about their placement experiences related to SEL?
   - How do you notice candidates responding when placement contexts differ from what you emphasize in class?

4. *Our survey found that candidates serving as main or emergency teachers reported the lowest levels of SEL preparedness.*

   From your experience, what factors or conditions might contribute to that pattern?

   - What have you seen or heard from candidates in these roles?
   - How have your interactions with these candidates shaped your understanding of their preparedness?

5. *Many candidates described feeling most confident when they saw SEL modeled by faculty in their teaching preparation courses.*

   In your own work, how do you approach modeling SEL practices, and what experiences influence how consistently you're able to do that?

   - What helps you personally feel able to model SEL in your instruction?
   - What tends to make this more challenging for you?
   - How do your day-to-day conditions or workload affect your ability to model SEL?

6. *Survey responses showed very strong SEL beliefs among faculty, but more variation in consistent implementation.*

   From your perspective, what kinds of experiences or conditions help faculty move from valuing SEL to embedding it consistently?

- Thinking about colleagues you've worked with, what experiences seem to support deeper engagement with SEL?
- When you reflect on your own practice, what helped you move from belief to action?

7. *Teacher educators expressed mixed clarity around Oregon's SEL standards, and some described confusion between EPP SEL standards and the K–12 Transformative SEL standards.*

   What has your own experience been with understanding and implementing Oregon's SEL standards? What kinds of support or clarification would strengthen that work?

   - How did you first make sense of the standards?
   - What aspects felt clear to you, and what felt more confusing?
   - How have you navigated the relationship between the EPP SEL standards and the K–12 SEL guidance in your own work?

8. *Teacher educators reported varied perceptions of institutional support for SEL—workload, time, competing standards, and program-level structures emerged as common barriers.*

   In your experience, what institutional structures, processes, or conditions have supported your SEL integration—and what has made it harder?

   - What support has been especially helpful for you?
   - What barriers have you personally encountered as you try to integrate SEL?
   - How do these supports or barriers show up in your daily work or course planning?

9. Is there anything else you'd like to share about how SEL standards are shaping your work or experience as a teacher educator?

Use Probes

- Tell me more
- I need more detail
- Can you give an example
- Can you elaborate on that?
- How did that feel?
- What made that successful/challenging?

APPENDIX H: FOCUS GROUP INFORMED CONSENT

Consent for Research Participation

Title:	Bridging Policy and Practice: Faculty Perceptions of Social-Emotional Learning Standards Implementation in Oregon EPPs
Researcher(s):	Kristin Rush, Doctoral Candidate, University of Oregon
Researcher Contact Info:	619-504-5223 Krush3@uoregon.edu

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The box below highlights key information about this research for you to consider when making a decision whether or not to participate. Carefully consider this information and the more detailed information provided below the box. Please ask questions about any of the information you do not understand before you decide whether to participate.

Key Information for You to Consider

- **Voluntary Consent**. You are being asked to volunteer for a research study. It is up to you whether you choose to participate or not. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled if you choose not to participate or discontinue participation.
- **Purpose**. The purpose of this study is to understand how teacher educators perceive their preparedness to integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) into educator preparation programs. This study also examines institutional and policy factors that may influence SEL integration at the faculty and program level.
- **Duration.** Your participation in this study will involve a one-time virtual focus group lasting approximately 45-60 minutes.
- **Procedures and Activities.** If you choose to participate, you will join a virtual focus group discussion via Zoom with a small group of other teacher educators from Oregon educator preparation programs. The discussion will explore your experiences with SEL implementation, including supports, barriers, and institutional factors that influence your work.

  The session will be audio recorded to allow for accurate transcription and analysis. Your name and identifying details will be removed from transcripts, and pseudonyms will be used in any reports or publications.
- **Risks.** Some of the foreseeable risks or discomforts of your participation include feeling uncomfortable or self-conscious when discussing your professional experiences or institutional practices with colleagues during the focus group. You may choose to skip any question or withdraw from the discussion at any time. There are no physical risks associated with this study.
- **Benefits**. There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this research. However, your insights may help inform improvements to educator preparation programs, faculty support systems, and SEL policy implementation in Oregon.
- **Alternatives.** Participation is voluntary, and the only alternative is to not participate in the study.

What happens to the information collected for this research?

The information you share during the focus group will be used for research purposes only. The session will be audio recorded to ensure accurate transcription and analysis. After transcription, your name and any identifying details will

be removed from the transcript. Research findings may be presented in publications or presentations, but no individual participant will be identified.

How will my privacy and data confidentiality be protected?

We will take several measures to protect your privacy:

- Focus group recordings and transcripts will be stored on a secure, password-protected university server accessible only to the principal investigator.
- Transcripts will be de-identified by removing names and any other identifiable references.
- Audio recordings will be deleted no later than 12 months after transcription is complete.
- Pseudonyms will be used in any reports or publications.

While these precautions greatly reduce the risk of identification, we cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Additionally, because this is a group discussion, confidentiality cannot be fully ensured among fellow participants. All participants will be asked to respect the privacy of others by not sharing information discussed outside of the focus group.

