SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) IN MUSEUMS:

PERSPECTIVES AND PRACTICES OF MUSEUM LEADERS

———————————————————

A Capstone

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education and Human Development

University of Virginia

———————————————————

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

———————————————————

by

Jacqueline C. Langholtz

B.A. The College of William & Mary

M.A. The University of Oklahoma

May, 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dr. Michelle Beavers, Chair

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) has been the focus of over thirty years of school and classroom-based research but has been largely overlooked within museums (Eppley, 2021; Luke et al., 2022). Museums are often guided by educational missions and work hand in hand with school and community-based educational partners. Increasingly, more museums are including SEL terms in their program descriptions, noting the ways in which their programs support SEL on their websites, integrating SEL into staff training, and offering SEL-related professional development for teachers.

While museums may be places in which SEL theory has long existed organically within best practices, the recent adoption of formal language around SEL connections is a more recent phenomenon. This qualitative multi-site comparative case study involved museum staff working in various levels of education-based leadership positions at three participating US-based museums that publicly advertised SEL-related public programs: the Intrepid Museum, the North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA), and the Virginia Museum for Contemporary Art (Virginia MOCA). Through focus group interviews and document analysis, this study examined museum leaders' perspectives on SEL, including what resources and tools they used to build their understanding of SEL, as well as what opportunities they identified for SEL and museums. This study compared museum leaders' practices for integrating SEL against CASEL's Theory of Action (TOA) to learn how museum leaders' actions compared with school leader-based actions for SEL integration.

Study findings suggest that museum leaders view SEL as being inherently present within their institutions and closely aligned with their educational mission. Sites that indicated a clear

start date for formalizing their SEL efforts pointed towards community-based needs they identified and felt they could help address as key motivations for SEL integration, including mental health needs related to the Covid-19 epidemic and the adoption of SEL curriculum within schools. SEL programs across the three sites took different forms: while the Intrepid Museum focused on teen programs, NCMA created an online course designed to support classroom-based teachers and the Virginia MOCA began a monthly art-based program for children and caregivers, illustrating that practices for museum-based SEL integration vary in program format.

Museum leaders at all three sites referenced CASEL as their leading resource but approaches to individual and collective staff training also varied widely. Practices for SEL integration aligned with the TOA's four main areas (Building Foundational Support and Plan, Strengthening Adult SEL Competencies and Capacities, Promoting SEL for and with Students, and Reflecting on Data for Continuous Improvement), but again showed variability regarding individual approach within each category. Museum leaders at each participating site indicated their ongoing commitment to SEL and intent to continue their efforts despite the lack of museum-specific resources to support them.

Based on these findings, this study's recommendations for a more systemic-level model of SEL integration within museums relate to creating a community practice (COP) for museum-based SEL. This COP would have three main goals: (1) Increase awareness regarding SEL and museums, both within the museum field and more broadly among school-based SEL partners and researchers; (2) Create and share museum-specific resources to support and inform SEL integration by museum practitioners; (3) Cultivate wider systemic integration of SEL among museums through collaborative and multidirectional SEL Skybridges. Practice-specific recommendations are detailed in this study's Action Plan.

UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA | SCHOOL of EDUCATION and HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Doctoral Capstone Approval Form

Langholtz, Jacqueline, Gjc17u@virginia.edu

Name*
*Last, First, MI

UVA Computing ID

Student Signature

Jacqueline C. Langholtz
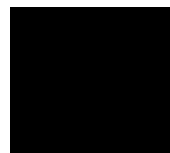
03/31/2025

Defense Date

Admin & Sup (EDD)

Degree Program

This doctoral capstone has been approved by the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education and Human Development in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Education.

Approved Title of Doctoral Capstone*

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in Museums: Perspectives and Practices of Museum Leaders

*Please ensure the title matches the final approved title on the capstone document exactly.
*Please follow appropriate approved title format. Here is a helpful tool, an APA title case converter.

Approved Capstone Committee

Michelle Beavers **Chair**	Education Leadership, Foundations, & Policy Education and Human Development, University of Virginia	*Michelle Beavers* 4/14/2025
Co-Chair **(If applicable.)**		
David Eddy-Spicer **Committee Member**	Education Leadership, Foundations, & Policy Education and Human Development, University of Virginia	*David Eddy-Spicer* 4/7/2025
Sara Dexter **Committee Member**	Education Leadership, Foundations, & Policy Education and Human Development, University of Virginia	*Sara Dexter* 4/7/2025

Committee Member

Committee Member

Committee Member

Committee Member

School of Education and Human Development
Registrar's Office
Office of Admissions and Student Affairs

Ehd-registrar@virginia.edu
Ridley Hall 102D, 417 Emmet Street
Charlottesville, VA 22903

DEDICATION

This capstone is dedicated to educators across the world—wherever their classroom may be—

who teach with love, practice peace, and model kindness to all.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

x

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The best thing, though, in that museum was that everything always stayed right where it was. Nobody'd move. You could go there a hundred thousand times, and that Eskimo would still be just finished catching those two fish, the birds would still be on their way south, the deers [sic] would still be drinking out of that water hole, with their pretty antlers and their pretty, skinny legs, and that squaw with the naked bosom would still be weaving that same blanket. Nobody'd be different. The only thing that would be different would be you. Not that you'd be so much older or anything. It wouldn't be that, exactly. You'd just be different, that's all. (Salinger, 1964, pp. 121–122)

It was here Claudia knew for sure that she had chosen the most elegant place in the world to hide. She wanted to sit on the lounge chair that had been made for Marie Antoinette or at least sit at her writing table. (Konigsburg, 1967, p. 6)

Holden Caufield's memory of visiting museums as a child will have an element of familiarity to any adult whose student days involved museum field trips. My own elementary school experience, like those of Holden Caufield in *The Catcher in the Rye* and Claudia Kincaid in *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, was enriched by visits to the American Museum of Natural History and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met). The fictitious characters' feelings of wonder and imagination in the museum space often resonated with my own. From books like these to scenes from popular movies, such as Ferris Bueller's visit to the Art Institute of Chicago (Hughes, 1986) when Cameron shared a reflective moment with a child and the Royal Tenenbaum's (Anderson, 2001) homage to precocious runaways hiding out at the Met, it's clear that there is a special magic to museums – especially for the young. To these characters, museums are places of refuge, places for introspection, and places to spark learning.

Museums have long existed as places of informal and experiential learning (DeWitt & Storksdieck, 2008; Monk, 2013; Tishman, 2018) and much has been published on how museums, as educational partners, both support and supplement traditional classroom-based learning (Ateş & Lane, 2019; Kisiel, 2005; Moisan, 2009; Young, 2021). Discussion of the value of museums to support experiential learning and museums as education-focused community

partners to schools can be found in writings by foundational leaders in America's progressive education movement, including John Dewey and John Cotton Dana (Hein, 2004; Monk, 2013). That tradition continues to this day. A recent report created by the Center for the Future of Museums asserts that museums are essential components of community support networks, especially for the Pre-K – 12 education system (Trendswatch: Museums as Community Infrastructure, 2022, pp. 5–7). While a student can certainly learn about space exploration from their textbook, imagine the thrill of the over three million visitors who visit the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum annually when they see the Space Shuttle Discovery in person or the emotional impact of sitting at the recreated Woolworth's counter at the Museum of African American History and Culture while learning about the birth of the Civil Rights movement. Museums engage the senses, ignite imagination, and enhance student learning, especially when paired with coordinated classroom-based curriculum and learning. Less is known about skills-based learning in the museum setting.

While museums differ greatly from institution to institution—large and small; art, science, history, or children's; government-run or privately funded; future-focused or dedicated to preserving memories of the past—what they all have in common is the premise that a visit to them will, in some way, be educational. According to a report by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), 97% of Americans believe that museums are educational assets to their communities (2018) and consider museums to be a more trustworthy source of historical information than books, teachers, or personal accounts (Rosenzweig, R. & Thelen, D., 1998). Museums traditionally served as repositories for knowledge; increasingly they are also being recognized for their ability to be safe places to wrestle with difficult history, convene courageous conversations, and promote empathy (Crow & Bowles, 2018).

Museums often focus on content-based learning—such as historical sites, science exhibitions, or artist retrospectives—but their broader mission frequently extends beyond imparting information. Many institutions prioritize expanding perspectives, fostering dialogue, and encouraging visitors to engage with stories that deepen their understanding of diverse cultures and histories. As an example, the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met) is not just a repository for precious collections; its mission states that "The Metropolitan Museum of Art collects, studies, conserves, and presents significant works of art across time and cultures in order to connect all people to creativity, knowledge, ideas, and one another." Other museums, such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, whose mission is to "[…] keep Holocaust memory alive while inspiring citizens and leaders to confront hatred, prevent genocide, and promote human dignity in our constantly changing world" make those perspective and feelings-based learning goals even more explicit. Additional examples of museums integrating concepts about cultural awareness, inclusivity, empathy, and social justice into their mission statements are easily found.

Like how fictional portrayals and research affirm museums as spaces for introspection, refuge, and learning, their role in fostering social-emotional learning (SEL) is an emerging area of exploration (Eppley, 2021; Luke et al., 2022). Despite their longstanding role as educational resources, museums' potential to support SEL remains underexplored. In particular, little research examines how museum leaders integrate SEL within their institutions. This study seeks to fill that gap.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

The past three decades have witnessed a growing movement within Pre-K and K-12 education in the United States to integrate Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) into classroom curricula, education policy, and national conversations (Casciano et al., 2019). Rather than being strictly content-specific, as a math or history curriculum may be, SEL focuses on skills and abilities that enhance personal and interpersonal development (Weissberg, Roger P. et al., 2015). The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), the leading entity in SEL research and practice (Bailey & Weiner, 2022; Edgar & Morrison, 2021), defines SEL as the process of developing self-awareness, managing emotions, building and maintaining healthy relationships, and making responsible decisions—skills that support personal and academic success, lifelong learning, and a more just and caring society (CASEL, 2020).

SEL-related skills such as critical thinking, emotional management, conflict resolution, decision-making, and teamwork are recognized as valuable for improving academic achievement and advancing educational equity. However, these skills are difficult to quantify using traditional assessment methods, as noted by the National Conference of State Legislatures (n.d.) and supported by research from CASEL and Durlak et al. (2011). Currently, 27 states have integrated SEL competencies into their K-12 state curricula, with all fifty states having adopted Pre-K SEL competencies (CASEL, n.d.; Weissberg et al., 2015). The value of building strong social and emotional skills is recognized well beyond the classroom, with its connection to emotional intelligence and leadership skills highlighted by publications like the Harvard Business Review (Ovans, 2015) and the New York Times (Proulx & Schulten, 2019).

Figure 1: CASEL's Framework for Systemic SEL (CASEL, 2020)

Core SEL competencies included in CASEL's Framework for Systemic SEL (Fig. 1) include the five areas of Self-awareness, Self-management, Social Awareness, Relationship skills, and Responsible decision making. Nested within each competency are associated skills and abilities that reflect each core competency, such as:

Self-awareness: skills including identifying emotions, developing an accurate self-perception, recognizing strengths, developing self-confidence and self-efficacy.

Self-management: skills including impulse control, stress management, self-discipline, self-motivation, goal-setting, and organizational skills.

Social-awareness: skills including perspective-taking, empathy, appreciating diversity, and respect for others.

Relationship skills: skills including communication, social engagement, relationship-building, and teamwork.

Responsible decision-making: skills including identifying problems, analyzing situations, solving problems, evaluating, reflecting, and developing ethical responsibility. (CASEL, n.d., as cited in Bailey & Weiner, 2022, p .6)

The five core competencies are surrounded by four concentric circles of learning contexts, broadening in scope from the classroom to the wider world: Classroom, School, Families and Caregivers, and Communities. While the majority of SEL instruction and curriculum-based learning happens within classroom and school settings, each one of these four educational contexts plays an important role in a student's social and emotional learning experience.

This study focuses on the outermost Communities circle and the ability of museums to support SEL within that respective learning context. The Communities circle of the CASEL framework incorporates community partners into SEL efforts, noting their ability to support and advance SEL efforts through what the framework terms "aligned learning opportunities." According to CASEL, these partners provide safe and developmentally rich settings for learning and development, have a deep understanding of community needs and assets, are seen as trusted partners and have connections to supports and services that families and students may need. CASEL does not explicitly name which types of organizations and programs belong within the Communities circle, but provides the following broad definition:

Community partners often provide safe and developmentally rich settings for learning

and development, have deep understanding of community needs and assets, are seen as

trusted partners by families and students, and have connections to additional supports and

services that school [sic] and families need. Community programs also offer

opportunities for young people to practice their social and emotional skills in settings that

are both personally relevant and can open opportunities for their future. To integrate SEL

efforts across the school day and out-of-school time, school staff and community partners

should align on common language and coordinate strategies and communication around

SEL-related efforts and initiatives. (CASEL, n.d.)

Based on this definition, museums, which exist to serve the public and their communities

and which are primarily guided by educational missions (Young, 2021), belong within the

Communities circle. Programs, such as those offered by museums, can provide visitors with

opportunities to engage in their social and emotional skills in settings that are relevant and

engaging. Designing exhibits and programs to foster connections, perspectives and experiences

and aligning on a common language, as suggested by CASEL, are efforts in support of this goal.

In addition, the engagement with the educational sector allows for coordinating and collaborating

with schools to create bridges of opportunities to integrate SEL efforts across the school day and

out-of-school time.

Speaking not to SEL specifically but to educational partnerships more broadly, AAM

asserts that K-12 education has a significant ally in museums (American Alliance of Museums,

2018). According to the AAM, museums in the United States spend an average of $2 billion

annually on educational activities and serve over 55 million K-12 students collectively. AAM

further estimates that the typical museum devotes three-quarters of its educational budget to

programs and services for K-12 students. This data is evidence of a relationship between schools and museums and situates museums as community partners with a potentially significant role to play within SEL's Communities context.

Despite CASEL's framework recognizing the importance of community partnerships, and the noted increase in SEL-related programming by museums, little is known about museum leaders' perspectives and practices in integrating SEL. By better understanding museum-based SEL integration practices, museum leaders can help strengthen the social and emotional well-being of their individual communities, as well as support stronger SEL community partnerships on a systemic level.

Problem of Practice

Decades of research demonstrate the positive impacts of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) on student outcomes in school and classroom settings (Schonert-Reichl, 2017, 2019); however, less is known about SEL in the museum setting (Eppley, 2021; Luke et al., 2022). Museums have long existed as places of informal and experiential learning, guided by educational missions (DeWitt & Storksdieck, 2008; Monk, 2013). Museums can provide opportunities for self-reflection and have been shown to facilitate perspective-taking and empathy-building through the exploration of different cultures and perspectives (Crow & Bowles, 2018; Kraybill, 2014). Much has been published on how museums, as educational partners, both support and supplement traditional classroom-based learning , 2021; Luke et al., 2022).

As more museums begin to integrate SEL into educational programming, an opportunity exists to better understand how museum leaders–working in their role as educational leaders– understand and apply SEL in the museum setting. This study will use CASEL's Theory of

Action (TOA) as a tool for examining SEL integration in select museums and the practices of museum leaders who have led those efforts. Ultimately, research will inform a better understanding of museum leaders' perspectives on opportunities for SEL in museums and contribute to what is known about the ability of museums, as members of the CASEL Framework's Communities circle, to support schools' SEL efforts.

Identifying the Gap

Although serving the needs of K-12 students and teachers is the primary focus of most museums' educational budgets (Young, 2021), museums frequently find that their resources are underutilized by the students and teachers they most wish to serve (Murtie et al., 2021). While contributing factors to this may include issues related to messaging on the part of the museums, time scarcity or strict adherence to state-prescribed curriculum on the part of schools, and other educational partner-related alignment logistics, museums remain important educational collaborators within their communities. The American Alliance of Museums estimates that museums serve over 55 million students annually (2018). This figure suggests that a significant number of America's students engage with museums, potentially multiple times, during their K-12 years. Other educational resources frequently offered by museums include teacher professional development, in-school and out-of-school arts enrichment programs, and a vast array of digital resources for use at home and in the classroom, suggesting the total number of students and teachers served is likely quite higher than the annual field trip numbers. Despite the role evidenced by these numbers that museums appear to have on K-12 learning, discussion of learning in museums is notably limited from most formal educational research. Museums, as educational partners to K-12 classroom-based education, are often overlooked or excluded from education research, with SEL being no exception.

Similarly, SEL is largely absent within museum field research and scholarship despite an increased emphasis within museums to promote empathy (Eppley, 2021; Kraybill, 2014; Luke et al., 2022; Uppin & Timoštšuk, 2019; Young, 2021) and cultural competencies, both being among the leading goals of SEL. SEL focuses on skill building—such as empathy and social awareness—rather than content acquisition, an overlapping interest of many museums (Eppley, 2021; Luke et al., 2022). SEL has also been shown to support equity (CASEL, 2020; Jagers et al., 2019, 2021), another overlapping area of focus between the SEL framework and museum learning. SEL, it is argued, can prepare students for living in a diverse world (Kaspar & Massey, 2022). As museums prepare to welcome and serve an ever-changing and diverse visitor audience, SEL offers itself as a bridge among people and cultures.

Although topics such as demonstrating empathy, taking others' perspectives, and identifying diverse social norms—all aspects of CASEL's framework—are germane to both SEL and museum learning, formal SEL has been largely absent from professional dialogue in museums. A search of The Journal of Museum Education, the field's leading professional journal, reveals just one article focusing on SEL in museums, published in 2021. Here is an opportunity to expand what is known about SEL and museums through the practices and perspectives of museum leaders who have pioneered SEL integration in museums.