Organizations responsible for research oversight may be permitted access to study records for monitoring purposes. For the University of Oregon, this includes the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

What if I want to stop participating in this research?

Taking part in this research study is your decision. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to take part in this study, but if you do, you can stop at any time. You have the right to choose not to participate in any study activity or completely withdraw from continued participation at any point in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the researchers or the University of Oregon.

Will I be paid for participating in this research?

You will not be paid for participating in this study. However, as a token of appreciation for your time, you will receive a $5 Starbucks gift card after participating in the focus group. Receiving the gift card does not depend on the content of your responses, and you may still participate even if you choose not to accept the gift card.

Who can answer my questions about this research?

If you have questions, concerns, or have experienced a research related injury, contact the research team at:

Kristin Rush, Doctoral Candidate
619-504-5223
Krush3@uoregon.edu

An Institutional Review Board ("IRB") is overseeing this research. An IRB is a group of people who perform independent review of research studies to ensure the rights and welfare of participants are protected. UO Research Compliance Services is the office that supports the IRB. If you have questions about your rights or wish to speak with someone other than the research team, you may contact:

Research Compliance Services
5237 University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403-5237
(541) 346-2510
ResearchCompliance@uoregon.edu

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

Before we begin, I want to review a few important points about today's session.

You are participating in a research study about how social-emotional learning (SEL) is being implemented in Oregon educator preparation programs. Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to answer any question or to withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

The session will be audio recorded to allow for accurate transcription and analysis. Your name will not be attached to the transcript, and pseudonyms will be used in reports or publications. The recording will be stored on a password-protected university server accessible only to me, the researcher, and will be deleted within 12 months after transcription is completed.

However, because this is a group setting, I cannot guarantee that everything shared today will remain confidential among participants. I ask that you respect each other's privacy and not repeat what is discussed outside this session.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating, and there are minimal risks, similar to everyday professional conversations. Your insights may help improve faculty support and policy implementation in Oregon's teacher preparation programs.

If you have any questions at any time, please feel free to ask.

By continuing with today's session, you are indicating your consent to participate in this research.

Are there any questions before we begin?

APPENDIX I: DECISION-MAKING MATRIX FOR ADAPTING FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Although quantitative findings were drawn from both teacher candidate and teacher educator surveys, all follow-up qualitative questions were asked solely to teacher educators. This decision reflects the explanatory logic of the design: teacher educators are positioned to interpret and explain programmatic, institutional, and instructional conditions that shape the candidate experience.

Survey Construct	Initial Findings	How It Informed the Focus Group Protocol	Research Question(s)	Rule Used
SEL Exposure (TC)	Lower exposure for some program types; secondary candidates reported noticeably less exposure	Added questions asking teacher educators how SEL shows up differently across programs and content areas	RQ1, RQ3	Subgroup differences
Placement SEL Climate (TC)	Wide variation; strong SEL placements linked to higher exposure	Added probes about how faculty support candidates when SEL is not present in placements	RQ1, RQ3	High variability (SD ≥ 1.0)
Mentor Modeling (TC)	Some candidates described strong modeling; others reported very little	Asked teacher educators to describe their role in supporting mentor teachers or navigating inconsistent modeling	RQ3	High variability
Preparedness and Readiness (TC)	Patterns of uncertainty, especially for newer/emergency teachers	Added questions about faculty perspectives on what helps candidates feel more prepared	RQ1, RQ3	Mean < 3.0
Policy Alignment (TC)	Mixed clarity about Oregon's SEL standards	Added questions exploring how teacher educators interpret and implement the standards	RQ2, RQ3	Evenly split responses

Survey Construct	Initial Findings	How It Informed the Focus Group Protocol	Research Question(s)	Rule Used
Institutional Support (TE)	Variation across programs; some faculty feel supported, others do not	Added questions about program structures that help or hinder SEL work	RQ2	Mean < 3.0
Time and Workload (TE)	Frequently identified as barriers	Included probes on workload, time, and competing priorities	RQ2	Common open-ended theme
Collaboration Across Faculty (TE)	Strongly related to successful SEL integration	Added questions about cross-faculty communication, shared vision, and teamwork	RQ2	Common open-ended theme

APPENDIX J: IRB APPROVAL DOCUMENTATION

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON | Research Compliance Services

EXEMPT DETERMINATION

May 16, 2025

Kristin Rush
krush3@uoregon.edu

Dear Kristin Rush:

The following research was reviewed and determined to qualify for exemption.

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Study Title:	Bridging Policy and Practice:Faculty Perceptions of Social-Emotional Learning Standards Implementation in Oregon Educator Preparation Programs
Principal Investigator:	Kristin Rush
Parent Study ID:	STUDY00001857
Transaction ID:	STUDY00001857
Documents Reviewed:	• Excempt Category 2, Category: IRB Protocol; • Excempt Determination, Category: IRB Protocol; • Focus Group Protocol, Category: Data Collection Materials; • Informed Consent_Focus Group, Category: Consent Form; • Informed Consent_Teacher Candidate, Category: Consent Form; • Informed Consent_Teacher Educator, Category: Consent Form; • Research Plan, Category: IRB Protocol; • Teacher Candidate Recruitment Email, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Teacher Candidate Survey, Category: Survey Instrument; • Teacher Educator Recruitment Email, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Teacher Educator Survey, Category: Survey Instrument;
Approval Date:	5/16/2025
Effective Date:	5/16/2025
Expiration Date:	7/31/2026

For this research, the following determinations have been made:

- This study has been reviewed under **the Pre-2018 Common Rule** and determined to qualify for exemption under **Title 45 CFR 46.101(b) ((2)(ii) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation (low risk)).**

The research is approved to be conducted as described in the approved protocol using the approved materials. Approved materials can be accessed in the protocol workspace in the IRB module of the research administration portal (RAP).

All changes to this research must be assessed to ensure the study continues to qualify for exemption. Research Compliance Services has developed specific guidance to help you understand when a modification is required before a change can be implemented. It is your responsibility to ensure modifications are submitted when required and approval secured before implementing changes to the protocol

A regulatory continuing Review is not required for this study. **An institutional approval period has been established based on your application materials.** If you anticipate the research will continue beyond the approval period, you must submit a **Continuing Review Application** at least 45 days prior to the expiration date. A closure report must be submitted once human subject research activities are complete. Failure to maintain current approval or properly close the protocol constitutes non-compliance.

With the submission of your request, you agreed to uphold the responsibilities of the Principal Investigator and have agreed to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the IRB Library within the IRB module of the RAP.

If you have any questions regarding your protocol or the review process, please contact Research Compliance Services at ResearchCompliance@uoregon.edu or (541)346-2510. The University of Oregon and Research Compliance Services appreciate your commitment to the ethical and responsible conduct of research with human subjects.

Please consider completing our user satisfaction survey. It only takes a few minutes, and we would like to hear about your experience working with our office!

Sincerely,

Jennifer Pedraza

Research Compliance Services
on behalf of the Committee for Protection of Human Subjects

cc: Chris Knowles

APPENDIX K: CODEBOOK

This table presents the qualitative codebook used to analyze teacher educator focus group data. Codes were developed using a hybrid deductive–inductive approach, integrating quantitative survey findings with theory drawn from SEL, educator preparation, and policy implementation literature. Quantitative-driven codes reflect constructs that emerged from statistically significant survey patterns and informed the focus group protocol, while theory-driven codes capture broader interpretive and systems-level dynamics.

Code	Label	Definition	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Sample Excerpt	FG
Quantitative Driven						
Q1	SEL Exposure	How teacher educators describe where, when, and how SEL is intentionally included—or unevenly included—across coursework, endorsements, or program pathways.	Faculty descriptions of SEL appear more strongly in some programs, endorsements, or courses; SEL being embedded, assumed, uneven, or omitted across program design; faculty interpretations of candidate access to SEL learning.	Placement-only descriptions without reference to coursework or program design; candidate self-reports not contextualized by faculty.	"SEL practices are not named explicitly."	FG2
Q2	Placement SEL Climate	How teacher educators describe the extent to which SEL is embedded, normalized, and consistently enacted within the field placement environment, independent of any single mentor teacher.	Faculty descriptions of school or classroom norms; perceived consistency or inconsistency of SEL practices; accounts of punitive, restorative, supportive, or toxic placement contexts.	Descriptions of individual mentor behaviors; mentor–candidate relationship dynamics; faculty SEL instruction in coursework.	"We easily only see those practices maybe in about 20 percent of classrooms."	FG1
Q3a	Mentor Teacher SEL Modeling (with K–12 Students)	Faculty descriptions of how mentor teachers enact and model SEL practices in their interactions with K–12 students, as observed or reported by candidates.	Descriptions of mentors' classroom management, co-regulation, discipline and repair practices, and relationship-building with children.	Mentor feedback or emotional support provided directly to candidates; generalized placement climate descriptions.	"If it's more punitive, they take that on as their style."	FG2