Identifying Integration of SEL in Museums

Few museums have adopted SEL in their educational programming in a formal and explicit way, though observable trends suggest that interest in integrating SEL into the arts and museum programming may be increasing (Eppley, 2021; Luke et al., 2022). A recent search of awards made by the Institute for Museums and Library Services (IMLS) showed eleven distinct grants, totaling over $1,591,000, aimed at supporting SEL-related programming in museums

between 2014 and 2022. A review of grey literature, such as blog posts by Randi Korn & Associates, a prominent consulting firm within the field of museum learning, and those by the Peak Experience Lab, include a call for more awareness surrounding SEL and its connections to the work of museums (Krantz, 2020; Peak Experience Lab, 2019). Blog posts exploring the links between SEL and museums' educational programming have recently been shared by The American Alliance of Museums (Hegstrom et al., 2024) and by CASEL (Langholtz, 2024). These observations suggest a growing interest in the topic of SEL among museum professionals, SEL practitioners, and their respective professional organizations.

The Met recently published a 116-page booklet "Social and emotional learning through art: Lessons for the classroom" (2022). Designed in collaboration with a teacher advisory committee, among its goals are to serve as a "resource that encourages teachers to use the Met's collection as a catalyst to help students gain and develop their social and emotional learning skills" (p. 2). The thirty lesson plans present pieces from the Met's collection with accompanying background and activity suggestions, along with the corresponding SEL competencies addressed in each lesson plan clearly listed.

Museum program descriptions, which frequently list connections to state and national curriculum standards (Murtie et al., 2021), are beginning to include connections to SEL standards and competencies. Examples of museums that highlight SEL connections on their website also include the Cleveland Museum of Art, which identifies specific SEL-aligned goals for their virtual lessons, presented alongside tips for classroom teachers to prepare for the program *Social-Emotional Learning Through Art*, and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), which shared a twelve-minute instructional video on their website showcasing how their educational programs support key elements of SEL (Raphael, 2024). The Virginia Museum of

Fine Art's website (2025) notes that the museum's "comprehensive and diverse collection is rich with examples of artworks that can serve as catalysts for fostering core competencies of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)." The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts has also hosted teacher workshops focused on developing school-based educators' SEL skills using art in their galleries. The National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, has also offered professional development programs that incorporate SEL, including a week-long summer institute for teachers titled *The Power of Art: Pathways to Critical Thinking and Social Emotional-Learning*. References to exhibits or programs supporting social and emotional learning can also be found on children's museum's websites, such as the Brooklyn Children's Museum, Glazer Children's Museum, and DuPage Children's Museum, among others.

Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum recently shared results from an impact study they conducted on their 2022-2023 *Thinking Through Art* program, which found that 73% of students who participated in that program showed evidence of high SEL skills in four key areas, compared with just 53% of non-participating students in those same four areas. These preliminary findings further illustrate SEL's relationship to museum learning and point to the need for more research on this topic, including evaluation studies. While these examples range from in-depth to cursory in their content, their existence, as well as their apparent increasing frequency of occurrence, is notable. Cumulatively, these examples of museums engaging in SEL also show SEL's presence at museums across the United States, not just in one localized area. As schools across the country integrate SEL into their curricula and learning standards, more museums may begin to do so, as well.

As previously noted, SEL aligns with museums' priorities, including empathy and equity (Eppley, 2021; Luke et al., 2022). This alignment is noticeable in the close coupling of SEL and

empathy by The Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, in their 2020/2021 annual report, for instance, which noted that "For decades, Children's Museum of Pittsburgh has offered joyful, creative, and curiosity-invoking experiences for learners of all ages. More recently, the Museum's most popular exhibits and programs have focused explicitly on the importance of social-emotional learning and the development of empathy and kindness" (Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, p. 10). While some museums, like the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, have begun to explicitly link their educational programming to aspects of SEL theory, these remain exceptions, rather than the norm. While it's clear that SEL is becoming more explicitly evident in the field of museum learning, little is known about how or why, and the ways in which museum leaders are facilitating this integration.

Research Questions

This study addresses a gap in Social Emotional Learning (SEL) research by investigating perspectives and practices of museum leaders when integrating SEL at their institutions. How museum leaders understand, view, and enact SEL integration is an area of SEL research that has, to date, largely been overlooked. The following primary research question and three sub-questions guide this study:

Primary Research Question: What is known about the perspectives and practices of museum leaders regarding the integration of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in museums?

RQ1: How do museum leaders define SEL?

RQ2: What leadership practices are used to integrate SEL into museums' educational programming?

RQ3: What opportunities do museum leaders identify for SEL and museums?

The following section provides a brief rationale for the focus, structure, and order of the research questions. The primary research question grounds the study in several important ways. Firstly, it identifies SEL as the overall topic of interest, focusing on the stage of SEL integration. It then situates SEL integration within the context of museums and further narrows to explore that topic through the perspectives and practices of leaders. Ultimately, the three questions that follow address a basic "what, how and why" structure.

Research question one seeks to learn how museum leaders define SEL to see how their conceptualization of the term matches or differs from its more common usage in the school and classroom setting. It also provides a useful baseline understanding of the term for the interviewer and interviewee to refer to as the interview progresses. Although CASEL is the most used SEL model within the research community and statewide policy, it is possible that museums are utilizing other—or completely original—models. This research question will ensure a clear understanding of how leaders define SEL and which, if any, existing framework their institution applied. Research question one, essentially, asks museum leaders *what* SEL is.

After establishing a clear understanding of SEL in the museum setting, it is important to understand the process of its integration. Research question two aims to understand *how* SEL was integrated by leaders within the museum setting. Specifically, this question seeks to explore the practices museum leaders use to incorporate SEL in their museum settings.

Lastly, research question three addresses *why* SEL is being integrated into museums. In asking museum leaders to speak about the "why," this study seeks to better understand their perspectives on the role of SEL within the museum, their views on opportunities for museum-school partnerships in support of SEL efforts, any impacts of SEL integration thus far, and speak to the future of museums and SEL, more broadly.

Defining Key Terminology

    Museum: For the purposes of this study, a museum will be defined as a non-profit institution with an educational mission that includes the word museum in its title. Its staff should be actively involved with professional organizations, such as the American Alliance of Museums, and it must offer educational programs to the public.

    Museum Leader: Museum leader, as it appears throughout this study and in the above research questions, refers to any museum staff person in the position of making decisions and setting direction for their institution's K-12 education team. Staffing structures vary from museum to museum; this position may at times be at a Vice President or Director-level position, or that of an education team manager. In this way, a museum leader parallels what is often referred to as a "school leader" in school and classroom-based literature. For the purposes of this study, a museum leader's specific title is irrelevant; deference will be given to the institution itself to recommend the appropriate person or persons working in a leadership position who can represent their museum's SEL-related efforts.

Furthermore, it is worth acknowledging that the museums themselves, as institutions that are leading the way in SEL integration, are leaders within the museum field. The museums participating in this study are likely to be formidable in both size and reputation. In this way, those museums are already leaders within their respective fields, with broader implications for the impacts of their practices. Put simply: when the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Smithsonian Institution commit resources to an educational initiative, they communicate a message to smaller museums about the priority of that effort and their belief in the initiative's value. When referring to museums

themselves as leaders, they will be referred to by their institutional name, not as individual-level leaders.

Community Partners and Community Partnerships: Community partners are often referenced in SEL research, as well as in reports by organizations like CASEL, though the term itself is rarely strictly defined. Community partners often include out-of-school time (OST) programs, youth development programs or organizations such as the YMCA, libraries, or even businesses. Occasionally museums are included in this list when a list is provided. More often, however, they are not explicitly named. As the literature review will explore further, their educational missions and existence as places of learning frequently accessed by student field trips, intergenerational family visits, teacher professional development programs, and other educational offerings shows alignment with the role of other community partners and out of school time (OST) providers. For the purposes of this study, the term "community partners" will be used in its most inclusive sense, with museums understood to be implied even when not explicitly mentioned.

Museum Learning: This term is intentionally broad; it is used rather than "museum environment" or "within the museum setting" as many museums offer digital programs, community outreach, in-school visits, and other off-site engagement opportunities. Not all museum learning happens *in* a museum building. With the increase in digital learning and virtual museum field trips—especially in 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic (Eppley, 2021)—"museum learning" is more inclusive of this range of educational methods and opportunities. Museum learning, also known within the field as museum

education, will be further explored and defined in this capstone's literature review, in section two.

Purpose and Significance

While relatively few museums have, to date, adopted SEL into practice in a formal way, those that have are in a position to share early insights into the "why" and the "how" of their initiatives, informing the field of museum learning, as well as broader applications for SEL research. Given the significance of museums as educational partners to K-12 learning in the United States and the number of student field trips to museums annually (American Alliance of Museums, 2018; Young, 2021), SEL in museums is a relevant and valuable topic for both classroom and museum educators.

This study aims to address a gap in research by studying museum leaders' practices of SEL integration in museums. Recent integration of SEL in select museums serves as a case study for examining how museum leaders understand SEL in museums, why those leaders chose to embark on the programmatic change of integrating SEL, and what they learned through that process. The research will examine how SEL is being integrated into museum learning, the motivations behind adoption, and the insights gained by museum leaders. In doing so, this study will explore the perspectives and practices of museum leaders who have experience pioneering SEL integration at their institutions.

The next section presents the conceptual framework, which provides a visual representation for the themes and questions guiding this study's research. A discussion of methods and approach to conducting research will follow.

Preview of Conceptual Framework

Rallis and Rossman (2012) assert that the purpose of a conceptual framework is to aid a researcher in identifying gaps in what is known about a given subject or problem and to guide the scope and purpose of research. As previously stated, comparatively little SEL-related research has included, let alone focused on, SEL in the museum setting. This study's conceptual framework aims to explore SEL integration in museums by examining the perspectives and practices of museum leaders who have experience in this area.

The conceptual framework begins with the premise that knowing the museum leader's perspectives on the topic of SEL will be critical for understanding how they view its merits, opportunities, and relevance within the context of museum learning. These perspectives alongside CASEL's four-step Theory of Action (TOA) for SEL integration, namely: Building Foundational Support and Plan, Strengthening Adult SEL, Promoting SEL for Students, and Reflecting on Data for Continuous Improvement. While not designed specifically for museums, the TOA provides a useful framework for understanding the steps—also known as focus areas—involved in SEL integration and can be adapted for use in museum contexts.

By using the TOA as a lens for examining the practices of museum leaders who have integrated SEL, this study can compare their processes against best practices in formal educational settings. This comparison highlights similarities and differences in SEL integration between the two educational settings. In doing so, it aimed to explore whether the four focus areas outlined in CASEL's TOA are applicable in museum settings and whether there are any additional steps or considerations that are specific to museums. That comparison may also inform future practice in this area by highlighting challenges and opportunities unique to museums in integrating SEL.

CASEL's TOA was chosen to examine if and how the four focus areas for SEL integration in the schools compare to the practices that museum leaders use when integrating SEL in their programming. The TOA provides an established, familiar and consistent lens for comparing the process across educational settings. A better understanding of the perspectives of museum leaders regarding SEL, coupled with a tool for understanding best practices for its integration, can inform future practice in this area.

The next section will present a brief overview of this study's methodological approach for better understanding museum leaders' perspectives and practices regarding SEL integration in museums and detail the process by which museums were selected for inclusion in this multi-site descriptive case study. Section three will address this study's conceptual framework and methodological approach in greater detail.

Preview of Methodology

This qualitative study is a descriptive multi-site comparative case study (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017) that utilizes purposeful sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to select participants to examine and compare SEL integration across three museums in the United States. Purposeful sampling is appropriate for this study because it is a method that allows researchers to gain understanding from specific samples from which the most can be learned (2016). In this study, gaining insight on their integration process from leaders at museums where SEL has been intentionally integrated is the goal. Since intentional integration of SEL concepts is not yet prevalent within the museum field, it was necessary to search for and identify museums that have already adopted this practice and whose leaders are able to reflect on that experience. Creation of this database, and the efforts of that creation, were informed by this study's literature review, by

repeated broad and targeted internet searches, and consultations with various SEL experts and museum professionals.

To identify appropriate and information-rich cases for purposeful sampling from the candidate database, best practice dictates the creation of specific selection criteria (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For the purposes of this study, US-based museums needed to publicly advertise their SEL-related programming by sharing a description of that program or SEL-related language on their website. The exact product or format of the SEL integration was allowed to take many forms; some included a new museum experience designed for K-12 student audiences, while others consisted of professional development for school-based educators or information for general visitors about how the museum's work supports SEL. In this way, this study takes an expansive view of SEL in the museum space, allowing for a broader number of museums to be considered for participation. When selecting museums to approach for inclusion in this research study, an effort was made to ensure that the sample selection, while small, included an aspect of diversity, as well as sharing enough similarities to be comparable. A more detailed description of the selection process is presented in section three's discussion of this study's methods.

Ultimately, three museums were selected for further study from an initial pool of over a dozen qualifying museums. It is acknowledged that the initial sample may not encompass every museum in the United States that has integrated SEL into its programs, especially as the number of museums announcing SEL-related programming has increased in the time it has taken to create and conduct this very study. Nevertheless, this multi-site case study design remains valid and appropriate for achieving the stated research aims.

A qualitative study is appropriate for this topic because it aims to collect, analyze, and understand personal experiences and opinions in-depth (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A

comparative case study was chosen for its ability to identify similarities and patterns in the data, providing insight to future practice in this area (2016). The study involved conducting semi-structured small-group focus group interviews, lightly scripted but designed to be flexible as needed (2016), with representatives from museums who are considered leaders of SEL integration at their institutions. Each of the three museums' focus group interviews involved between two to five museum staff and included various levels of leadership perspectives. All interviews followed a pre-approved interview protocol (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and a consistent set of interview questions (Appendix 4), which will be discussed in further detail in section three.

Following the focus group interviews, data analysis consisted of several rounds of reading and coding, looking for emergent patterns and themes. Creswell and Creswell (2018) outline six sequential steps to be followed, from the specific to the general and involving multiple levels of analysis. These include organizing and preparing the data for research, reading all the data, starting to code the data, generating a description and themes, and representing those description and themes (2018). In this case, each site's interview data, paired with document analysis, were examined for evidence that addressed their leaders' perspectives and practices regarding SEL integration.

CASEL's TOA is used as a tool to help identify practices for integration as articulated by interview participants. The TOA's four basic categories of action are: Building Foundational Support and Plan; Strengthening Adult Competencies and Capacities; Promoting SEL for and with Students; and Reflecting on Data for Continuous Improvement. Leadership practices for SEL integration within the museum setting were identified in each focus group interview, compared with the four steps of CASEL's TOA, and organized into each step where alignment

was found. Leadership practices identified as falling outside of the TOA were also identified and explored. After coding each interview individually, the interviews were cross analyzed for areas of similarity or difference among the three locations, making this a multi-site case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). CASEL's TOA and its role in this study's conceptual framework will be further detailed in section three.

In addition to the interview data, documents and artifacts from each interview site were considered as a means of triangulating research using various data points (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Consistent with best practice, documents and artifacts were assessed for authenticity, cataloged, and coded congruent with interview data gathering patterns (2016). Three sources of information were used to complete the triangulation; examples include information collected during interviews, internal training documents, final program descriptions found on brochures and the museum's website, materials printed for use by the public, evaluation materials, and language used in grant reports. Documents and artifacts served as evidence of integration practices referenced in the interviews themselves and were analyzed for themes consistent with the interviews themselves. Including artifact analysis as a part of data gathering helps provide evidence of the integration practices that participants described during interviews. Document analysis also provided an opportunity during the data analysis process to notice themes that might have otherwise go unexplored or not be surfaced by the interviews themselves (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Limitations

Although the methodology is designed to provide a rich understanding of each museum leader's approach to the SEL integration process, limitations also exist within the study. One limitation is the potential lack of generalizability of findings beyond specific institutions and individual leaders studied. This limitation is due to the small sample size—three institutions—and that participants were selected through purposeful sampling and, thus, may not be representative (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017) of all museums that have integrated SEL into their programming. Additionally, interview participants are likely will be to express pro-SEL when discussing their motivations for integration, introducing a potential source of bias. Museum leaders who have not integrated SEL because they are either uninformed on the topic or are not supportive of its use in museum learning are not represented in the research.

It is notable that each of the museums identified for inclusion in this study are in urban areas, while the Institute of Museum and Library Services (2018) reports that roughly 26% of American museums are in rural areas. Two of the participating museums are above average in size, suggesting access to larger budgets, staff, buildings, visitation, and other resources that may impact an institution's ability to pilot a new initiative or program. More small and regional museums may also be integrating SEL into their programming, but they may be undiscoverable if that effort is not widely or publicly advertised. Selecting only from museums that publicly advertise their SEL efforts is not representative of SEL efforts by all museums. While limitations exist, and were considered when interpreting findings, they do not detract from the valuable insights to be gained from studying leaders' perspectives and practices of integrating SEL in museums.

Delimitations

The selection of museums and construction of interview questions are two key delimitations of the study. Alternative sampling criteria and interview questions could have potentially impacted the data, analysis, and findings of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition, the research questions were deliberately designed to focus on the process of SEL integration from a museum leaders' perspective. Focusing on leadership practices for integration rather than extending into the depths of curriculum writing and program development prohibits an in-depth comparison of SEL product, such as teacher professional development versus structured field trip program, versus self-guided family scavenger hunt or any other possible iteration of programming approach. This delimitation ensures that the study remains focused on the practices that museum leaders used to integrate SEL.

Furthermore, although each focus group interview included multiple perspectives representing various levels of museum leaders, this study does not extend into the viewpoints of other notable stakeholder groups, such as community and school-based educational partners, or students and adult visitors. Including those wider perspectives would contribute to a more complete view on the topic of SEL in museums and would significantly expand the scope of the study.

Additionally, limiting the scope of research to the integration stage stops short of entering the field of program evaluation. Although program evaluation could inform future practice, it is not the primary focus of this study and warrants a different research direction. Examining motivations and approach to integration by the leaders of these efforts is a first step towards subsequent research in this area. These considerations comprise the primary areas related to this

study's delimitations. The next section addresses the role of the researcher in designing, conducting, and interpreting the results of the study.