Code	Label	Definition	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Sample Excerpt	FG
Q3b	Mentor Teacher SEL Modeling (with Candidates)	Faculty descriptions of how mentor teachers apply—or fail to apply—SEL principles in their relationships with and supervision of teacher candidates.	Descriptions of psychological safety, trust or threat, feedback tone, mentoring presence or absence, and power dynamics.	Mentor instructional practices with children; general discussions of adult SEL or burnout not tied to mentoring.	"She felt threatened by the teacher candidate."	FG1
Q4	Candidate SEL Preparedness	How teacher educators interpret candidates' readiness, confidence, or struggle related specifically to implementing SEL.	Faculty observations of candidates feeling prepared, underprepared, overwhelmed, or in "survival mode"; references to emergency licensure, accelerated roles, or learning SEL on the job.	General teaching readiness without explicit connection to SEL.	"They're just trying to survive."	FG3
Q5	Faculty SEL Modeling	How teacher educators describe modeling SEL through their own instructional practices in higher education settings.	Faculty use of relationship-building, reflective practices, norms, co-regulation, explicit SEL naming, or modeling in courses; intentional demonstration for candidates.	Modeling that occurs in K–12 placements or by mentor teachers.	"It's our job as teacher educators to show them how they can weave it in."	FG1
Q6	Faculty SEL Beliefs vs. Implementation Consistency	How teacher educators describe tension between strong beliefs about SEL and challenges sustaining or operationalizing SEL consistently in practice.	Expressions of valuing SEL alongside difficulty prioritizing, enacting, or maintaining it; reflections on philosophical alignment versus instructional reality.	Structural or workload barriers described without reference to faculty beliefs or instructional intentions.	"It feels piecemeal across courses."	FG2
Q7	Policy Alignment and Standards Clarity	How teacher educators make sense of Oregon's SEL standards and their relationship to educator preparation and K–12 expectations.	Expressions of clarity, confusion, reinterpretation, or uncertainty about SEL standards; references to look-fors, compliance, or state guidance.	Discussion of SEL that does not reference standards, policy, or state context.	"More and more students are choosing SEL as the focus for their first unit."	FG3

Code	Label	Definition	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Sample Excerpt	FG
Q8	Institutional Support, Workload, and Structures	How teacher educators describe institutional conditions that enable or constrain SEL implementation within educator preparation programs.	References to workload, time, leadership, governance, placement availability, program silos, rural constraints, or organizational structures shaping feasibility.	Personal beliefs or preferences without linkage to institutional conditions.	"They're juggling teaching full-time and coursework."	FG2
Q9	SEL as Pedagogy / Well-Rounded SEL	How teacher educators frame SEL as embedded within instructional practice and program design rather than as a standalone subject.	SEL is described as "how teaching happens"; integration of SEL with academic content; framing SEL as an interconnected ecosystem involving adults, students, relationships, and learning environments.	Standalone SEL programs; general beliefs without instructional reference; placement-only descriptions.	"SEL doesn't live here. It lives in here."	FG2
Q10	SEL Relevance	How teacher educators describe whether SEL is perceived as relevant, legitimate, or applicable across roles, subjects, grade levels, or professional identities.	Faculty descriptions of SEL being seen as "elementary-only," "the counselor's job," "extra," or misaligned with professional identity or instructional role.	Instructional strategies (Q9); access or exposure (Q1); institutional constraints (Q8); adult well-being (T10).	"Secondary is still very much a disciplinary-based model first."	FG3
Theory Driven						
T1	Adult Social and Emotional Competence (Adult SEC / Teacher SEL)	How teacher educators describe their own social and emotional capacities—regulation, reflection, and relational skills—as they relate to teaching and professional life.	References to adult well-being, emotional awareness, resilience, reflective practice, or relational capacity connected to educator roles.	Student SEL discussed without reference to adult experience or educator well-being.	"We need to teach teachers how to regulate."	FG1

Code	Label	Definition	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Sample Excerpt	FG
T2	Equity-Centered or Transformative SEL	How teacher educators describe SEL approaches that center identity, agency, cultural responsiveness, and critical consciousness.	Discussion of belonging, identity affirmation, power, voice, cultural responsiveness, or equity-oriented SEL practices.	Generic or decontextualized SEL strategies without attention to equity or identity.	"This is not about learning. This is about growth."	FG2
T3	Teacher Educator Sensemaking of SEL Standards	How teacher educators interpret, adapt, and refine their understanding of SEL standards over time.	Expressions of confusion, reinterpretation, evolution, or meaning making related to SEL standards.	References to standards without interpretation, reflection, or sensemaking.	"Is it something to do, or is it something to be?"	FG2
T4	Institutional Culture and Climate	How shared norms, values, trust, and relational conditions within institutions shape SEL integration.	References to collaboration, coherence, shared vision, trust, or departmental/institutional climate related to SEL.	Individual experiences without connection to broader cultural or institutional patterns.	"The single greatest source of variance is the teacher."	FG3
T5	Systems Coherence	How aligned or misaligned coursework, clinical placements, and policy expectations are within educator preparation systems.	Descriptions of alignment or misalignment across courses, field experiences, and policy expectations related to SEL.	Isolated anecdotes without system-level implications.	"Students are hearing different lexicons."	FG2
T6	Top-Down Policy Influences	How state-level or external policy structures shape SEL implementation in educator preparation.	References to TSPC, ODE, accreditation, mandates, or external accountability pressures influencing SEL work.	Faculty-initiated efforts without reference to state or external policy.	"You can't mandate passion."	FG2
T7	Bottom-Up Faculty Agency and Leadership	How teacher educators engage in faculty-driven leadership, innovation, and collaboration related to SEL.	Examples of faculty initiative, shared leadership, collaboration, or engagement in efforts such as TEI or OCSEP.	Changes driven primarily by policy mandates rather than faculty agency.	"Having a champion has completely reshaped the work."	FG2

Code	Label	Definition	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Sample Excerpt	FG
T8	Organizational Capacity and Enabling Conditions	How institutional resources and conditions support or constrain SEL implementation.	References to time, leadership support, professional learning, tools, or organizational structures that enable SEL.	Personal beliefs or dispositions without reference to organizational conditions.	"Time and FTE are always barriers."	FG2
T9	Implementation Barriers in Complex Systems	How multi-agency oversight and competing directives create system-level barriers to SEL implementation.	Discussion of misalignment or tension across agencies (e.g., TSPC, ODE), conflicting expectations, or layered accountability.	Challenges are limited to a single course or individual role.	"They dropped into the curriculum like a ton of bricks."	FG3
T10	Adult SEL, Burnout, and Workforce Sustainability	How SEL relates to educator stress, burnout, retention, and long-term workforce sustainability.	References to emotional strain, burnout prevention, workload stress, or SEL as support for educator well-being.	Student behavior or outcomes without linkage to adult SEL or educator well-being.	"You cannot grow and be perfect at the same time."	FG1
Novel						
N1	Other Novel Theme	Placeholder for recurring, analytically meaningful themes that do not fit existing codes.	Themes appearing in two or more transcripts that hold analytic significance.	One-off comments or isolated observations without recurrence or relevance.	—	—

REFERENCES

Acker, S. (1992). *Gendered education: Sociological reflections on women, teaching, and feminism*. Open University Press.

Akcan, S., & Tatar, S. (2010). An investigation of the nature of feedback given to pre-service English teachers during their practice teaching experience. *Teacher Development, 14*(2), 153–172. https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2010.494495

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. (2026). *Call to action: Federal support for systemic approaches to educator workforce development and design.*

Anderson, J. D. (1988). *The education of Blacks in the South, 1860–1935*. University of North Carolina Press.

Berg, J., Osher, D., Moroney, D., & Yoder, N. (2017). The intersection of school climate and social and emotional development. *American Institutes for Research*. https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/Intersection-School-Climate-and-Social-and-Emotional-Development-February-2017.pdf

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Bridgeland, J., Bruce, M., & Hariharan, A. (2013). *The missing piece: A national teacher survey on how social and emotional learning can empower children and transform schools*. Civic Enterprises.

Bryk, A. S., Gomez, L. M., Grunow, A., & LeMahieu, P. G. (2015). *Learning to improve: How America's schools can get better at getting better*. Harvard Education Press.

Center on Education Policy. (2020). *History and evolution of public education in the United States*. George Washington University.

Cochran-Smith, M. (2005). Teacher educators as researchers: Multiple perspectives. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 21*(2), 219–225.

Cochran-Smith, M., & Fries, K. (2005). Researching teacher education in changing times: Politics and paradigms. In M. Cochran-Smith & K. Zeichner (Eds.), *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education* (pp. 69–110). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Cochran-Smith, M., Villegas, A. M., Abrams, L. W., Chavez-Moreno, L. C., Mills, T., & Stern, R. (2018). Critiquing teacher preparation research: An overview of the field, part II. *Journal of Teacher Education, 69*(5), 424–437. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487118783185

Colaianne, B. A., Galla, B. M., & Roeser, R. W. (2020). Perceptions of mindful teaching are associated with longitudinal change in adolescents' mindfulness and compassion. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 44*(1), 41–50. https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025419870864

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. (2020). *CASEL SEL framework*. https://casel.org/casel-sel-framework-11-2020/

Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. (2015). *History of CAEP*. https://caepnet.org/about/history-of-caep

Creswell, J. W. (2016). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2003). Keeping good teachers: Why it matters, what leaders can do. *Educational Leadership, 60*(8), 6–13.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). *Powerful teacher education: Lessons from exemplary programs.* Jossey-Bass.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Cook-Harvey, C. M. (2018). *Educating the whole child: Improving school climate to support student success*. Learning Policy Institute. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Educating_Whole_Child_REPORT.pdf

Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B., & Osher, D. (2020). Implications for educational practice of the science of learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science, 24*(2), 97–140. https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1537791

Donahue-Keegan, D., Villegas-Reimers, E., & Cressey, J. M. (2019). Integrating social-emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching in teacher education preparation programs. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 46*(4), 150–168.

Durlak, J. A., & DuPre, E. P. (2008). Implementation matters: A review of research on the influence of implementation on program outcomes and the factors affecting implementation. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 41*(3–4), 327–350. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-008-9165-0

Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development, 82*(1), 405–432.

Eastern Oregon University. (2024). *Educator Equity Plan 2024–2026*. Submitted to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission.