Role of the Researcher

As a career museum educator with a Virginia teaching license and graduate-level academic training in both museum studies and K-12 learning, my professional experiences shape my perspective that the fields of formal classroom learning, and informal museum learning often operate as distinct but parallel field (Straughn-Navarro et al., 2021). As a doctoral student in the Administration and Supervision program at the University of Virginia, my coursework regularly covered topics that required translation on my part to transfer from the classroom learning context to the museum learning context. While the terms used by each profession often varied, the themes and goals were usually compatible. Among those: how to train effective teachers, motivate and empower an education team, support student outcomes, identify and address inequity in curriculum, and more. When I was introduced to Social and Emotional Learning as a concept in a class presentation by Dr. Michelle Beavers, this study's capstone Chair, the connections between my experiences working in museum education and SEL's goals immediately resonated. I wondered how, given the apparent overlap and synergy between its framework and topics within the museum community, I was not more familiar with SEL. This research is an attempt to address a knowledge gap I recognized within myself, as well as within the larger field of SEL research.

Biases and Assumptions

As a researcher with a background in museum learning, I acknowledge biases and assumptions I hold that may relate to the study. This section will address those biases and assumptions as they relate to this study. As Rallis and Rossman (2012) note, biases come with

our passions, but what matters in the research process is approaching learning with an open mind. One such assumption I may hold, based on my passion for museum education and its capacity for building empathy, is that museum leaders are likely to feel positively about SEL as a concept. My personal motivation to seek out and highlight examples of positive deviance (Pascale et al., 2010) in museum leaders leading SEL integration is likely to align this study with like-minded research participants. Selecting educational leaders who are integrating SEL in the museum setting may introduce confirmation bias, since those individuals are more likely to speak positively about opportunities regarding museums and SEL. Even if my feelings on SEL were neutral, one can assume that museum leaders representing institutions that are pioneering work in this area will be advocates for its adoption. Additionally, perspectives and opinions informed by my personal experience as a museum professional and leader within that space, paired with my belief in the value of SEL skills, could influence my own understanding and interpretation of the data, despite my attempts to be impartial.

To minimize the impact of my assumptions, I designed interview questions with the goal of being impartial and focused on asking leaders to talk about their approach to SEL integration. This allows for the resulting data to reflect their perspectives and experiences, rather than my opinions. Similarly, by applying CASEL's four-step Theory of Action (TOA) as a tool for mapping their leadership practices and basic steps taken to support the process of SEL integration, I used a pre-validated resource rather than an original one. In interpreting data, I took steps to remain mindful of my bias and acknowledge any potential impact it may have had on the study's findings. In the Methodology section, I will provide a detailed description of the steps I took to minimize the impact of my bias and assumptions on my approach to analyzing and interpreting data, as well.

Summary

In summary, despite the apparent synergy between SEL's stated goals and museum learning (Eppley, 2021; Luke et al., 2022), SEL as a formalized framework is largely missing from museum learning research and conversations. This capstone study contributes to what is known about SEL in museum learning by examining the perspectives and practices of museum leaders with experience integrating SEL in the museum setting. Evidence suggests that SEL is a topic of increasing interest to school-based educators and administrators, museum leaders, and education policymakers. The next section reviews the literature on SEL, its relationship to museum learning, and leadership practices relating to SEL integration in educational settings.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to examine what is known about SEL integration in museums. To do so, it synthesizes research across the following three areas: the origins and traditional applications of SEL; SEL's relationship to the field of museum learning; and best practices for SEL integration in both school and out-of-school settings. Each section includes subsections to explore related or supporting research that may help to inform a better understanding of SEL and museums.

Approach to Literature Review

Research began with a thorough review of educational databases including EBSCO and ERIC for data on SEL in museums and related topics that might inform this study, such as SEL in out-of-school time programs (CASEL Schoolguide, n.d.; Newman, 2020) and arts integration (Casciano et al., 2019). Google Scholar was also used for identifying existing research on search terms including "Museums and Social and Emotional Learning," "Leadership for SEL," "SEL Integration," "Leadership Perspectives on SEL," and other related terms. Google Scholar's "Related Articles" tool was used to scan for scholarly articles that may have been overlooked; reference lists in related articles also helped with the identification of promising sources. The University of Virginia's Educational & Social Science Research Librarian assisted in ensuring that a thorough search of the literature (A. Hosbach-Wallman, personal communication, November 21, 2022) had been conducted. In addition to searching all major scholarly journals and publications, she also consulted databases for dissertations, theses, and capstones from schools of education as well as museum studies programs.

After determining that relatively little research has, to date, focused on SEL in museum contexts, a search was conducted for museums that publicly advertised connections to SEL in

their programs and materials; to do this, individual museum's websites were consulted and grey literature was reviewed, including various museum associations' conference documents and museum-related blogs for references to SEL and related terms. Multiple conversations with personal contacts in the museum field also aided in forming a better understanding of current trends in programming and practice. While peer-reviewed research on museums and SEL remained limited, identifiable reports by independent and governmental agencies that included relevant data, as well as resources created by CASEL and individual museums informed a better understanding of the topic. Where appropriate, those sources are included in this study and within this section's review of literature.

In addition to a thorough review of literature relating to museums and SEL, the history of SEL's creation and application in school settings was examined. This began with a review of early SEL literature, including *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators* (Elias et al., 1997), an essential introduction to SEL theory and practice, and a collaborative effort by CASEL's founders. Another important text, which contemporary SEL research often references and is used here, as well, is Durlak et al.'s *Handbook of Social and Emotional Learning* (2015).

CASEL's website and the many research reports found there were also helpful for understanding school-based perspectives on SEL integration. CASEL's Theory of Action (TOA) and related research on its application was examined for possible connections to SEL integration across learning contexts. Lacking an established framework or much discoverable research on best leadership practices for SEL integration, a blended approach is used to address that topic by identifying areas of overlap among established leadership frameworks within the field of classroom-based education and best practices for SEL integration as articulated in CASEL's

TOA. In this way, parallels between leadership theory and SEL integration practices help to frame an understanding of leadership for SEL integration.

SEL: Origins and School-based Applications

Social and Emotional Learning was a movement born in America in the mid-nineties, at a time when the AIDS epidemic, drug prevention, sex education, violence prevention, and personal health were prevalent themes in K-12 education and policy (Elias et al., 1997). The Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), founded in Chicago in 1994 and originally called the Collaborative for the Advancement of Social and Emotional Learning, was a direct response to the need to support the knowledge, skills, and abilities of children to navigate making complex life decisions (Elias et al.). CASEL aimed to "encourage and support the creation of safe, caring learning environments that build social, cognitive, and emotional skills" (Elias et al., p. viii). Bailey and Weiner (2022), describe CASEL as the most widely known and used SEL framework, citing its founding goal as delivering high-quality SEL from preschool through high school. Traditionally, SEL has been practiced in school and classroom environments. CASEL's five core competencies—self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and decision making—were created to help guide school curriculum and instruction for SEL (Bailey & Weiner, p. 6). In doing so, CASEL applied extensive research from across academic fields, as well as workplace skill analysis (Bailey & Weiner, p. 6).

With society experiencing many changes, SEL emerged as a response to those needs. K-12 education was one of the first entities to explore the possibilities, and Elias et al. (1997) introduced SEL to classroom-based educators in *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators* (1997). In it, helping students prepare for life beyond school is a clear

and prevailing purpose of SEL. The emphasis on responsible decision making and relationship skills, key components of SEL's framework today, are an acknowledgement that teaching content knowledge alone is not sufficient preparation for "real life." Elias et al. (1997) drew on Daniel Goleman's (1995) research on emotional intelligence and its societal value, incorporating data from the 1980s U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration Research Project. This data highlights "what employers want for teens" (Fig. 1.3, p. 7), emphasizing interpersonal communication, creative thinking, problem-solving, and other SEL-related competencies.

Establishing the need for SEL, demonstrating how SEL fits into school and classroom learning, and giving educators the basic steps to get started are the Elias et al.'s (1997) objectives. Connections to SEL outside of the classroom are included, though with the primary emphasis being on ensuring that families and caregivers can be informed supporters of school-based efforts. Classrooms and schools are the traditional spaces for SEL. The term "community" is used in various contexts and applications, without a clear definition. For example, in modeling how to approach setting SEL-related goals, "community involvement" is included: "How are various community groups, organizations, businesses, senior citizens, and so on, involved with your efforts to promote students' SEL?" (Elias et al., p. 120). Here, community is used broadly, but in a way that is easily recognizable as being generally about non-school entities. The authors state that "A classroom or a school is a community" (Elias et al., p. 97). The term community partner is not yet commonly used, with entities that the CASEL Framework's would today situate within the Communities circle still evolving into partners in the truest sense.

Elias et al. (1997) acknowledge that SEL benefits from being "provided through a variety of diverse efforts, such as classroom instruction, extracurricular activities, a supportive school

climate, and involvement in community service" (p. 3), though the primary focus remains on supporting in-school efforts. In examining the "value of securing community involvement and support" (p. 89), authors note that community involvement in and support for SEL is essential for success. Reflecting the "skills, attitudes and values that are priorities in the community" (Elias et al., p. 89) are highlighted as examples of synergistic links between school-based efforts and the wider context in which those schools exist. As is commonly found in today's SEL research, examples of community entities include "agencies and businesses" (Elias et al., p. 89) by name, though museums are not mentioned. The authors of *Social and Emotional Learning: Past, Present and Future* note that students' social, emotional, and academic competencies are enhanced through coordinated school, family, and community strategies (Weissberg et al., 2015, p. 6), adding that community members and organizations can support classroom and school efforts by providing students with additional opportunities to refine and apply various SEL skills (Catalano et al., 2004, as cited by Weissberg et al, 2015, p. 9).

SEL Frameworks

CASEL is widely recognized as being the leading SEL framework (Durlak et al., 2015), but it is by no means the only approach to SEL. Though each approach may differ in exact content and method of delivery, they all share a vision to promote the healthy development and success of children so they can grow to their fullest potential – socially, emotionally, academically, and eventually professionally (CASEL, 2013 as cited in Brackett et al., 2015). Other leading SEL and SEL-related frameworks include RULER, which stands for Recognize, Understand, Label, Express and Regulate. Developed at The Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, the RULER framework is a PreK-High School systemic approach to SEL that largely centers emotional intelligence theory (Brackett et al., 2015). While it includes many

overlapping areas with CASEL's framework, its increased emphasis on school settings and climates limits its scope in some degree. As evidence of this, RULER's Theory of Change lists key stakeholders as including administrators and school board, educators and staff, families, and students (Brackett et al., 2019); notably omitting community partners. The "Whole Child" model, another SEL-adjacent framework, broadens the focus beyond students' academic achievement to include their social and emotional development, health, and safety, highlighting the interdependent relationships among all of these factors (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018). These are just two examples among many other education-based frameworks that overlap with or incorporate aspects of the CASEL framework. As frameworks are designed to meet a specific community or educational context's needs, more are surely to come. For this study's conceptual framework and literature review, CASEL's Framework for Systemic SEL, also known as the CASEL Wheel or CASEL 5, serves as the primary focus.

SEL in Contemporary Conversations

Understanding the initial origins of SEL and CASEL's creation of a first formalized framework with school-based instruction and curriculum in mind (Bailey & Weiner, 2022) helps inform contemporary conversations about SEL. In 2004, Illinois became the first state to develop preschool to high school SEL learning standards that provide guidance for the domain of SEL-related skills (Weissberg et al., 2015). As previously noted, all 50 states in the US now have preschool social and emotional development standards (Weissberg et al., 2015), with 27 states having integrated SEL into their learning standards (CASEL, n.d.). In 2019 alone, more than 200 pieces of legislation referencing SEL were introduced (Shriver & Weissberg, 2020). Many of the same societal factors present at the birth of SEL roughly thirty years ago remain pernicious and prevalent in students' lives today, making SEL-related skills as essential as ever. While research

on the effects of the 2020 Covid-19 global pandemic is still emerging, students' social and emotional skills suffered along with their academic achievement (Bailey et al., 2021). Addressing this skill gap has brought SEL to the forefront of educational policy conversations, not without disagreement.

In the spring of 2020, *Phi Delta Kappan*, a leading source for discussion of K-12 education policy and research, published "Another education war? The coming debates over social and emotional learning" (Zhao, 2020). Critics of SEL, and of CASEL, argue that pro-SEL organizations have pushed states and districts to adopt SEL, justifying the move by citing Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA, the federal education law allowing states to use one nonacademic measure for accountability, in addition to required academic measures (Zhao, 2020). Yong Zhao, highlighting other more pointed criticisms, notes that SEL has been referred to as "nonacademic common core" (Gorman, 2016), "a terrifying experiment in social engineering" (Eden, 2019), "faux psychology" (Finn, 2017), and an "erosion of freedom of conscience" (Effrem & Robbins, 2019). Doubts on SEL's research base, including its measurable impacts, have been cast as oversold, or hype, while specific goals have been called ambiguous and amorphous – a catchall term. To this last point, CASEL leaders Tim Shriver and Dan Weissberg (2020) have replied that while CASEL has attempted to clarify SEL goals, it is not the only accepted framework, and that by its truest definition, SEL should be interpreted, adjusted and implemented to address a specific context's needs.

In "What everyone should know about implementation" (Durlak et al., 2015, chapter 26), Joseph Durlak writes that several factors may explain why an evidence-based program that has been shown to be effective may not result in consistently positive outcomes in all cases. Taking a broad view of the inherent challenges of the implementation process, Durlak notes that reasons

for this effectiveness gap may include staff members being insufficiently prepared to implement the new program, staff making substantive changes to the program's structure or application, or the new program being unexpectedly cut short or prematurely ended due to various issues (Durlak, 2015). Given the broad proliferation of SEL programs in schools and community-based programs nationwide, it logically follows that SEL is likely to be imperfectly implemented in many instances.

"A response to constructive criticism of social and emotional learning" (Shriver & Weissberg, 2020), published in direct response to many of the criticisms highlighted by Zhao (2020), addresses the critique that SEL, rather that supporting equity in education, has undermined it. Specifically, that SEL has at times been weaponized against students of color and other marginalized groups to teach them white values, white culture, and white behavior. Shriver and Weissberg, as with the other concerns leveled at SEL, assert that these concerns must be taken seriously, but that SEL always emphasized that *all* students benefited from greater support and development in social and emotional skills (2020, pp. 54-55). While the application of SEL approaches may, in reality, be inconsistent or ineffectively delivered, they argue that concerns about equity have motivated the SEL movement from the start.

Conversations about SEL's ability to support equity and inclusion extend far beyond the classroom. In "Museums as partners in PreK-12 social-emotional learning," (2021), author Hajnal Eppley notes that museum programs allow students to build empathy and practice listening skills, among other SEL-related connections. Drawing a direct connection to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, an increase in racially motivated violence across the United States following the death of George Floyd, and tensions surrounding the 2020 U.S. election, Eppley (2021) describes a "greater sense of urgency" among the museum's school-based partners for

supporting students social and emotional well-being and addressing state SEL curriculum goals. This sense of urgency motivated the Cleveland Museum of Art to clarify their SEL goals and communicate them to school partners with more intention. Arguing that, "to fully support PreK-12 students in a post-Covid society, museums must integrate concepts of social-emotional learning into their programs" (p. 510), Eppley (2021) illustrates how central the topic of SEL is, not only to school and classroom communities, but to all the partnering organizations that surround them. As students' needs, pressures, and realities grow and change, so will the future of SEL.

SEL's Relationship to Museum Learning

The next section presents scholarship supporting the concept that SEL, while born in the classroom, makes a natural bridge into the museum gallery. While the number of references on this topic is limited, what makes them notable is their direct relevance to the museum setting, as they are authored by museum professionals for museum practitioners. Unlike SEL scholarship originating from the school and classroom context, which may include museums as community partners, or other museum-related research discussing loosely related concepts like empathy-building or cultural competencies, these references explicitly focus on the integration and application of SEL within museums. They represent early research efforts and insights from experienced museum practitioners who have worked on incorporating SEL principles. These sources represent the early research on SEL in museums and perspectives from museum practitioners experienced in its integration presented as scaffolding for as-yet awaited authoritative study on the subject.

Museum Learning

Straughn-Navarro et al. (2021) describe museum educators and K-12 teachers as colleagues working in parallel fields (p. 213). Though museums and schools remain separate and distinct learning spaces, insights from scholarship beginning to emerge from museums suggest that SEL is often mission-related for museums, appeals to the strengths and experiences of museum educators, and can aid museums in forming deeper, collaborative relationships with classroom-based educators. In this way, SEL presents itself as a bridge between parallel educational fields.

While the premise that museums are beneficial for learning and for promoting public knowledge is not generally contested, understanding their impact—especially the experiential, cognitive, and feelings-based kind, can be challenging. Content-based tests can be administered via pre- and post-visit assessments. Understanding the potential long-term impact on a student's thinking about the world and their place in it, however, is not so easily measured (Kraybill, 2014). Research focusing on educational outcomes of museum visits is, in many ways, still an emerging field (Kisida et al., 2016). A landmark study published by Crystal Bridges Museum of Art was among the first to demonstrate the cognitive and non-cognitive benefits of a one-time field trip for K-12 students, confirming the value of interpreting artwork in building students' ability to take others' perspectives (Kraybill, 2014).

Researchers have noted the challenges of measuring the impact of museum and arts-based education (Kisida et al., 2016). The initial mission of Harvard's Project Zero, now a leader in the field of educational research, was to carry out fundamental research on education in the arts (Project Zero, n.d.). It was named after its founder, Nelson Goodman, who said that "The state of general communicable knowledge about arts education is zero. We're starting at zero, so

we are Project Zero." Museums, as noted by Project Zero's Senior Research Associate Shari Tishman (2018), are places that often apply the practice of inquiry and "slow looking" in their educational approach. In inviting K-12 students and visitors of all ages to look more closely, find their own personal connections to artwork, and explore meaning making through the process of asking and responding to deep questions rather than just receiving information, viewers expand their understanding of art in complex ways (Tishman, 2018). Tishman's research supports the claim that many museum-based approaches to teaching and learning promote skills such as taking others' perspectives, developing empathy and compassion, building self-awareness, identifying and valuing diverse cultural norms, building cultural competency and strengthening communication skills – all components of SEL.