Educator Advancement Council. (2024). *2024 Oregon educator equity report*. https://core-docs.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/2764/EAC/4748115/FINAL_Educator_Equity_Report_2024_rev.pdf

Edvalson, R. (2023). Western Oregon University. The Oregon Encyclopedia. https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/western_oregon_university/

Fetters, M. D., Curry, L. A., & Creswell, J. W. (2013). Achieving integration in mixed methods designs: Principles and practices. *Health Services Research, 48*(6 Pt 2), 2134–2156. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6773.12117

Fixsen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., Friedman, R. M., & Wallace, F. (2005). *Implementation research: A synthesis of the literature* (FMHI Publication #231). National Implementation Research Network, University of South Florida. https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resources/implementation-research-synthesis-literature

Fullan, M. (2010). *Motion leadership: The skinny on becoming change savvy*. Corwin Press.

Fullan, M. (2016). *The new meaning of educational change* (5th ed.). Teachers College Press.

Fullan, M., & Quinn, J. (2021). *Coherence: The right drivers in action for schools, districts, and systems*. Corwin Press.

Fullard, M. (2021). *Teacher turnover after COVID-19 disruptions*. RAND Corporation.

Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education, 53*(2), 106–116. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487102053002003

Goldstein, D. (2014). *The teacher wars: A history of America's most embattled profession* (1st ed.). Doubleday.

Goldstein, L. S. (2002). *Reclaiming caring in teaching and teacher education*. Peter Lang.

Greenberg, M. T., Brown, J. L., & Abenavoli, R. M. (2016). *Teacher stress and health: Effects on teachers, students, and schools*. Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center, Pennsylvania State University. https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2016/07/teacher-stress-and-health.html

Greenberg, M. T. (2023). Evidence for social and emotional learning in schools. *Learning Policy Institute*. https://doi.org/10.54300/928.269

Hamilton, L. S., & Doss, C. J. (2020). Supports for social and emotional learning in American schools and classrooms: Findings from the American Teacher Panel. *RAND Corporation*. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR4259.html

Hammond, Z., & Jackson, Y. (2015). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students*. Corwin.

Herman, K. C., Hickmon-Rosa, J., & Reinke, W. M. (2020). Empirically derived profiles of teacher stress, burnout, self-efficacy, and coping and associated student outcomes. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 22*(2), 90–100.

Hon, D., Rush, K., Darwich, L., Sauve, J., & O'Neil, L. V. (2024). Oregon's journey creating social and emotional learning standards for educator preparation programs. *Social and Emotional Learning: Research, Practice, and Policy, 4*, 100054. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sel.2024.100054

Hon, D., Sauve, J. A., Zinsser, K., Mahfouz, J., & Schonert-Reichl, K. A. (2025). SEL and pre-service teacher preparation. In J. A. Durlak, C. E. Domitrovich, & J. L. Mahoney (Eds.), *Handbook of social and emotional learning (2nd ed.)*. Guilford Press.

Honig, M. I. (2006). *New directions in education policy implementation: Confronting complexity*. State University of New York Press.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. Routledge.

Ingersoll, R. M. (2003). Is there really a teacher shortage? *Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy*.

Ivankova, N. V., Creswell, J. W., & Stick, S. L. (2006). Using mixed-methods sequential explanatory design: From theory to practice. *Field Methods, 18*(1), 3–20. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05282260

Jagers, R. J., Rivas-Drake, D., & Borowski, T. (2019). Equity & social and emotional learning: A cultural analysis. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 29*(2), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2019.1614443

Jagers, R. J., Skoog-Hoffman, A., Barthelus, B., & Schlund, J. (2021). Transformative social emotional learning: In pursuit of educational equity and excellence. *American Educator, 45*(2), 12–17.

The Jamovi project. (2024). *Jamovi* (Version 2.6) [Computer software]. https://www.jamovi.org

Jennings, P. A., Frank, J. L., Snowberg, K. E., Coccia, M. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2017). Improving classroom learning environments by cultivating awareness and resilience in education (CARE): Results of a randomized controlled trial. *School Psychology Quarterly, 32*(3), 401–416.

Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. (2009). The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to child and classroom outcomes. *Review of Educational Research, 79*(1), 491–525. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308325693

Jennings, P. A. (2018). *The trauma-informed classroom: Building resilience with compassionate teaching*. W. W. Norton.

Jones, S. M., Bouffard, S. M., & Weissbourd, R. (2013). Educators' social and emotional skills vital to learning. *Phi Delta Kappan, 94*(8), 62–65.

Kang, H. (2021). Exploring cooperating teachers' feedback practices and perceptions in teacher preparation. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 49*(5), 457–472. https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2020.1719031

Kania, J., Kramer, M., & Senge, P. (2018). *The water of systems change*. FSG: Foundation Strategy Group.

Katz, D., Mahfouz, J., & Romas, S. (2020). Creating a foundation of well-being for teachers and students starts with SEL curriculum in teacher education programs. *Northwest Journal of Teacher Education, 15*(2), Article 5. https://doi.org/10.15760/nwjte.2020.15.2.5

Kelchtermans, G. (2009). Who I am in how I teach is the message: Self-understanding, vulnerability, and reflection. *Teachers and Teaching, 15*(2), 257–272. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540600902875332

Kezar, A. (2014). Higher education change and social networks: A review of research. *The Journal of Higher Education, 85*(1), 91–125.