Limited Research on SEL and Museums

Limited research exists on SEL in museums, though the increasing interest in SEL integration, evidenced by numerous museums beginning to offer SEL-supporting programs, suggests that more research is likely to emerge as the practice becomes more mainstream. This section will present an overview of the existing research on SEL in museums. As this capstone's approach to the literature review section noted, finding peer-reviewed articles and scholarly research on SEL in museums was challenging, and the results extremely limited. While the number of museums publicizing their programmatic connections in support of SEL is only growing—by way of example, Philadelphia's Please Touch Museum hired its first Social-Emotional Learning Coordinator in 2023—deeper research on the topic has yet to keep pace.

Eppley's "Museums as partners in Pre-K social-emotional learning" (2021) presents experiences from the Cleveland Museum of Art as an example of SEL integration in the museum setting, including motivations for SEL integration, connections between museum programming

and CASEL's SEL competencies, general strategies for supporting students' SEL within museum contexts, and future considerations for SEL in museums. Published by the Journal of Museum Education, it is one of the few discoverable articles that focuses on the topic of SEL in museums. In it, Eppley argues that museums are uniquely prepared to support SEL for PreK-12 students and that while connections to SEL often exist in a museum field trip, those connections are not always explicitly communicated to teachers. Due to a variety of factors, teachers, in turn, often overlook museums as a place that supports SEL goals.

Eppley's perspective as a practitioner provides insights on the integration process at the Cleveland Museum of Art and illustrates how that museum responded to its community and its needs. Ohio's emphasis on "Whole Child" education, the state's adoption of SEL standards, the broader cultural contexts of the global Covid-19 crisis and an increase in racially motivated violence in the United States are among the relevant pieces of this unique case study. The author shows connections between museums' emphasis on building empathy and SEL core competencies—a key link between SEL and best practices in museum learning highlighted in this capstone. Becoming knowledgeable about SEL and building a common language with schools regarding SEL curricula are two concluding recommendations of the article, echoing recommended best practices for SEL OST partners (Newman & Moroney, 2019).

Absent from this and other sources exploring SEL and museums (Eppley, 2021; Luke et al., 2022) is data on how many museums in the United States have integrated SEL, a survey of the other museum-based SEL programs, or insight on leadership practices for SEL integration. Currently, those areas appear unexplored by researchers. Eppley supports the argument that SEL in museums is a topic worthy of future study and offers recommendations surrounding increasing knowledge around SEL as a topic, as well as building a common language for communicating

with schools about SEL connections (2021). The article provides an insightful look into one of the leading museums offering SEL, but much about the landscape of SEL within museums more broadly, beyond the Cleveland Museum of Art, remains unknown.

Echoing the call for more attention to SEL in museums and noting the prevalence of SEL research from the formal education setting, Luke, Brenkert and Rivera (2022) present results from an empirical study of over 600 4–5-year-olds in two informal learning settings: children's museums and community playgrounds. Findings presented in "Preschoolers' SEL in children's museums and community playgrounds" demonstrate that preschool children engaged in SEL in both settings, but that significantly more instances of SEL were seen in children's museums compared with community playgrounds (Luke, et al., p. 229).

Methodology for the study design is quasi-experimental in nature. The purpose was to observe preschoolers' social-emotional behavior in children's museums and at community playgrounds (Luke et al., 2022). Researchers used the Revised/Shortened Minnesota Preschool Affect Checklist to document preschool children's social and emotional behaviors, observing 468 preschool children within the museum setting and 138 at community playgrounds. Their findings indicate evidence of preschool children engaging in SEL in both settings (Luke et al,, p. 237). Researchers observed significantly more instances of children regulating their emotions, managing behaviors, and practicing their peer relationship skills at the children's museum compared to the community playground (Luke et al., p. 238), suggesting that children's museum exhibits may foster SEL engagement in preschool children more than playgrounds do. Results of the study further suggest that unfacilitated experiences, like those often occurring through play, prompt opportunities for preschool students to engage in social emotional behavior. Authors found this notable, as previous studies suggest that SEL interventions are made more successful

by direct and repeated instruction from trained teachers (O'Conner et al., 2017, as cited in Luke et al., 2022).

Luke et al. (2022) underscore the importance of learning social and emotional skills in early childhood and highlight existing efforts to promote SEL in young learners via preschool programs. They note that interventions that promote children's SEL in grades PreK-12 have greatly increased in number and observe that many children's museums have begun to offer exhibits and programs specifically designed to foster and support SEL. Referenced among examples are the Boston Children's Museum's PlaySpace, which is described on the museum's website as "designed to support children in developing and practicing essential cognitive, physical, social and emotional skills" (Luke et al., p. 231). Similar language from several other children's museum websites is presented as further evidence that children's museums are aware of SEL and are advertising their connections to it with intention. Despite these documented examples of SEL language in children museums' advertised offerings, the authors note that no published research studies on the topic of SEL in children's museums are, to date, discoverable.

Among the conclusions from the research findings offered by Luke et al. (2022) is the implication for the future design of children's museum exhibits and spaces, such as considering the ways in which an activity or exhibit prompts negotiating social behaviors such as sharing and taking turns versus opportunities for solitary play and learning. Authors stop short of prescribing specific interventions or changes for museum designers or gallery educators but indicate that exhibit design is an area for future consideration where SEL connections are concerned.

Echoing observations about museums and SEL made by Eppley (2021), as well as by researchers of SEL and OST partners (Newman and Moroney, 2019; Newman, 2020), Luke, Brenkert and Rivera (2022) underscore the importance of exploring SEL beyond the formal

classroom and assert the "wider ecosystem of learning" in which children can learn and practice social and emotional learning (p. 239). In doing so, authors advocate for "[engaging] in shared learning opportunities with families to support their understanding of their child's social and emotional learning" (Brenkert & Rivera, p. 239), an indication that museums may be able to help facilitate this greater understanding in a way that other learning environments cannot. While the focus of this study centered on preschool-aged children (ages 4-5) engaging in SEL within the context of children's museums, specifically, its findings and recommendations provide key insights into the field of SEL in museums, more broadly.

Straughn-Navarro et al. (2021) examine SEL in museums through the lens of self-care and professional development in *"Sparking innovation in museum/K-12 programs through self-care and social-emotional learning"*. Central to the article's focus is the concept of peer-to-peer professional learning communities (PLC's) between museums and schools and the ways in which closer collaboration between school-based educators and museum educators may help build space for both groups to practice self-care, build stronger relationships, and ultimately create more meaningful learning experiences for educators, visitors, and students (Straughn-Navarro et al., p. 212). A strong theme of the article is that museum educators and K-12 teachers have much in common, and that they may be thought of as "colleagues across parallel fields." Their shared mission of education is highlighted as a unifying commonality, along with similar "obstacles of limited funding, a lack of institutional agency, and a traditionally lower status within their organizations" (Straughn-Navarro et al., p. 213).

A case study of a program led by the Spencer Museum of Art in Kansas serving art teachers based in nearby Salina, KS (Straughn-Navarro et al., 2021) illustrates opportunities for PLC's involving museum educators and classroom-based educators. This program prioritized

teachers' needs for support in SEL with the objective of "co-creating a meaningful community around the Spencer [Museum's] resources," in this case, their extensive Asian art collection.

Reflections on the program note the goal to better understand the specific challenges faced by classroom teachers and to "co-develop solutions to help overcome challenges with creativity and innovation" (Straughn-Navarro et al., p. 214). To build the trust necessary for collaborative groups such as those to accomplish those goals, the authors note the significant amount of time necessary for deep listening and community building. Straughn-Navarro et al. note that incorporating joy and fun within the museum and through the exploration of the museum's resources can be a powerful tool in professional development and relationship building. They add that PLC's such as these "can be a powerful catalyst to create space and time for self-care for teachers and museum educators" (Straughn-Navarro et al., p. 215).

The potential for peer-to-peer collaboration through museum-school PLC's remains the authors' primary focus, with museums as a place for practicing and expanding teachers' SEL skills being of key importance. Activities promoting mindfulness, close looking at art, and reflection are referenced as examples of how the Spencer Museum modeled the museum's ability to enrich teachers' curriculum with art integration practices in support of SEL. Ultimately, the authors conclude that by "developing and modeling flexible, skill-based, transformative learning experiences for teachers, students benefit from both the teachers' and museum educators' capacities for facilitating learning in social-emotional well-being and creating lifelong learners" (Straughn-Navarro et al., 2021).

As noted throughout in this capstone, growing interest in SEL within the museum field is observable in grey literature, such as professional conference programs, museum practitioner blogs, the addition of SEL-focused staff positions, and programming including exhibition design,

teacher professional development, and student programs. It can be assumed that, as interest grows, more research on SEL in museums is likely to emerge. This scholarship explores how SEL both connects with and advances mission-related educational efforts within museums. Though each was narrow in its focus on a specific site or type of museum, common themes can be found among them that relate to the unique attributes of museums as learning environments, commonly found skills and abilities of museum educators, the role of community partnerships, addressing classroom teachers' needs, and a focus on student outcomes.

SEL and Arts Education

Research from the field of visual and performing arts education offers insights into how SEL theory and practice is being integrated into diverse curricula and by other non-school educational partners. Casciano et al. (2019), researching arts education and SEL, note that SEL may be more proximate to arts-based learning than academic outcomes, but that the field itself is under-explored. As Scott Edgar and Bob Morrison (2021) assert, more investigation is needed "into the congruence of the arts and SEL" (p.145). The authors, in reviewing policy implications and opportunities for SEL and arts education, note that the "intrinsic connection" between SEL and arts education policy "is becoming more and more evident" (Edgar & Morrison, p. 145), with implications for practice, policy, and advocacy. Arts education happens in various contexts; it can apply to teaching and learning found within schools, concert halls, museums, theater spaces, dance studios, and more. A broad term, arts education nonetheless provides a unique opportunity, irrespective of context, to examine the relationship between SEL and the "Arts." Examining the relationship between SEL and arts education presents opportunities for better understanding SEL and its links to arts-focused museum education, as well.

The state of New Jersey presents a compelling case study in the benefits of SEL and arts educators working together. The SEL Arts Education Standards Framework was designed by a team, co-chaired by Bob Morrison and Dr. Maurice Elias, resulting from a crosswalk of arts education and SEL standards (Edgar & Morrison, 2021). While maintaining a focus on arts instruction, clear connections to supporting SEL informed the instructional approach (Edgar & Morrison, p. 146). Edgar and Morrison suggest that this "allowed the team to illuminate the inherent nature of SEL within arts education and how this can be activated in students intentionally" (p.146).

In the two stated goals of this project, information is the common factor. According to Edgar and Morrison (2021, p. 146), the primary goals were:

1. Empowering arts educators with the information they need to revise curricula and instruction to embed the activation of the SEL components into practice.

2. Providing arts educators, administrators, and other decision-makers with the information needed to elevate the understanding of how arts education is a valuable tool to support the implementation of SEL strategies in a school or district.

These goals underscore the need for more collaboration across educational disciplines and content areas where SEL can be the common binding agent for educators who may otherwise work independently from one another.

Researchers have noted the apparent alignment between SEL and arts education (Omasta et al., 2021). A study comparing the National Core Arts Standards (NCAS) in dance, media, arts, music, theater and visual arts with SEL standards adopted by the state of Illinois found 15,500 "intersections" of arts standards and SEL goals (Omasta et al., 2021). Noting that the types and degrees of alignment varied, the study's authors recommend that pursuit of arts learning in

conjunction with SEL goals involve "conscious planning" to ensure that both types of learning occur. These authors caution that, despite a natural alignment of goals, the assumption that SEL will occur without deliberate intent is presumptuous (Omasta et al., 2021).

Echoing observations regarding synergy between best practices in museum learning and SEL, Omasta et al. (2021) suggest that research in the performing and visual arts has "long pointed to these disciplines' ability to foster SEL, though not always using and sometimes pre-daring is the current acronym" (Omasta et al., p. 159). Ultimately, though NCAS Standards and Illinois SEL standards showed repeated overlap, the study's authors determined that more work is needed by arts educators to deliberately plan and build SEL goals into their lessons if supporting SEL through arts education is going to be effective. Despite the feeling by some arts educators that they're "already doing" SEL, more explicit and intentional connections need to be made (Omasta et al., p. 168).

Recommendations for strengthening partnerships between SEL and arts education include encouraging arts educators to join groups such as SEL4us and other state or local SEL groups. These platforms provide opportunities to "be a voice for the SEL/arts education connection" (Edgar & Morrison, 2021). Additionally, working with CASEL, in its capacity as the leading authority in SEL research, could help bring attention to the intersection of SEL and arts education (Edgar & Morrison). Researchers writing on the topic of arts education and SEL concur that intentional integration and deliberate approach to SEL instruction is crucial for its success (Edgar & Morrison, 2021; Omasta et al., 2021). With clear parallels between the fields of arts education and museum learning, these recommendations seem well-suited for application within the museum setting.

Leadership and SEL Integration

Leadership has been defined as the exercise of influence on what people do, how they do it, and how they do it, and how they think and feel about their success (Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2012, as cited in Bailey & Weiner, 2022). For the purpose of this capstone study, museum leaders are analogous to school leaders. Museum leaders who have led SEL integration at their museum are exercising influence through the process of SEL integration, via their actions taken in that process, and their perceptions of the effects of that integration. Bailey and Weiner note in "Interpreting Social-Emotional Learning: How School Leaders Make Sense of SEL Skills for Themselves and Others" (2022) that SEL has become a leading topic for school leaders but note that further research is necessary to more fully understand how school leaders in schools known for their SEL focus make sense of, define, and use their SEL skills. Likewise for museum leaders and SEL integration. As more research from educational leadership emerges, knowledge of effective SEL leadership in school and classroom settings may be useful for museum leaders approaching many of the same opportunities and challenges.

While research remains limited on efforts to integrate SEL into the museum setting (Eppley, 2021; Luke et al., 2022), a review of literature related to leadership for SEL integration in traditional school-based settings offers insight into best practice and offers opportunities for gaining insight into potentially transferrable recommendations for museum leaders. What follows is a review of relevant literature regarding leadership for SEL integration that addressed these potential areas of overlap and contained useful recommendations for leader actions irrespective of educational setting. Rarely are museums explicitly mentioned; those connections are extrapolated to reference a relevant body of peer-reviewed research with parallels to this study's focus.

Since no singularly accepted framework or theory exists for s leadership SEL integration, this study adopts a blended approach synthesizing literature related to SEL integration practices and connecting leadership recommendations to established frameworks. Comparing scholarship on best practices for SEL integration with established leadership frameworks from the field of educational research revealed multiples areas of alignment.

CASEL's TOA and Parallels to Established Leadership Frameworks

Resources developed by CASEL, including the four-step Theory of Action (TOA), provide useful tools for examining recommended best practices for SEL integration. A guide developed by CASEL titled "Systemic Social and Emotional Learning for States" (Yoder et al., 2021), includes CASEL's Theory of Action, model for Continuous Improvement Cycle, 20 specific activities for SEL integration, and rubrics for assessing progress in each of the TOA's four step's focus areas.

The TOA, as its name implies, is action, or practice based. Recommended best practices for SEL integration are listed sequentially, with the first being "Building Foundational Support and Plan." This step focuses on gathering a diverse "SEL Team," on creating a shared vision for school-wide implementation, developing a communication plan, and developing a plan for systemic implementation of SEL. The second step, "Strengthening Adult SEL Competencies and Capacity," focuses on the adults responsible for leading SEL to become more fluent and practiced in it. This step notably precedes "Promoting SEL for Students" because it emphasizes the importance of adult learning prior to engaging students in SEL efforts. Doing so would risk an ineffective implementation and would jeopardize positive impacts. Adult SEL provides opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and collaboration, including not only school-based educators, but also family members, state agencies, and community partners (Yoder et al., 2021).

It is notable that this four-step TOA does not explicitly reference the "CASEL 5" or the five specific core SEL competencies central to CASEL's Framework. Guidance provided for the third step, Promoting SEL for Students, notes that an SEL framework should be clearly defined and articulated with an aligned curriculum, tools and activities (2021), but does not predetermine the specific selection of SEL framework. In this way, CASEL's TOA is designed to be agnostic – a tool to aid in SEL integration, not necessarily CASEL integration.

The last step of the TOA is "Reflecting on Data for Continuous Improvement." This step involves identifying, collecting, analyzing, reporting, and reflecting on data related to student outcomes and other impacts of the SEL integration. With continuous improvement as the goal, articulated changes to content, approach, or delivery are a logical expression of step four in action. In one version of this model, the four-step TOA is presented within a "Continuous Improvement Cycle" comprised of an "Organize," "Implement" and "Improve" cycle (Yoder et al, 2021).

Interestingly, while the TOA is based in applied practices, it closely mirrors many aspects of accepted leadership frameworks. Specific recommended actions within the TOA's first step, or focus area, of Building Foundational Support and Plan correlate closely with points within the Ontario Leadership Framework's (OLF) Setting Direction domain (Leithwood, 2012). These include Building a Shared Vision; Identifying Specific, Shared, Short-term Goals; Creating High Performance Expectations; and Communicating the Vision and Goals – all critical aspects of the TOA's Building Foundational Support and Plan focus area. Leithwood's original five Core Leadership Capacities—Setting Goals, Aligning Resources with Priorities, Promoting Collaborative Learning Cultures, Using Data, and Engaging in Courageous Conversations can be found within various domains of the Ontario Leadership Framework (2012, p. 10). Those five

core leadership capacities also closely mirror CASEL's four-step action plan. Viewing these two models side by side shows how zooming in or out on their components and frameworks reveals close parallels, informed by research and often complementing one another. Although Leithwood's 2012 leadership model was created primarily with school-based educational leaders in mind, it notably highlights that the "practices included in the OLF are what most successful leaders do in many different contexts, their practical value depends on leaders enacting them in ways that are sensitive to the specific features of the circumstances and settings in which they work and the people with whom they are working" (Leithwood, p. 13). By this definition, OLF—and, by extension, CASEL's TOA—are practical guides for educational leaders in diverse educational settings, including museums.

The actions of successful educational leaders have been widely studied. That body of research supports the theory that effective leaders share common leadership practices. Several additional leading frameworks guide the field of educational leadership, among them Leithwood's (2012) Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF), as discussed above, Murphy et al.'s (2006) Learning-Centered Leadership Framework (LCL), and Seabring et al.'s (2006) Essential Supports Framework (ES). The Unified Framework (UF) (Hitt & Tucker, 2016) was created by systematically reviewing and synthesizing literature on attributes of effective school leaders, identifying areas of overlap in leading educational leadership frameworks, and grouping like competencies under five overarching, or unifying themes. As the chart below demonstrates, these five themes roughly correspond to the four steps in CASEL's TOA for SEL integration (Table 1). These parallels are noteworthy not only because they show alignment between theory and practice, but also because leadership actions may, as in this study, refer to a specific individual,

or to the actions and policies of a museum institution, broadly speaking. In the case of this study,

both are relevant.

Unified Framework Model	Corresponds to	CASEL's TOA
Establishing and conveying the mission and vision	=	Building Foundational Support and Plan
Building professional capacity	=	Strengthening Adult SEL Competencies and Capacities
Creating a supportive organization for learning	=	Promoting SEL for and with Students
Facilitating a high-quality learning experience for students	=	Reflecting on Data for Continuous Improvement
Connecting with external partners	=	Building Foundational Support and Plan

Table 1: Unified Framework Leadership Capacities compared to CASEL's Theory of Action

While the Unified Framework's "Connecting with external partners" (Hitt & Tucker, 2016)

appears at first not to have a clear corresponding action within CASEL's TOA, involving

stakeholders from a variety of settings—including legislators, state board, local businesses,

youth-serving organizations, parent groups, faith-based organizations, etc.—is a key aspect of

the TOA's first essential step: Building Foundational Support and Plan (Yoder et al., 2021, p. 9).

Similarly, UF's Building Professional Capacity closely aligns with the TOA's second step,

which focuses on Strengthening Adult SEL Competencies and Capacity.

Creating a Supportive Organization for Learning, UF's third key practice, while not as

strictly student-focused as the TOA's third step, notes that "leaders who positively influence

student achievement think carefully about how to construct a school environment that both

demonstrates a concern for the people in the organization and enables these same adults to

achieve personal and organizational goals" (Hitt & Tucker, 2016, p. 552). In this way, a positive

relationship is drawn between student achievement and a leader whose actions have included

maintaining ambitious and high expectations and standards, tending to and building on diversity, and acquiring and allocating resources strategically (Hitt & Tucker, p. 544).

UF's fourth key practice, Facilitating a High-Quality Learning Experience for Students, has embedded within it practices that align with the TOA's final step of Reflecting on Data for Continuous Improvement. Among those are Developing and Monitoring the Curricular, Instructional, and Assessment Programs. Due to its repeated mention of monitoring, Table 1 shows UF's fourth key practice as aligning with the TOA's Promoting SEL for Students, but connections also exist with the two prior steps. Lastly, UF's final key practice, Connecting with External Partners, also has clear connections to multiple steps in the TOA. For this comparison, it is shown in Table 1 as corresponding to the TOA's Building Foundational Support and Plan primarily due to its emphasis on community-based collaboration. The parallels between the five dominant themes of the Unified Framework and CASEL's TOA suggest that the TOA is an appropriate tool for use in this study, where leadership practices are of key interest, although the learning context differs from school-based models. This section explored parallels between CASEL's TOA and other established leadership frameworks. The following section will present research on general leadership practices for SEL integration in educational settings.

Guiding Leadership for SEL Integration

"Implementing social-emotional learning in the elementary classroom" (Kaspar & Massey, 2022) examines practices for implementing SEL into the elementary classroom and provides recommendations that roughly correlate to CASEL's TOA. Among Kaspar and Massey's recommendations are that administrators need to research best practices for SEL implementation; once best practices are identified and teachers are prepared to lead SEL instruction, school leaders may focus on preparing the learning environment. Once a supportive

learning environment is in place, SEL instruction can begin. A proposed three-year action plan model includes the creation of an "SEL Leadership Team," development of SMART Goals, researching and piloting a curriculum, and collecting baseline data (Kaspar & Massey, Fig 1., p. 645). In the second year of implementation, the action plan includes professional development opportunities, sharing information to stakeholders, schoolwide implementation, and SEL-related coaching requirements for teachers. The final, or third year of implementation, encompasses encouraging educators to reflect on the effectiveness of their practice, to begin offering multiple tiers of SEL-related interventions, and collecting feedback from stakeholders. This model, while inclusive of many of the practices embedded in CASEL's TOA, is more specific to school-based environments. Nevertheless, it informs a perspective on SEL integration with parallels to possible best practices in non-school settings. A multi-year approach to integration is essential for Building Foundational Support and Plan; likewise, developing SMART Goals (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound) supports both the initial planning phase and the final step, Reflecting on Data for Continuous Improvement, irrespective of educational context or setting.

The authors of "Transformative leadership for SEL" (Elias et al., 2006) argue for the importance of transformative leadership for accomplishing the kinds of changes needed for SEL integration in the school setting. They broadly define transformative leadership in this context as leadership that is willing to "realign structures and relationships to achieve genuine and sustainable change" (Elias et al, p. 11). Authors Elias, O'Brien, Utne, and Weissberg (2006) highlight leading with vision and courage, beginning and integrating efforts schoolwide, and implementing with integrity as the three most important aspects of transformative leadership for

SEL integration. Implementing with integrity, as a theme, is echoed across much of the research on successful SEL integration.

Elaborating on leading with vision and courage, Elias et al. (2006) call for a commitment to developing SEL skills beginning with adults in the school and extending to relationships between and among those adults and children. Here, a great emphasis is put on modeling caring and moral behavior, the importance of mutual respect, and acknowledgement that school climate and culture play a large role in SEL integration efforts; it is not merely a plug-in for curriculum, but a fundamental change in schoolwide efforts and its identity.

Building on the theme of integrating efforts schoolwide, Elias et al. (2006) argue that the implementation of skill-building curriculum linked to school subject areas is beneficial. Among the examples of evidence-based skill-building curricula presented is Facing History and Ourselves. Facing History and Ourselves is an organization with partners across the educational sector, including with leading museums, such as the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, among others. These museums and other partners share content with Facing History and Ourselves, which then creates lessons and teaching resources for educators to use in the classroom designed to "challenge teachers and their students to stand up to bigotry and hate" (add link to facinghistory.org). This represents a direct link embedded within recommendations for successful leadership in SEL integration by one of the movement's earliest champions, Maurice J. Elias, between school-based SEL and resources created by or contributed to by museums.

Noting that a teacher or teacher leader's own social emotional capability (SEC) drastically impacts SEL efforts, the Prosocial Classroom Model (Jennings & Greenberg, 2015) argues for the importance of cultivating SEC in adults to ensure its development in students.

Noting that SEC is context dependent, and that an individual may have a high functionality in one context but need training or experience to adapt to another (p. 496), this model supports the perspective not only that a leader's SEL skills—referred to here as SEC—need intentional cultivation and support for student-focused SEL efforts to be successful, but also that different learning contexts may demand different types of SEC. Linking these concepts back to the museums, some applications include the specific need for supporting adult SEL skills in museum educators and museum leaders through museum-specific SEL training, as well as the possibility for school-based teachers to develop new SEC's by partnering with museum-based SEL providers. While these museum-based applications have yet to be fully explored, this prosocial model for developing SEC in school-based educators is relevant for SEL leaders in a range of educational contexts, including museums.

CASEL's report "Systemic social emotional learning for states" (Yoder et al., 2021) notes that a systemic approach involves "a consistent, multi-layered system to implement and sustain SEL across multiple contexts over time" (p. 3). Systemic SEL, its authors argue, requires intentionally engaging all the communities in which a student belongs and providing SEL instruction in various contexts. Developed with State Education Agency (SEA) leaders in mind, the report provides resources for putting the CASEL's four-step TOA into practice in a range of contexts. Its goal to support systemic SEL makes its scope more inclusive overall, and thus applicable to diverse SEL settings. In its report, CASEL states that while the key activities and desired outcomes will differ, using the same four focus areas found in the TOA will help ensure that policymakers and practitioners at all levels are consistent in their approach and using the same logic model for successful implementation of SEL (Yoder et al., p. 2). This acknowledgment that policies and practices need to be aligned "from state capitals to

classrooms" is confirmation that SEL leaders come in many forms: they may be classroom teachers, school principals, district leaders or, as in this case, community partners. The following section presents research on SEL integration beyond school walls, extending to out of school time (OST) settings.

SEL Integration in Out of School Time (OST) Settings

Research demonstrating the positive impacts of SEL (CASEL, 2020; Denham, 2015, 2015; Jagers et al., 2019; Weissberg et al., 2015) has fueled increasingly urgent conversations about the importance of SEL by leaders in educational research and policy fields, and which may provide useful insights for community-based SEL efforts. These include The Aspen Institute, Wallace Foundation, and Harvard University's Ecological Approaches to Social Emotional Learning (EASEL) Laboratory, among others. Educational leaders, institutions, and policy makers have taken note of SEL and are devoting considerable resources to advancing its study and practice, with implications for how SEL is understood and integrated outside of the school and classroom setting.

In a recent publication by the Wallace Foundation titled "Social and Emotional Learning Starts with the Arts" (Maximos, 2020), organizations such as dance studios and orchestral halls were highlighted as cultural entities that supported students' SEL development and could alleviate budgetary burdens on the part of schools and classrooms. Although arts education and community partnerships are directly connected, museums were notably absent from the list of examples. Despite the growing interest in SEL, The Wallace Foundation's report "Navigating social and emotional learning from the inside out. Looking inside and across 33 leading SEL programs: A practical resource for schools and OST providers" (2021) also does not mention museums. Kenneth Leithwood, a prominent figure in the field of educational leadership, was one

of the authors of the Wallace Foundation's 2021 report. This underscores the extent of the gap

between SEL research and museum learning, which can result in the exclusion of critical

information that may aid and support SEL efforts, even within the highest levels of educational

leadership, scholarship, and thought.

The Aspen Institute's report "From a nation at risk to a nation at hope: Recommendations

from the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development" (2018),

which refers to the promotion of SEL as "[…] not a shifting educational fad; it is the substance

of education itself" (p. 6), mentions museums twice; once, listed among "youth development

organizations, businesses, libraries [..] and faith-based groups" as "critical preK-12 partners" (p.

26) and again within their framework (p. 28) as a "community learning setting." Nearly half of

the Aspen Institute's 80-page report (2018) is dedicated to recommendations for SEL policy and

practice implementation by community partners. The report cites research suggesting that

aligning SEL efforts across homes, schools and communities creates more consistent

opportunities for students to build and practice SEL-related skills and advocates for expanding

the definition of "where adults *should* expect young people to find formal and informal

opportunities that support them socially, emotionally, and academically" (Aspen Instiute, p.27).

Indicating that partnership work can be both difficult and time consuming, recommendations for

leading those efforts by the report's authors include collaborative planning, open

communication, effective coordination, and a strong commitment to placing young people's

needs […] at the center of such efforts" (Aspen Institute, p. 28).

With a focus on "comprehensively supporting students" (Aspen Institute, 2018, p. 32),

the report's recommendations for action speak to the role of local communities and their leaders,

naming OST providers among them to be champions for SEL. For this partnership work to be

successful, recommendations for leadership called for "a galvanizing agenda, flexible resources to support collective planning, and authentic representation of the students and families being served" (Aspen Institute, p. 32). Additionally, local leaders are described as needing autonomy and flexibility as they determine the unique needs of their specific communities, adapting an approach to the work that is a best fit for those needs.

Although peer-reviewed research on SEL in museums remains limited, interest is growing in how community partners, referred to as "out-of-school-time" (OST) programs, including camps, after-school enrichment, and sports integrate SEL (Newman, 2020). After acknowledging the synergy between many OST program goals and approaches and those found in formal SEL frameworks, Newman and Moroney (2019), writing on what they term as "Intentional SEL," suggest that schools and community partners can improve the ways they work together in support of stronger SEL outcomes. Newman and Moroney recommend three best practices for intentional integration of SEL in OST: determining a common understanding of the definition of SEL and its application in a particular OST setting; identifying synergies between OST strengths and SEL goals; and "getting ready" to implement SEL before doing so. By doing so, educators working across educational settings can help strengthen students' SEL skills beyond what classroom-based instruction alone can provide. Although Newman and Moroney's definition of OST partners does not explicitly name museums, their recommendations for intentional SEL integration for OST partners are broad enough to apply to museums integrating SEL.

Summary

Though it is likely that many museums are supporting SEL through aligned learning opportunities and intentionally integrated SEL efforts, much of this work has, to date, gone unnoticed by the SEL research field and underexplored within the museum field, as well. The literature review highlights significant gaps in understanding museums' role in SEL and best practices for leaders integrating SEL in the museum setting. The next section presents this study's conceptual framework and methodology, which seek to address these gaps in the field of SEL research.

CHAPTER III: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

The following section describes this study's research design, starting with the conceptual framework that informs its theoretical approach and the research questions that focus its scope of inquiry. It also details the site selection, data collection, data analysis methods study limitations and the role of the researcher.

Conceptual Framework

This study's conceptual framework (Fig. 2) encompasses both the perceptions of museum leaders about SEL and the practices they engaged in to integrate SEL into their museum's programming. By examining their perceptions and practices, this study sought to gain a deeper understanding not only of how they integrated SEL, but also what SEL means to them and why they chose to integrate it. Research on SEL integration in the school setting supports the understanding that the perspectives of school leaders and SEL leadership teams is an important influence on the success or failure of that school's SEL efforts.

As previously discussed, integrating SEL in museums is an emerging field despite SEL's mainstream presence in schools and classrooms for several decades. Learning more about the perspectives of museum leaders who have recently led SEL integration will be important for informing why this is the case, potentially informing future SEL research and museum practice. Museum leaders' perspectives on SEL and museums anchor this conceptual framework on the left, where a reader would begin. These perspectives may involve not only knowledge-based content, such as a definition of SEL and familiarity with one or more leading frameworks, but also emotional or opinions-based content, such as motivations for integrating SEL, thoughts on its relationship to museum learning, and hopes for the future.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Integration in Museums: Examining Perspectives and Practices of Museum Leaders

Leaders' Perspectives on SEL and Museums

Practices for SEL Integration

Building Foundational Support & Plan

Strengthening Adult SEL Competencies & Capacities

Reflecting on Data For Continuous Improvement

Promoting SEL with and for Students

Adapted from CASEL (n.d.)

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

As previously discussed in this study's literature review, Leithwood's Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) (2012) serves to guide practices of school leaders in the integration of implementing new practices through Setting Directions. As referenced previously, domain 2.2 relates to Setting Directions, in which a leader shows understanding and alignment of both individual and institutional motivations, which play a key role in successful leaders' actions (2012, p. 14). In exploring the perspectives of museum leaders on SEL and museums, an opportunity exists to learn not only about each leader's own personal perspectives on SEL and museums, but also their broader view on the topic as informed by their role as a leader of others and as a representative of their institution. Nested within the Setting Directions domain of OLF are leadership skills related to Building a Shared Vision (2.2.1) and Identifying Specific, Shared, Short-term Goals (2.2.2). Although this study's conceptual framework does not explicitly name Leithwood's OLF framework, this illustration of parallel themes shows how they are embedded.

While some of these domains show clear connections to leader practices, understanding perspectives remain an integral aspect to these domains. Whereas school leaders may cite promoting a more respectful and inclusive school culture as a values-based reason for integrating SEL, less is known about museum leaders' primary motivations regarding SEL integration. Before attempting to understand how SEL is integrated, understanding museum leaders' perspectives addresses the fundamental question: why?

Moving from left to right on the conceptual framework (CF), a plus sign pairs leaders' perceptions with actual action-based practices for SEL integration. This study seeks to learn how museum leaders with experience intentionally integrating SEL perceive the topic, otherwise the CF would not require that action be paired with perception. Additionally, it is likely that museum leaders' perceptions help to inform and direct their actions, which in turn inform and direct their future actions. In this way, perception and action, or practices, are key elements of this study's CF. While this study does not attempt to evaluate or assess the outcomes of these museums' particular SEL efforts, the connection between their leaders' perceptions and practices is nevertheless important.

As previously discussed in this study's literature review, the conceptual framework uses CASEL's four-step Theory of Action (TOA), originally designed with schools and classrooms in mind, as a tool for organizing and understanding museum leaders' practices for SEL integration in the museum setting. The four focus areas in CASEL's TOA for SEL integration are: Building Foundational Support and Plan; Strengthening Adult SEL Competencies and Capacity; Promoting SEL for Students; and Reflecting on Data for Continuous Improvement. CASEL's TOA does not reference the CASEL Wheel or its components in any way, making it flexible enough to be applied to the examination of integration practices at museums that may have used

an alternate SEL framework or frameworks. As previously noted, CASEL's TOA was developed with school-based SEL integration in mind; this study applies it to a different educational context to reveal the ways in which it is or is not transferrable to the museum setting.

This study used qualitative data from focus group interviews, paired with triangulated data from document analysis to examine SEL integration in the museum setting and learn if it follows a similar trajectory to SEL integration in traditional educational settings. Mapping that alignment or divergence is one of this study's primary goals. Surveyable data on SEL in museums is still emerging and does not, to date, offer any cross-case suggestions for integration. Chronicling The Cleveland Museum of Art's educational team's motivations and approach to integrating SEL in their school programs is a focus of "Museums as partners in PreK-12 learning" (Eppley, 2021), but so far no research exists that compares integration practices among multiple museums, as discussed in chapter two.