Labaree, D. F. (2008). The winning ways of a losing strategy: Educationalizing social problems in the United States. *Educational Theory, 58*(4), 447–460. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5446.2008.00299.x

LaBue, A. (1960). Teacher certification in the United States: A brief history. *Journal of Teacher Education, 11*(2), 147–172.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Lipsky, M. (1980). *Street-level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public services*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Maguth, B. M., & Daviso, A. W. (2018). A "lived-in model" to teacher education: The impact of embedding pre-service teacher education on secondary student learning. *Creative Education, 9*(10), 1504–1524. https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2018.910111

Mahoney, J. L., Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2020). An update on social and emotional learning: A conceptual framework and practical guide. *The Future of Children, 27*(1), 13–32. https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.2020.0001

Mahoney, J. L., Weissberg, R. P., Greenberg, M. T., Dusenbury, L., Jagers, R. J., Niemi, K., Schlinger, M., Schlund, J., Shriver, T. P., VanAusdal, K., & Yoder, N. (2021). Systemic social and emotional learning: Promoting educational success for all preschool to high school students. *American Psychologist, 76*(7), 1128–1142. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000701

Markowitz, N. L., & Bouffard, S. M. (2020). *Teaching with a social, emotional, and cultural lens: A framework for educators and teacher educators*. Harvard Education Press.

Martinez, V., Wigham, B., Rush, K., & Hon, D. (2024). Oregon's K–12 transformative social and emotional learning framework and standard development. *Social and Emotional Learning: Research, Practice, and Policy, 4*, 100058. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sel.2024.100058

McLaughlin, M. W. (1987). Learning from experience: Lessons from policy implementation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 9*(2), 171–178.

Morse, J. M. (2010). Simultaneous and sequential qualitative mixed method designs. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16*(6), 483–491. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410364741

National Academy of Education. (2024). *Evaluating and improving teacher preparation programs* (K. M. Zeichner, L. Darling-Hammond, A. I. Berman, D. Dong, & G. Sykes, Eds.). National Academy of Education.

National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification. (2019). *Professional Educator Standards Board Association*. https://www.nasdtec.net/page/PESBA

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. (2008). *Professional standards for the accreditation of teacher preparation institutions*. http://www.ncate.org

Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education*. University of California Press.

Oberle, E., Domitrovich, C., Meyers, D., & Weissberg, R. P. (2019). Establishing systemic social and emotional learning approaches in schools: A framework for schoolwide implementation. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 49*(3), 333–347.

Oliveira, S., Roberto, M. S., Pereira, N. S., Marques-Pinto, A., & Veiga-Simão, A. (2021). Impacts of social and emotional learning interventions for teachers on teachers' outcomes: A systematic review with meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*, 677217. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.677217

Oregon Department of Education. (2023, June). *Oregon's Transformative Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Framework & Standards.* https://drc.casel.org/uploads/sites/3/2024/02/ODE_Oregons-Transformative-SEL-Framework-Standards_FINAL.pdf

Oregon Department of Education & Teacher Standards and Practices Commission. (2023, December). *Senate Bill 275: Examining whether to merge TSPC into ODE – Report to the Legislature*. https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/291507

Oregon Legislative Assembly. (2015). *House Bill 3375: Oregon Educator Equity Act*. https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2015R1/Measures/Overview/HB3375

Oregon Legislative Assembly. (2021). *Oregon House Bill 2166*. https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/ors/ors329.html

Oregon Legislative Assembly. (2023). *Oregon Senate Bill 1045*. https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2023R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/SB1045

Oregon Longitudinal Data Collaborative. (2024). *Oregon educator public employment dashboard*. Higher Education Coordinating Commission. https://www.oregon.gov/highered/strategy-research/Pages/OLDC-educator-dashboard.aspx

Oregon State University. (2024). *Educator Equity Plan 2024–2026*. Submitted to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission.

Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission. (2022). *Program completion reports*. [Internal report].

Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission. (2019). *CAEP in Oregon*. https://www.oregon.gov/tspc/EPP/Pages/OR-CAEP.aspx

Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission. (2023). *Educator SEL framework and standards*. https://www.oregon.gov/tspc/EPP/Documents/Oregon%20TSPC%20Educator%20SEL%20Framework%20%26%20Standards.pdf

Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission. (2024). *About us*. https://www.oregon.gov/tspc/about/Pages/default.aspx

Osher, D., Kidron, Y., DeCandia, C. J., Kendziora, K., Weissberg, R. P., Wentzel, K. R., & Ramani, G. (2016). Interventions to promote safe and supportive school climate. In K. R. Wentzel & G. B. Ramani (Eds.), *Handbook of social influences in school contexts* (pp. 384–404). Routledge.