By examining the practices of museum leaders who have experienced pioneering SEL integration, this study aims to identify effective strategies and best practices for integrating SEL in museums. In doing so, it can also identify challenges and barriers that museum leaders have faced and how they have overcome them. These insights may help to inform future practice in both museum and educational settings and contribute to the bridge of more effective and inclusive educational programs that promote SEL skills.

This study focuses on perspectives and practices—or thoughts and actions—of museum leaders regarding SEL. As an earlier definition of the term museum leader indicated, for the purposes of this study the term leader was broadly defined and inclusive of those who lead the development and facilitation of SEL-related programs. By including multiple levels of leadership within a focus group interview, the data collected is more likely to address a wider spectrum of

perspectives on the questions, as well as generate a richer conversation among the team responsible for creating and implementing the programs being discussed. A focus group format interview that is inclusive of multiple staff members at various levels of leadership allows for perspectives from multiple leadership levels to be in conversation. Analyzing respondents' answers to semi-structured focus group interview questions aids in the effort to build an understanding of their collective thoughts on SEL: what it is, how it relates to museum learning, opportunities and challenges of integrating it, and opinions in general. These perspectives are important because they help to inform an understanding of leading motivations for SEL integration, as well as core knowledge of the subject. A leader's motivations and core knowledge are likely to impact their actions regarding setting and communicating direction, planning the integration process, and a host of other actions.

By situating these perspectives and practices within the context of the TOA, the framework provides a tool to explore how museum leaders understand and prioritize SEL integration in their institutions. This understanding can provide valuable insights into the benefits and challenges of SEL integration in museum learning environments. Ultimately, knowledge gained from this study may help better inform the broader role of museums as community partners in SEL efforts.

Research Questions

Given that no research has, to date, explored the thoughts and actions of museum leaders who have led the way in bridging SEL into the museum space, the following research questions are designed to gain insight on those areas. Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommend guidelines for writing qualitative research questions, asking no more than five to seven sub-questions in addition to the central research question (pp. 133-134). Starting with a broad scope, interest in

museum leaders' perspectives and practices are narrowed down to an essential what, why, and how in a three-part inquiry that follows.

Primary Research Question: What is known about the perspectives and practices of museum leaders regarding the integration of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in museums?

RQ1: How do museum leaders define SEL?

RQ2: What leadership practices are used to integrate SEL into museums' educational programming?

RQ3: What opportunities do museum leaders identify for SEL and museums?

Alignment between the conceptual framework and research questions is mapped using the table (Table 2) below.

Research Question	Conceptual Framework Connection
Primary RQ: What is known about the perspectives and practices of museum leaders regarding the integration of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in museums?	The Primary RQ frames the study's aim by addressing both perceptions and practices of museum leaders integrating SEL.
RQ1: How do museum leaders define SEL?	This question seeks to address the perceptions of museum leaders, which impact their decisions and actions.
RQ2: What leadership practices are used to integrate SEL into museums' educational programming?	This question relates to practices for integration and how those practices align with the four-step TOA.
RQ3: What opportunities do museum leaders identify for SEL and museums?	This question relates back to museum leaders' perceptions, extending beyond SEL itself to include the role of museums, broadly speaking.

Table 2: This study's research questions and corresponding connections to conceptual framework

Study Design

This study was designed as a qualitative, mixed methods, muti-site comparative case study. Qualitative research is fundamentally about examining how people make meaning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To accomplish this, qualitative researchers analyze what people say in interviews and examine what people do (Merriam & Tisdell, p. 65). This description of qualitative research closely aligns with this study's conceptual framework, as it explores museum leaders' thoughts and perspectives on SEL and their practices related to SEL integration. Conversations with groups of museum leaders about their perspectives, as described in more detail in the data collection and analysis section, will be compared with evidence of their actions.

Case studies are defined by in-depth description and analysis of a program, event, process, or one or more individuals and are bounded by time and activity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Comparative case studies, also called multi-site case studies, involve collecting and analyzing data from several cases (Merriam & Tisdell, p. 40). Including multiple cases enhances external validity and generalizability (Merriam & Tisdell, p. 40), making it especially well-suited to a study like this one, where minimal preexisting research exists to inform it.

This study employs non-probabilistic, purposeful, unique sampling. The sampling is non-probabilistic, also known as purposeful, because of the goal to discover, understand, and gain insight (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Noting that purposeful sampling is the most common form of sampling in qualitative research, Merriam and Tisdell note that, to begin purposeful sampling, the researcher must first determine the essential selection criteria for choosing sites or people to be studied (pp. 96 – 97). In this case, it is a unique sample because the museums identified for

study inclusion share the unique attribute of having integrated SEL into their programming. As this capstone has repeatedly demonstrated, SEL integration in museums is an emerging practice and is not yet widely found within the field. While many more museums may have practices that intrinsically align with SEL frameworks, only museums that publicly advertise their programs using the formal term were considered for inclusion in this study.

As the next section will address, an initial pool of possible study sites was narrowed using unique purposeful sampling and resulted in three participating study sites. Each of these three study sites participated in a focus group interview that included 2-5 staff at various levels of leadership within the organization who were responsible for the development and implementation of that museum's SEL programs. These interviews were paired with document and artifact analysis to triangulate findings related to SEL integration at those museums. This approach aims to provide a rich and complex view of each museum's approach to SEL integration, as well as the perspectives of those museums' educational leaders. Following many rounds of coding, findings resulting from close analysis of each case study's data were then considered within the broader context of the entire data set, resulting in a comparative multi-site case study that is able to highlight common themes among the three sites, as well as key differences.

Approach to Study Inclusion

The selection process for participating sites was simple in design criteria, but took place over an extended period, between May 2021-January 2025. Museums were identified through internet searches looking for terms including "social emotional learning and museums," the literature review process, and via conversations with museum professionals at various museum conferences. During this process, the number of identifiable museums offering programs or

products formally supporting SEL grew and changed. A database was created for tracking SEL-related museum offerings that were publicly advertised during this time. Recorded in the database was the museum institution's name, mission statement, link to SEL-related program or product, description of said product, and a geographical marker. If the museum's mission statement was education-based, and if their SEL-related program or product was (a) identifiable on their website, and (b) formally identified by that museum as relating to SEL, the museum was added to the list of possible sites for study. To be considered eligible for inclusion in the study, the museum needed to be based in the United States, have an educationally focused mission, and be a non-profit institution that identified itself as a museum in its name or title.

Museums were eligible for inclusion in this research only if they publicly advertised their SEL-related offerings, such as on their website. Included within the sample of potential participant sites was a wide range of SEL-related products; for the purposes of this study, the exact type of SEL integration was not standardized. For example, some museums have developed a new program or teaching resource, while others are focusing on highlighting standards-based curriculum connections in existing programs. Not predetermining the specific type or format of SEL product allows any museum self-identifying as integrating SEL to be considered for this study, not limiting it only to museums offering certain types of programs. Museums believed to be engaged in SEL work but not self-identifying as intentionally doing so, or those planning SEL integration that has not yet been enacted were not included.

As noted in this study's limitations, it is likely that additional museums may be integrating SEL but were not identified due to their program's listings on their website, the lack of searchable and formal SEL-related text, or for other reasons that are not yet apparent. This process of determination is likely imperfect, as the initial sample of qualifying museums almost

certainly did not encompass every museum in the United States that has integrated SEL into its programs. That fact does not challenge the overall validity of this multi-site case study, however, and the selection methodology is appropriate for achieving the overall research aims. Insights gleaned from qualitative case studies can directly influence future research (Merriam, 2016); similarly, findings from this study may be useful for informing practice in SEL integration, museum-school partnerships, and in museum leadership, broadly speaking.

Just as the field of education is broad, encompassing public schools, private schools, K-12 to higher education and all manner of unique philosophies and specialties, the museum world is similarly varied. This multi-site comparative case study sought to recruit a sample that reflects the range of museum types engaging with SEL while ensuring that findings remain relevant to commonly structured museums. This decision was made with the goal of ensuring that findings and recommendations might be useful to a broad audience.

Data Collection and Analysis

Participant recruitment and data collection began following IRB approval. During the recruitment process, leadership-level education staff at museums selected for participation in the study were contacted and provided with a description of the study's goals and structure. Following receipt of institutional-level approval, those museum leaders were asked to recommend additional staff best suited to speak about their museum's efforts to integrate SEL into programming. Those individuals, acting in their capacity as museum leaders and representatives of their institution's SEL-related efforts, were invited to participate in a 60-minute focus group interview. All interviews followed a consistent, semi-structured, interview script and protocol (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), which will be explained in further detail later in this section. Participating museums granted permission for their institutional names to be used in

the study; however, all individuals' names were replaced with a generic title representing their workplace role to maintain anonymity.

Focus group interviews were conducted between January 25 and February 7, 2025, synchronously, via Zoom. Interviews were recorded and saved directly to the University of Virginia's secure OneDrive cloud-based storage. The resulting data included both a video recording, for reference if needed, and Zoom's automatically generated transcription. Any text exchanged in the chat box during the interview was also saved. Immediately following the conclusion of each site's focus group interview, the researcher engaged in memoing to capture notes that would support subsequent review of interview transcripts and document analysis.

Digital documents subsequently provided by interview participants for inclusion in document analysis were saved along with this interview data in files organized by study site and tracked in an artifact log spreadsheet, also saved to OneDrive's secure server. This artifact log included fields to capture assigned study codes, consistent with data analysis codes used to analyze interview data, and notes fields for additional memoing. In accordance with IRB protocol, all interview transcripts, document copies, and digital files related to data collection will be deleted one year after the conclusion of this study.

Best practices for analyzing qualitative data followed the five-step process outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2018), including: organize and prepare the data for analysis; read all the data; begin coding all the data; generate a description and themes; and, finally, representing the description and themes (pp. 193 – 195). Care was taken to ensure fidelity in the execution of these five steps during this study, beginning with data preparation and ending with interpretation of the data. Prior to document analysis, the interviewer conducted several read-throughs of the interview transcripts to ensure accuracy and, where necessary, redact individual participant

names that may have been used during the interview. Any spelling or errors resulting from abbreviations or the use of special terms were corrected by the researcher. After finalizing transcript accuracy, interview scripts were uploaded into MaxQDA for coding and analysis.

Data analysis consisted of several rounds of reading the interview transcripts while looking for patterns and emergent themes. Cycles of thematic coding followed, first using the a priori codes originally drafted (Appendix 5), and eventually following this study's expanded Codebook (Appendix 6). As recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018), data was coded by the following three categories: expected codes, surprising codes, and codes of unusual or conceptual interest (p. 195). Expected codes, as the name suggests, relate to topics one would expect to find based on the literature. In this case, those codes relate to the four areas of CASEL's TOA. Surprising and unusual codes emerged during data analysis and tended to relate to museum-specific contexts and perspectives that were previously unexplored in school-based SEL research.

Each site's interview data and accompanying documents were analyzed for evidence addressing museum leaders' perspectives and practices. Related to practices for integration, CASEL's TOA four step plan for integration was used to identify four basic categories of action: (1) Building Foundational Support and Plan, (2) Strengthening Adult SEL Competencies and Capacities, (3) Promoting SEL for and with Students, and (4) Reflecting on Data for Continuous Improvement. During rounds of thematic coding, areas of overlap and divergence with the TOA and its components were noted. Any practices described by interview subjects outside the bounds of the TOA were coded as museum-specific topic areas and analyzed for deeper meaning.

During repeated rounds of data analysis, surprising codes, which were not anticipated before the study began and codes of unusual or conceptual interest were added to the Codebook

(Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Museum-specific codes were identified and labeled as they emerged from the data. After coding each interview and their associated documents individually, data was cross analyzed for areas of similarity or difference among the three study site locations.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) describe data triangulation as being among the best-known strategies for supporting the internal validity of qualitative research (p. 244). Data triangulation utilizes multiple sources of data from different sources collected at different times or at different places to cross-check information (Merriam & Tisdell, p. 245). It is a strategy for increasing a study's overall credibility (Merriam & Tisdell, p. 245) and builds a coherent justification for themes by converging several sources of data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, focus group interview participants were asked to provide examples of grant language, program evaluations, training materials, or other evidence to triangulate their responses about SEL integration. Those materials, along with the focus group interview script, and publicly available information about a program served as three distinct data points from which knowledge was gleaned.

Consistent with best practices for multi-site case studies, cross-case comparisons and interpretation were conducted by analyzing themes from interview data and artifact analysis across the three sites (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). By comparing data from across the three study sites , this research not only provides insight into if and how SEL (definitions of, actions for integration, and opportunities for) within the museum setting compares to SEL within school and classroom settings, but also whether or not there is an early consensus within the museum community regarding SEL as expressed through the perspectives and practices of museum leaders participating in this study, or if the approach to integration differs among different—and different types of—museums. The research questions allow for a

comprehensive exploration of the integration of SEL in the museum setting, moving from understanding how museum leaders define SEL to how they view it as related to museum learning and the steps they took to integrate it.

Interpretation in qualitative research, note Creswell and Creswell (2018) involves summarizing the overall findings, comparing the findings to the literature, discussing a personal view of the findings, and stating limitations and future research (p. 198). In this case, to establish a clear understanding of SEL in the museum setting, understanding the integration process is important. By exploring the approaches used by museum leaders to integrate SEL, this research may help to inform a clearer overall understanding of museums and SEL.

Interview Script and Protocol

The previous section described how data was collected, organized and analyzed. The following section describes the semi-structured interview script that guided the three focus group interviews (Appendix 4). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) recommend that semi-structured interviews be flexibly worded in order to guide the conversation along relevant topics while allowing the researcher to respond to the situation at hand (p. 110-111). The interview protocol included eight questions, paired with probes, designed to generate conversation regarding both perception (i.e., understanding and opinions of) and practices (i.e., concrete experience with) SEL in museums.

Best practices for interview protocol laid out by Creswell and Creswell (2018) include preparing an interview script and using it consistently in all interviews, a practice this study followed in all three focus group interviews. Additionally, this document included basic information about the interview—such as time, date, and location—to aid in data collection and organization (2018). It also included a standard introduction comprised of standard instructions,

information about the interviewer and the purpose of the study, a written component addressing IRB approval and consent by the interview subject, and an opportunity for the interviewee to ask questions before the interview begins (Creswell & Creswell, p. 191, Fig. 9.1).

Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommend that the interview protocol include opening questions to set the tone and help the interview subject feel more at ease, content questions related to the study's research questions, probes to prompt deeper conversation, and appropriate closing instructions (p. 191, Fig. 9.1). Again, these recommendations were closely followed in the planning and execution of this research study.

Table 3, below, shows alignment between the interview questions and this study's guiding research questions. In this study's interview protocol, question 1 allowed the interviewer and interview participants to establish a comfortable rapport while confirming essential details related to the interview. In this case, that included the roles and titles of interview participants. Participants were asked about program-related information (question 2), such as how SEL is currently integrated at the museum, as well as who is served by the programs (students, teachers, staff, or other) and who leads those programs. The aim of these questions was to ensure that the SEL-related programs identified by the selection criteria and rubric were the same programs currently being offered by that museum and to begin to delve deeper into what those programs or products look like at that specific institution.

Following those expositional questions, participants were asked to speak about their perspectives on SEL, including identifying any specific resources or training that helped inform this understanding (question 3). This is a key component of the conceptual framework, as understanding how leaders define a topic or educational initiative is crucial to their leadership approach. This offered an opportunity to hear from participants about the specific resources that

helped them gain a better understanding of SEL as a concept, since all museums may not necessarily use the same SEL framework. This question also allowed for any and all relevant frameworks to be discussed. In doing so, this question will not only shed light on their perspectives on SEL but also give insight into their thoughts on opportunities for SEL and museums (RQ3). Grouped with those perspective-focused question is an inquiry about primary motivations for integrating SEL at that museum (question 4).

Research Question	Aligning/Corresponding Data Point
Primary RQ: What is known about the perspectives and practices of museum leaders regarding the integration of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in museums?	Interview questions #: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
RQ1: How do museum leaders define SEL?	Interview question #: 3
RQ2: What leadership practices do museum leaders use to integrate SEL into their museum's educational programming?	Interview questions #: 5 & 6 Document Analysis: Internal training materials, grant language, evaluation tools, and public-facing materials provided for triangulation
RQ3: What opportunities do museum leaders identify for SEL and museums?	Interview question #: 7

Table 3: This study's research questions and corresponding data points

Question 5 and its probes examine SEL integration practices, exploring specific steps taken in preparation and challenges faced. This question aimed not only to inform a better understanding of leadership practices taken (RQ2) but also touch upon the potential for SEL in museums (RQ3), since motivations are specifically addressed.

Questions 6 prompted participants to discuss the type of feedback their museum has received on its SEL programs and how these efforts were reviewed and assessed. Although this study is not a formal evaluation, asking educational leaders to speak about the success or challenges of their SEL efforts aligns with the final step of CASEL's TOA, which relates to reflecting on data for continuous improvement. While interview questions related to leaders'

perspectives on SEL and these specific questions about program evaluation align to CASEL's

TOA, other aspects of the integration process were intentionally left open-ended, so as not to

steer or lead the interview subject's answers to hew too closely to CASEL's four-step TOA.

Question 7 and its probes invited interview participants to share their thoughts on the

future of SEL and museums. Understanding museum leaders' perspectives on the future of SEL

and museums relates to RQ 3, which relates to opportunities for museums and SEL, and also

touches on RQ 1, or how museum leaders define SEL. Examining Museum leaders' perspectives

on the future of SEL may help inform a gap in research about today's practices while also giving

insight into possible future trends. To ensure the interview's questions didn't limit the

conversation or exclude pertinent information, question 8 invited the participants to share

anything else they wish to about SEL as a topic or their individual experience as it relates to SEL

integration at their museum.