Pikić Jugović, D., Lončarić, D., & Matijević, A. (2025). Teachers' social and emotional competencies and motivation as predictors of burnout and retention: The role of early career supports. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 129*, 104167. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2024.104167

Portland State University. (2025). *PSU leaning into its majority-BIPOC future*. https://www.pdx.edu/diversity/news/psu-leaning-its-majority-bipoc-future

Public Broadcasting System. (n.d.). *Only a teacher*. https://www.pbs.org/onlyateacher/timeline.html

Putnam, H. (2024). *State of student teaching: What districts and programs say about their partnerships*. National Council on Teacher Quality. https://www.nctq.org/publications/State-of-Student-Teaching

Rovio-Johansson, A. (2019). Reinvestigating the theory and practice gap in participatory educational research. *International Journal for Lesson and Learning Studies, 9*(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJLLS-01-2020-094

Rush, K. (2025). *Program evaluation of the Teacher Educator Institute* [Unpublished manuscript].

Rush, K., Hon, D., Vega O'Neil, L., & Hata, M. (2025). Implementation of the educator preparation transformative SEL standards: A case study. *Social and Emotional Learning: Research, Practice, and Policy.* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sel.2025.100115

Rush, K., Mondragon, S., Bahr, R., Plumeau, K., Boe, S., Hon, D., Sauve, J., & Darwich, L. (2024). *Strengthening social, emotional, and culturally sustaining teaching practices: A*

study of Oregon educator preparation and new teacher perceptions. Myers Education Press.

Sabatier, P., & Mazmanian, D. (1980). The implementation of public policy: A framework of analysis. *Policy Studies Journal, 8*(4), 538–560. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.1980.tb01266.x

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Sauve, J. A. (2023). *Oregon teacher preparation for social and emotional learning: Experiences of early career teachers* (Publication No. 92325) [Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia]. UBC Theses and Dissertations. https://open.library.ubc.ca/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0438445

Schonert-Reichl, K. A**.** (2017). Social and emotional learning and teachers. *The Future of Children*, 27(1), 137–155. https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.2017.0007

Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Kitil, M. J., & Hanson-Peterson, J. (2017). To reach the students, teach the teachers: A national scan of teacher preparation and social and emotional learning. *Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)*. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED582029.pdf

Simmons, D. (2021). Why SEL alone isn't enough. *Educational Leadership, 78*(6), 30–34.

Sirotnik, K. A. (2001). *Renewing schools and teacher education: An agenda for change.* American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2015). Job satisfaction, stress and coping strategies in the teaching profession—what do teachers say? *International Education Studies, 8*(3), 181–192. https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v8n3p181

Spillane, J. P., Reiser, B. J., & Reimer, T. (2002). Policy implementation and cognition: Reframing and refocusing implementation research. *Review of Educational Research, 72*(3), 387–431. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543072003387

Sutcher, L., Darling-Hammond, L., & Carver-Thomas, D. (2016). *A coming crisis in teaching? Teacher supply, demand, and shortages in the U.S.* Learning Policy Institute. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/coming-crisis-teaching

Taylor, W. (2025). Normal school | Teacher training. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. https://www.britannica.com/topic/normal-school

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, A. W. (2001). Teacher efficacy: Capturing an elusive construct. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 17*(7), 783–805. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(01)00036-1

Tyack, D. B. (1974). *The one best system: A history of American urban education*. Harvard University Press. https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674251120

Vescio, V., Ross, D., & Adams, A. (2008). A review of research on the impact of professional learning communities on teaching practice and student learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24*(1), 80–91. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2007.01.004

Walker, T. (2022). Survey: Alarming number of educators may soon leave the profession. *National Education Association*. https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/survey-alarming-number-educators-may-soon-leave-profession

Warner Pacific University. (2025). *Diversity and inclusion at Warner Pacific University*. https://www.warnerpacific.edu/student-success-engagement/diversity-inclusion/

Weiner, B. J. (2009). A theory of organizational readiness for change. *Implementation Science, 4*, Article 67. https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-4-67

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity.* Cambridge University Press.

Western Oregon University. (2025). *Western Oregon University becomes Oregon's first public, four-year Hispanic-Serving Institution*. https://wou.edu/2025/04/21/western-oregon-university-becomes-oregons-first-public-four-year-hispanic-serving-institution/

Wilson, A., Wilson, C., & Witthaus, G. (2020). Using a community of practice in higher education: Understanding the demographics of participation and impact on teaching. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 32*(1), 39–48. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1259432.pdf

Yang, C., Manchanda, S., & Greenstein, J. (2021). Educators' online teaching self-efficacy and compassion fatigue during the COVID-19 pandemic: The dual roles of "connect." *School Psychology, 36*(6), 504–515. https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000475

Yoder, N. (2014). Teaching the whole child: Instructional practices that support social-emotional learning in three teacher evaluation frameworks. *Center on Great Teachers and Leaders at American Institutes for Research*.

Zembylas, M. (2005). *Teaching with emotion: A postmodern enactment*. Information Age Publishing.

Zeichner, K. (2010). Competition, economic rationalization, increased surveillance, and attacks on diversity: Neo-liberalism and the transformation of teacher education in the U.S. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 26*(8), 1544–1552. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.06.004