Before each interview concluded, participants were asked to share documents supporting

the SEL-related initiatives they referenced. Each site was at liberty to select documents they

wished to share. Examples of what could be provided included brochures for the public, program

booklets, exhibition text, language from the museum's website, or other materials. Gathering

data from multiple sources is a means of triangulating its credibility and supporting the overall

validity of the study itself (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Throughout the interview, the researcher endeavored to remain neutral toward the

interview participants as well as in response to their answers in an effort not to introduce

personal opinion or bias (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Questions were designed to be flexible, to

forefront the interviewee's voice rather than the interviewer's, and to support this study's

research questions. Following the conclusion of the interview, participants were thanked for their

time, assured of the confidentiality of their answers, and provided with contact information for the researcher, should questions arise.

Study Site Backgrounds

What follows is a brief background on each of the three institutions that agreed to participate in this study and a description of the roles of staff members who represented each participating museum in that focus group interview. Adhering to the terms of IRB approval for this research study, the names of the participating museums are disclosed, along with information publicly available on their website and annual reports. This includes their geographic location, mission statement, annual visitation, staff size, and annual budget. This information helps inform a complete understanding of the museum in its own right: its institutional health, its relationship to its community, factors that might shape its institutional culture, and implications for its reach, stature, and resources. The museums' size, mission, and visitor demographics of each museum provides additional context for understanding museum leaders' approaches to SEL integration, and their motivation for doing so. Also included in each study site background is a brief description of the SEL-related program or resources offered at that museum as well as a description of documents provided by that site for data analysis.

Study Site #1: The Intrepid Museum

The Intrepid Museum is well known even within a city that is among the most recognized around the world for its museums: New York City. An American military and maritime history museum that inhabits the decommissioned aircraft carrier *Intrepid*, this floating museum docked walking distance from Times Square on the Hudson River welcomes over 1 million visitors per year. The stated mission of the Intrepid Museum is "to advance the understanding of the intersection of history and innovation in order to honor our heroes, educate the public and inspire

future generations." Permanent exhibits include the *Intrepid* itself, which launched in 1943 and served in WWII, the Cold War, the Vietnam War, and later as a NASA recovery vessel; the British Airways Concord supersonic plane; the American-guided nuclear missile submarine *Growler;* NASA's *Expedition* space shuttle prototype; and many more helicopters, jets, and other aeronautical artifacts.

As of the date of this study, the Intrepid Museum's "Learning Library," a section of its website that shares lesson plans and resources for classroom-based educators, lists Social Emotional Learning among Aviation, Civics, History and STEM, among others, as one of the seven themes by which lesson plans can be sorted. This thematic nod indicates a level of importance for the term and an awareness of its relevance and popularity among website users. In addition to the Learning Library resources, SEL as a term shows up in several other locations on the Intrepid Museum's website, including in a description of their All Access Maker Camps for children and teens aged 8-14, noting that the camp, " [...] provides an in-depth learning opportunity for campers to practice social-emotional skills, including problem-solving, communication and collaboration." On its webpage describing resources for visitors with disabilities, the Intrepid notes that their "Specialized programs include enhanced sensory opportunities and support social-emotional and academic goals. Museum educators draw connections between participants' experiences and the challenges crew members, pilots, engineers and astronauts faced."

While SEL-related terminology appears across various museum resources, focus group participants primarily discussed "long touch" teen programs, including a summer camp, internship, and access program. These differ from single-visit programs, such as a field trip or drop-in program because the same members of museum staff are seeing the same program

participants repeatedly. They get to know these students and form closer relationships with them than possible with a single-visit field trip or general museum visit. Roughly 300 individuals take part in these programs each year.

Study Site #2: The North Carolina Museum of Art

The North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA) is in Raleigh, NC and typically receives over one million visitors per year. NCMA's mission states that it "stewards and shares the people's art collection and inspires creativity by connecting our diverse communities to cultural and natural resources." NCMA pairs its mission with a vision to "be a vital cultural resource for the entire state and a national leader in creating a welcoming experience of belonging and joy."

A search of NCMA's website shows SEL explicitly mentioned in several places, including for their online course "Art and SEL," described as self-paced, 15-hour course in which "educators engage in the transformative process of SEL by exploring themes of mindfulness, identity, perspective sharing, community building, and agency and participating in experiences that model growth and development of justice-oriented, global citizens." SEL is also mentioned on their site's "Statewide Engagement" education page with a description of "NCMA Explore, [...] a multi-person virtual gallery for children designed to grow social-emotional learning skills. Skills are introduced through immersive experiences in contextual virtual environments anchored by art from around the globe." NCMA's 15-hour course is free and open to the public, designed to support classroom-based teachers integrate the museum's art-based resources into SEL instruction while also growing their SEL skills. NCMA staff estimates that roughly 920 teachers participated in one of their SEL-related professional development programs last year.

Study Site #3: The Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art

This study's third participating study site is the Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art (Virginia MOCA) in Virginia Beach, VA. Its stated mission is that "Virginia MOCA presents ever-changing exhibitions where neighbors, strangers, students, families, communities, and cultures are invited to explore our shared humanity, through locally relevant and nationally resonant, contemporary art that's exceptional—in all of its timeliness, restlessness, and beauty." Virginia MOCA's 2023/2024 annual report indicates just over 20,000 exhibit visitors during that fiscal year. Following their focus group interview, VA MOCA staff provided visitation data for FY 23/24 that showed just over 2,000 youth and family participants engaged in their SEL-related Looking to Learn and Youth Tour programs. While VA MOCA's overall annual visitation is considerably smaller than the other two participating study sites, it is notable that roughly 10% of their annual visitors engage in SEL-related programming at their site.

Virginia MOCA reports that 40% of its annual visitors are Virginia Beach residents, and a local focus is evident on its museum website, which frequently references its community context. "Virginia MOCA continues to meet the needs of the community to provide a space for reflection and dialogue on important matters of the day. [...] We're rooted in community, and we work hard to do right by it—with our eyes on a more expansive art world and compassionate culture. Here, art can be mysterious, but never exclusive. Here, art makes way for us to connect." Although it is non-collecting, it is an accredited member of the American Alliance of Museums, which is the leading professional organization for museums in the United States.

A search of Virginia MOCA's website shows SEL present within their "Looking to Learn" program. This program is described as one that "encourages valuable social emotional

skills that help children build and develop greater empathy and respect for their peers and community." It is designed for children ages 3-8 and their caregivers and is offered monthly.

Site Comparisons

Although the sample size represents just three museums, their similarities and differences are helpful for inviting comparisons. For example, all three sites are located across three states on the East Coast, and all are in urban environments. The Intrepid Museum is in the most densely populated location, alongside midtown Manhattan. Its location makes it accessible to over 8 million New York City residents and countless tourists. While their SEL efforts currently focus on camps and after school programs delivered to local students and teens, it is worth noting that their general visitorship is mostly non-local and often international. By comparison, the NCMA and Virginia MOCA, while still in urban centers, are in less densely populated areas.

Two of the three museums in this study are art museums, though one is non-collecting, meaning it does not own a permanent collection of art or artifacts; rather, it exhibits only temporary exhibits. The other, NCMA, houses an extensive permanent collection representing over 5,000 years of art, spanning from ancient antiquity to today. The NCMA is a major art museum, with forty galleries spread over multiple buildings and a 164-acre museum park, and is one the leading art museums in the American South. The Virginia MOCA focuses its ever-changing exhibits on contemporary and emerging artists. NCMA's large-scale professional development programs contrast with Virginia MOCA's smaller, community-centered efforts. While NCMA serves a broad statewide audience through virtual and in-person teacher training, Virginia MOCA's SEL integration focuses on direct engagement with local youth and families. In these ways, the two art museums represented in this study may have as many differences as similarities.

The Intrepid Museum, like the NCMA, has an extensive collection, including the aircraft carrier from which the museum gets its name. Visitors explore this floating structure as permanent and changing exhibits spread across its many decks invite them into its historic spaces. Unlike NCMA and Virginia MOCA, which use art to foster reflection and self-expression, the Intrepid Museum's SEL approach may center more on historical empathy, teamwork, and resilience. These disciplinary differences offer varying entry points for SEL integration.

Whereas the Intrepid Museum's SEL-related efforts focus largely on teen engagement and long-term programming, NCMA's approach emphasizes teacher professional development and interactive digital experiences. The Virginia MOCA's focus was more community-based, creating monthly programs for children and their caregivers that supported SEL skill development among families. These differences highlight the various ways museums may integrate SEL, based on their missions and target audiences.

While the three study sites have many differences, what unites them is that each has begun a journey of integrating SEL into their programming, noting those efforts in a public way. Situating study participants as leaders within the specific educational context of a museum provided an opportunity for examining museum leaders' thoughts and perspectives on SEL, as well as insight into the leadership practices involved in the integration process. This study's conceptual framework applied CASEL's four-step Theory of Action (TOA), originally designed for school-based SEL integration, to museum settings. While museums differ from traditional classrooms, the TOA's focus on leadership, staff development, student engagement, and evaluation provided a useful structure for analyzing how SEL is integrated across diverse learning environments.

Limitations

  This study is subject to limitations by several factors, which this section will address. With SEL integration in museums still being an emerging field, limited existing research resulted in the need to repeatedly turn to research from school-based SEL. Since no models centered the perspectives of museum-based educators, school-based tools and research for understanding SEL and leadership for SEL integration were substituted.

  Additionally, the study was limited to U.S.-based museums that publicly shared, their SEL-based programs, primarily through website text. As previously discussed, this selection process almost certainly failed to identify every museum integrating SEL and whose perspectives on its integration and alignment might be of interest. The small pool of qualified potential participants evolved during this study, with some museums that originally qualified for participation removing or changing their publicly posted program descriptions. Without knowledge of why this happened, conjecture is neither helpful nor recommended. Interestingly, throughout this study's research and design, the overall number of qualified potential participant sites grew. This suggested that more museums have are, or at least have, integrated SEL with each passing year.

  As section one's discussion of the study limitations noted, the potential sample size was limited by the number of discoverable museums integrating SEL. Another limitation in this study is that it relied on a single round of interviews at each participating site. While each focus group included multiple museum leaders, ten individual participants overall, these were collected over just three focus group interviews.

Role of the Researcher

As a longtime museum professional, SEL presented itself to me as an alternate lens through which to view the field of museum learning. Connections seemed apparent, but I had limited familiarity with the formal theory or practice of traditional, school-based SEL. Similarly, I was unsure if and how SEL was being applied in the museum field. My belief that SEL aligned with history museums' efforts to promote empathy and grow cultural competencies predisposes me to view SEL as mission-aligned to the work of many museums.

Rallis and Rossman (2012) describe the conceptualization of a study as a process of systematic reasoning resulting in constructed knowledge (p. 129). My approach to constructing knowledge about SEL, both broadly and as it relates to museums, was impacted by the biases and assumptions I brought to this study. It likely led to seeking out examples of pro-SEL museum leaders, which could skew data to be positive. To mitigate this potential bias, I chose not to design this study as an evaluation, but as inquiry aimed at gathering information to inform future research on the subject. It used a widely accepted tool, CASEL's TOA, to assist in identifying, organizing, and ultimately mapping the steps of museum leaders who have led SEL integration.

As Maxwell (2013, p. 124 as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) explains, the reason for noting a researcher's biases and assumptions is not to eliminate them, but to use them as a means of contextualizing choices related to the study's design and ultimate conclusions. Supporting this idea, Creswell and Creswell (2018) note that clarifying a researcher's bias helps to create an honest and open narrative which is self-reflective, resonates with readers, and reflects best practice in qualitative research (p. 200). It is my hope that including my museum-based

perspectives on SEL highlights the need for more research on SEL as it relates to museums, as well as the opportunity for other museum professionals to consider their work through this lens.

Summary

Section three described this as a qualitative, multi-site comparative case study that utilized purposeful sampling. Using data gathered from document analysis and semi-structured interviews with museum leaders representing three participant sites where SEL was integrated by a museum, it sought to inform a gap in the area of SEL research; namely, how and why museums are beginning to integrate SEL. Guided by a conceptual framework that centers both the perspectives and practices of museum leaders who have integrated SEL in museums, it applied CASEL's four step Theory of Action, a tool which has embedded into it many practices of successful school leaders, to understand how museum-based SEL integration compares to school-based integration. Learning about if and how museum-based SEL integration mirrors school-based SEL integration will help inform theory, practice, and partnership in this area, both between schools and museums, and within the museum field itself.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

This research study examines the perspectives and practices of museum leaders with experience implementing Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in the museum setting. Addressing a current gap in research related to museums and SEL, the primary research question this study sought to address was "What is known about the perspectives and practices of museum leaders regarding the integration of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in museums?" To help answer that, this study attempted to learn how museum leaders define SEL (RQ1), what leadership practices are used to integrate SEL into museums' educational programming (RQ2), and what opportunities museum leaders identify for SEL and museums (RQ3). Guided by a conceptual framework that examines both leader perspectives and leader actions, this study applies CASEL's four-step TOA to identify and understand SEL integration efforts within the museum setting. The research design encompassed three focus-group style interviews involving leadership-level educational staff, managers and program-level educators with experience related to their institution's SEL efforts. Interview data was paired with document analysis to further inform and support the information being shared in interviews.

Focus Group Descriptions

The three museums that agreed to participate in this research study were the Intrepid Museum in New York, NY, the North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA) in Raleigh, NC, and the Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art (Virginia MOCA) in Virginia Beach, VA. All three are non-profit museums in the United States with an educational mission and whose websites advertise SEL-related programs and resources by name as of the date of study. Site-specific backgrounds for each of the three participating museums as well as a brief overview of their SEL integration efforts were presented in chapter three. Although participating museum institutions

granted permission for their institutional name to be used, only generic titles were used for individual participants to maintain confidentiality and focus on their institutional roles. Participants were asked to share documents such as internal training resources, evaluation materials, funding reports, or any other artifacts that might not be publicly available but that related to the topics being discussed in the interview.

For the purposes of this study, leadership-level permission was required in order to conduct the interview, but each museum nominated the individuals they felt were best suited to representing their institution's SEL efforts. In all, the study's three sites comprised perspectives from ten museum professionals working at various levels of leadership within their respective education departments. Each site provided between three to seven documents, resulting in seventeen artifacts reviewed for this study. Publicly available website text was used in addition to the documents provided to triangulate data relating to SEL integration at each site.

Representing the Intrepid Museum in the study site's focus group interview to share more about the museum's SEL-related efforts through these programs was the Vice President of Education & Evaluation, the Manager of Youth Leadership and Alumni, the Manager of Access Initiatives, and two Museum Educators affiliated with Youth Leadership & Alumni Programs. Documents and artifacts provided by interview participants included the museum's 2024 Education Brochure, a program evaluation from classroom-based teachers that had participated in their 2024 Inspiration Academy, and excerpts from two grant reports that focused on program evaluations for one of their teen camps. SEL-explicit and SEL-adjacent language were evident in all four, to varying degrees.

Representing the NCMA in the study site's focus group interview was the Director of Education, the Manager of Teacher Programs and Resources, and the Manager of School

Outreach. Document and artifacts provided by the museum included recently-updated language from the Art and SEL online course "Why Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)?" that was referenced in their focus group interview, as well as notes and slides from a presentation delivered by their team for the National Art Education Association's 2021 conference titled "Using Art and Transformative SEL to Support Teachers and Students."

Examples of training documents for Virginia MOCA staff were shared as part of the document analysis along with the education department's staff handbook and materials from a 2021 community conversation on the topic of SEL that involved stakeholders and community partners from the Virginia Beach area. Representing the Virginia MOCA in the study's focus group interview was the Studio & Community Programs Manager and the Manager of School & Educator Programs.

The variation in focus group size—five from the Intrepid Museum, three from NCMA, and two from Virginia MOCA—reflects each museum's institutional structure, with larger institutions having more specialized leadership roles and smaller institutions relying on staff who take on multiple responsibilities. As the findings presented in this chapter will show, these structural differences, as reflected by focus group interviews, contributed to the data's depth and breadth of reflection, experience, and perspective.

The next section will identify key trends across the three study sites and present a system for analyzing themes found within both interview and document-based data. The resulting analysis informs a better understanding of museum leaders' perspectives on SEL, as well as their actions relating to SEL integration at their site. As referenced in this study's conceptual framework, CASEL's four-step TOA is used as a tool for organizing leader actions. Actions that fall outside the purview of the established TOA are discussed, as is the interconnectivity between

expressed motivations (perspectives) and TOA-related actions. This chapter is organized through the themes of the CF followed by their connection to the RQs. To help with this framing, leader actions were organized using the four steps in CASEL's TOA. Each step of the TOA and corresponding leader actions are presented, with corresponding cross-case analysis, in the sections below. Leader perspectives, explored through "Museum-Specific Topics" are addressed in a separate section. Alignment between key findings and corresponding RQs are noted throughout this chapter. Following the presentation of those findings, their overall relevance in addressing each of the three RQs is presented in this chapter's summary.

Introduction to Findings

Through multiple rounds of data coding, paired with analytic memos taken during and immediately following each interview, museum-specific themes and TOA-aligned actions emerged. While museum leaders did not explicitly use TOA terminology, their actions closely followed its principles. These findings suggest that while museums may not use TOA terminology explicitly, their actions align with its principles in significant ways.

While each museum site differed not only in their SEL product, but also in their level of and approach to training, each museum shared several notable constants in their SEL story. Among those notable similarities was that each site referenced CASEL by name, indicating a basic shared foundation of knowledge not only among museums, but between museums and the wider SEL community. Additionally, all three museums referenced serving an identified community need through their SEL programs. None of the museum leaders interviewed explicitly stated that SEL integration was directed by external mandates, nor did they cite attendance or funding as primary motivations. Instead, participants consistently framed their

efforts as responsive to community needs, highlighting the perceived benefits for various stakeholder groups, from young children and caregivers to local teens and classroom teachers.

While the presence of SEL terminology on a museum's website was a criterion for inclusion in this study, website content alone provided limited insight into the depth or motivations of SEL integration. Interview data and document analysis revealed that SEL efforts often extended beyond what was publicly articulated online, emphasizing the importance of leadership perspectives in understanding implementation.

As this chapter's findings will show, many of the thoughts and actions described by museum leaders during interviews hewed to the TOA's four categories, especially when allowing for a nesting of similar themes and terms as sub-categories. What data analysis also revealed was an emergent set of museum-specific findings and motivations. These included repeated characterizations of museums as distinctly different environments than schools and classrooms and the challenges and opportunities that presented; SEL as inherent vs intentional within museum education; and the idea that emphasizing SEL through public programming served identified needs within those museum's communities. The topic of mental health, highlighted by the demands and deficiencies triggered by 2020's Covid-19 epidemic, was also present across all site interviews, irrespective of geographic location and category of museum. Many of these museum-specific themes inform aspects of SEL integration beyond those typically included in traditional school-based models.

Again, while each museum had approached SEL integration in their own way, interview participants in every focus group indicated an interest in continuing to grow their SEL skills and knowledge. None of the sites included in this study indicated intending to pause or abandon their SEL efforts, and each interview included moments where museum leaders spoke about their

work in SEL with a true sense of pride and purpose. Every site was able to provide compelling examples of how they promote SEL for and with students, and each of them engaged in program evaluation in some way.

Beyond the scope of TOA-aligned actions, additional themes emerged that reflect museum-specific perspectives on SEL. First, participants across all sites described SEL as deeply embedded in the culture and values of museum education, suggesting that SEL principles existed in practice long before the terminology was formally adopted. Second, leaders consistently drew distinctions between museums and schools as learning environments, emphasizing museums' flexibility in fostering social-emotional growth. Finally, interviewees across sites expressed a strong commitment to SEL, highlighting their intent to continue SEL initiatives regardless of external policy changes or political debates.

The next section explores these emergent findings in more detail and supports the interpretation of those themes through the interview data and document analysis that helps to tell this story. Data analysis is presented first in the four steps of CASEL's TOA, followed by the three museum-specific themes identified in this study.

Identifying Key Trends in the Data

Table 4 is a visual representation of key trends identified through repeated rounds of coding and analysis. Table 4 serves as a tool for organizing this study's key findings and also guides the structure of how those findings will be presented in this chapter: by each of the four TOA areas, followed by museum-specific topics. Each 'X' represents supporting data from interviews or document analysis. Blank spaces indicate no corresponding data. Similar alignment is shown across the three study sites for nearly all themes, with the select notable exceptions.

Rows 1.1 - 1.3 relate to TOA 1, Building Foundational Support and Plan. Leader actions correlating to the planning stage of SEL integration in museum settings included working with local community partners and stakeholders (1.2), such as local school district representatives, and being well-informed about needs expressed by those partners (1.1). Aligning language to match K-12 terms (1.3) was another leader action that corresponded to the planning stage. While that action is shown here within TOA 1, it is also connected to TOA 2, Strengthening Adult SEL Competencies and Capacities, as it also relates to SEL knowledge.

Description of data trend related to museum leader actions		Intrepid Museum	NCMA	VA MOCA
TOA 1: Building Foundational Support & Plan				
1.1	Referenced identified community-based need, including Covid-19/mental health, as a motivation for SEL efforts	X	X	X
1.2	Referenced engaging in community partner or stakeholder collaboration during program planning		X	X
1.3	Aligned program language and descriptions with K-12 SEL terms	X	X	X
TOA 2: Strengthening Adult SEL Competencies & Capacities				
2.1	Referenced CASEL by name	X	X	X
2.2	Completed formal SEL training pre-integration		X	
2.3	Applied prior knowledge and formal experience in SEL to museum-based SEL integration			X
2.4	Indicated interest in future/ongoing learning related to building SEL skills and knowledge	X	X	X
TOA 3: Promoting SEL for and with Students				
3.1	Provided specific examples of students engaging in museum-based SEL	X	X	X
TOA 4: Reflecting on Data for Continuous Improvement				
4.1	Referenced SEL program-related evaluations	X	X	X
Non-TOA/Museum-Specific				
5.1	Referenced SEL as mission-aligned and/or inherent to the essential work of museum education	X	X	X
5.2	Referenced differences in museums' vs schools' educational context	X	X	X

Table 4: Visual representation of key data trends

TOA 1 focuses on initial planning efforts; TOA 2 builds on this foundation by addressing the development of SEL-related knowledge and skills among museum staff. Rows 2.1-2.4 capture key aspects of this professional learning process, including references to CASEL, formal training experiences, and ongoing professional development interests. While a school-based setting would primarily imply school-based educators as the audience for Adult SEL, focus group participants often referenced multiple adult audiences, including, staff "leading" SEL efforts at the institution (usually the interview participants, themselves), other museum-based educators and staff (via internal training), school-based educators participating in a professional development hosted by the museum (such as the case with NCMA's online course), and community members and caregivers (such as adults participating in Virginia MOCA's Looking to Learn workshops).

While all three study sites referenced CASEL unprompted during their focus group interviews (2.1), their approaches to formal training varied (2.2 and 2.3). At the Intrepid Museum, SEL was described as informally embedded and inherently present within the institution's culture, but not explicitly named. At the NCMA, museum leaders sought formal training in SEL from an external source before sharing that information back with their museum's wider education team (2.2). At Virginia MOCA, museum leaders entered their current roles with prior SEL expertise from academic training and teaching experience using that knowledge to train staff (2.3). All three museums indicated an interest in future or ongoing learning related to building their SEL skills and knowledge (2.4). Themes relating to staff training and its relationship to SEL integration will be explored in more detail in a subsequent section.

Leader actions related to TOA 3, or Promoting SEL for and with Students, were present in all three interviews, though discussions were often less detailed than planning and staff training efforts. Museum leaders' actions in this area focused on promoting the development of student-focused SEL efforts (3.1) by engaging in other areas of the TOA. Aligning resources to support these programs, supporting the development of staff knowledge and skills around SEL, and ensuring that structures are in place to evaluate these efforts are consistent with leader-level actions within school-based SEL, as well. In this way, leaders are focused on and responsible for program development rather than direct student engagement.

TOA 4, Reflecting on Data for Continuous Improvement, was mentioned primarily in the context of program evaluations and assessment efforts (4.1). Every museum referenced engaging in exit surveys with teachers and community members participating in their programs, with the NCMA also referencing a teacher advisory group. NCMA's Teacher Advisory Group serves as a valuable bridge between the museum and K-12 educators, offering insights that inform both planning (TOA 1) and professional learning efforts (TOA 2). By incorporating teacher perspectives, the museum ensures that its SEL programming aligns with school-based needs while also fostering opportunities for mutual learning between museum educators and classroom teachers. This is one reason this study's conceptual framework shows the TOA as a four-part blossoming flower, since all steps are important, interconnected, non-linear, and often present at the same time. Consistent with the structure of the categories above, data gathered from focus group interviews, along with document analysis, will be detailed in a subsequent section related to that theme.

Non-TOA/Museum-Specific Perspectives

Two museum-specific themes emerged from the data and appear to fall outside of the structure of the TOA are noted in the last two rows, 5.1-5.2. First, museum leaders viewed SEL as inherent, or in many ways already present within their museum's work and culture (5.1). This theme was evident across all three sites, with many study participants speaking with great passion about their dedication to these efforts, whether formally titled SEL or not. Secondly, museum leaders emphasized how museums and schools are fundamentally different spaces in which to practice SEL and how being an educational space that is not school-based comes with its unique opportunities (5.2). Each of these perspectives helps inform this study's RQ 1, which relates to understanding how museum leaders define SEL, and correlate closely with codes relating to motivations for SEL integration. These three topics will be addressed in subsequent sections of chapter four's findings as distinct but interrelated themes.

While these museum-specific themes provide important context for how leaders conceptualize SEL, the following sections focus on how SEL integration occurs in practice. Using CASEL's four-step TOA as a framework, the next section explores museum leader actions in relation to the Building Foundational Support and Plan stage, highlighting key motivations and strategic decisions that shaped SEL adoption.

TOA Alignment: Building Foundational Support & Plan for SEL

The first theme this segment of findings will explore is alignment to the Building Foundational Support and Plan for SEL stage of CASEL's four-step TOA. While the three museums that participated in this study each approached SEL integration in their own way, leader actions still evidenced key parallels with one another. These parallels also included

referencing certain motivations for adopting SEL language and practices into museum programming. As excerpts shared below from interviews illustrate, those motivations included addressing community needs as identified by each museum, most notably: supporting SEL skills for students and adults during and immediately following Covid-19 pandemic-related school closures and distance learning, and aligning language with K-12 terms to support SEL curriculum in schools.

These motivations align to leader actions in the TOA's first stage while also reflecting on museum leaders' perspectives on SEL and, specifically, opportunities for SEL and museums (RQ 3). If museum leaders did not think offering SEL-related programs would address the community-based needs identified in the case studies below, these new program offerings would likely not have been created. In this way, motivations for SEL integration skip over RQ 1 and RQ 2, informing this study's RQ 3. At the same time, viewing leader actions relating to the start of a museum's SEL programming through the TOA also informs the broader area of leadership practices related to SEL integration in the museum setting (RQ 2).

Museum Leaders' Motivations for SEL Integration: Responding to Community Needs

A community-focused mindset and mission was evident in the NCMA's interview participants' answers when indicating their motivations for formally integrating SEL. For example, one team member described the catalyst that sparked NCMA's integration efforts. Noting that NCMA's team works "fairly closely at times with the Arts team at the Department of Public Instruction, because we're both part of State agencies," they referenced having been part of a meeting "with people from that organization that were working specifically on implementing the CASEL competencies within North Carolina because the North Carolina Department of Education had signed on to the onto CASEL." Realizing that it was "going to be

more present in classrooms" and that the NCMA education team "always try to stay up to date," they were able to identify this moment as the beginning of their formal SEL integration efforts.

This data highlights collaboration between schools and museums and demonstrates how engagement in policy changes helps them stayed aligned. Without an awareness of these upcoming changes or a seat at the table with other state agencies, the NCMA may not have identified the need for SEL-related programming. The NCMA team recognized that an awareness of state-level policies was essential to supporting school-based teachers, who would be ultimately responsible for enacting the SEL-related curricular changes. NCMA staff talked about considering "how [SEL] applied to [teachers], to be able to even do it with students," noting teachers' SEL needs as their area of focus from the start. NCMA's earliest efforts to provide SEL-related programming were aimed at supporting classroom teachers in growing and practicing their SEL skills so that those teachers, in turn, could support their students' SEL.

The Manager of Teacher Programs and Resources explained how NCMA's SEL-related efforts coalesced around 2020. This timeline coincided with North Carolina's plans to adopt an SEL curriculum and overlapped "with the onset of the pandemic." Realizing that "this was going to be a huge area of need that teachers themselves were going through something traumatic as well as students," NCMA decided to focus their SEL-related efforts on helping teachers prepare for the curriculum changes while strengthening their SEL-related skills. NCMA's Manager of Teacher Programs and resources described having "had a lot of discussions when we were planning the course that what we've that we felt like teachers needed to learn about this and apply it." NCMA's team described working "fairly closely" with the Arts team at the Department of Public Instruction due to their shared role as state agencies. They noted that "the

North Carolina Department of Education had signed onto CASEL," prompting them to ensure their museum remained aligned with the growing presence of SEL in classrooms.

Once the museum's education leaders learned of the planned adoption of CASEL's model, they sought formal training for themselves, completing a course titled "Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) for Educators," offered by North Carolina State University's Friday Institute. In this example, museum leaders built foundational support by working closely with school-based community partners to stay current on upcoming statewide educational initiatives, identifying a community-based need, and positioning themselves to help address that need by first strengthening their SEL skills.

Virginia MOCA leaders also referenced the pandemic when talking about the origin of their formalized SEL integration efforts. The Manager of School and Educator Programs recalled conversations with colleagues about the effects of pandemic-related isolation on students and the need to facilitate learning differently. While Virginia MOCA traditionally serves local students and teachers through field trip programs, it is also keenly focused on their local community and families. When considering the likely needs of these stakeholder groups during the pandemic, they decided to infuse SEL skills and language into their community-based workshops with children and their caregivers in mind. In their focus group interview and the documents provided for review, the Virginia MOCA team also evidences examples of working with community stakeholders in the early stages of their program planning.

Collaborating with Community Stakeholders

The Virginia MOCA team hosted a public event, Community Conversations: Social Emotional Learning and Anti-Bias Education at Home, inviting representatives from Virginia Beach City Public Schools, the Virginia Beach Public Library, and a local Virginia Beach Public

Schools parent and Virginia MOCA volunteer. The discussion focused on how caregivers can manage kindness, respect, and empathy through art and storytelling. The panel discussion served as a launch event for the museum's new monthly art and storytelling program for families, *Looking to Learn*. Much like the origin story shared by NCMA staff, this example shows museum leaders identified a community need and involved local stakeholders in program planning and delivery. It also shows how museum leaders embraced learning and expanded into a program area. Actions related to staff training will be explored in the next section.

Virginia MOCA's Manager of School and Educator Programs explained that their team chose to focus on families and caregivers due to widespread social disconnection, affecting not only students but entire households. They recalled, "One of our primary concerns when we closed down in-person programming was that many of our members were families. We were concerned about meeting their needs without a physical space to gather, so I was tasked with proposing a virtual alternative. That's where *Looking to Learn* came from." Describing how the pandemic was likely "one of the first times that many parents were directly involved in their child's education," Virginia MOCA staff saw a need to help parents and caregivers grow their SEL skills together. This started virtually during the pandemic, then expanded to a hybrid model once programs began to return to in-person and is now fully in-person.

Reflecting on those pandemic-era beginnings, Virginia MOCA staff summarized goals for their Looking to Learn program: (1) to foster social and emotional awareness in response to the emotional challenges of the pandemic and (2) to equip parents with strategies for supporting their children's SEL development. Noting that school-based teachers likely already "had an understanding for that approach," the museum's focus on supporting the social and emotional learning of families through art-based programs was a very intentional choice.

Unlike NCMA and Virginia MOCA, which identified clear timelines for the formal start of their SEL efforts, the Intrepid Museum's interview participants described SEL as though it had always been a part of their educational efforts and did not pinpoint a concrete start date. While this gave the sense that the Building Foundational Support and Plan might have been less defined for their site, their interview included many references to SEL programs that serve an identified community need, such as teen mental health and "parent respite."

The Intrepid Museum's Manager of Access Initiatives shared comments from grateful parents of camp participants such as "This is the only camp that I can drop him off and I am comfortable and I know I won't get a call," or the only camp experience where their children had not been asked to leave the camp. Reflecting on this aspect of the museum's programming, the Manager of Access Initiatives added: "So it's also not just acknowledging the social emotional growth of our students, but also acknowledging that there's the people around them that also need and crave that social emotional learning too." This sentiment, echoed across the three site interviews, reinforced that SEL was important not because it guaranteed grant funding or because it was a directive or an initiative the museum was being pressured to adopt but because museum staff saw that it addressed community needs.

TOA's second step, strengthening adult SEL competencies and capacities, aligns with a museum's ability to integrate SEL with integrity. However, the TOA's stages are interconnected rather than sequential. While staff training related SEL skills will be explored in the next section, considering how museum staff applied their new or existing SEL knowledge in program design points back towards leader actions related to TOA's first step, Building Foundational Support and Plan, as well as forward towards the TOA's final step, Reflecting on Data for Continuous Improvement. Each participating site referenced or provided language relating to stated program

outcomes, evidence of the museum's specific SEL-related goals, and program evaluations aligned with those goals. Approaches to program evaluation will be discussed in the section relating to TOA's fourth and final step.

The NCMA Manager of School Outreach identified several interconnected themes weaving together program planning and outcomes with building SEL skills for adults and students, all while focusing on the museum's community. She stated, "[...] within the course, we have a whole menu of strategies and projects and approaches that we align with the CASEL framework, but also through the lens of visual arts. [...] It's mindfulness, identity, perspective, sharing community building and agency. And so then, we align those with the framework and picked artists, picked strategies, picked projects that could help teachers build students capacities in those areas and help them think about their own projects and routines that could support that." She further shared the outcome of a "repository for everything that we do, best practices type things, and helping teachers build a community of sharing ideas."

NCMA's Manager also described how the museum's education team doesn't just model practices for SEL skill building via the online course for teachers but also integrates them into other areas of museum programming, including onsite field trips, virtual field trips, and classroom-based programs: "[...] we use those same strategies, model them, call them out. [..] So, we're using them in practice as well. [...] it's built in in the way that we train teachers or teach teachers, and then it's built into the way that we engage our communities as well." NCMA's account of their SEL journey demonstrates how a museum leader applied their SEL knowledge to build a program that intentionally integrates the CASEL framework with their museum's resources as well as their teaching routines and practices. By making these connections to SEL more explicit, NCMA serves an identified community need. Their characterization of SEL as

being infused throughout community engagement efforts indicates that they still view community stakeholders as central to their SEL efforts. The next section of findings examines how museum leaders built their SEL knowledge and the various "adult" groups in TOA's second step.

TOA Alignment: Strengthening Adult SEL Competencies & Capacities

Museum Leaders Defining Adult SEL

CASEL's TOA was created for school-based educators. As a result, its reference to strengthening "adult" SEL usually implies professional development and opportunities for teachers to build their SEL skills and competencies. This might occasionally extend to parents and caregivers, but it is usually focused on school-based educators. Within the context of a museum, however, more applications for this phrase must be considered. In museums, adult SEL encompasses five distinct groups: museum leaders who develop SEL-integrated programs; museum-based educators responsible for delivering these programs; school-based educators and community partners who engage in museum-hosted professional development; adult visitors participating in educational programming such as gallery tours or lectures, and museum professionals learning from one another through research, conferences, or professional networks.

This last group related to museum-to-museum learning, where institutions that have pioneered SEL integration share their knowledge with other museum professionals through a "community of practice." While this may seem like an unnecessary segmentation of a group that could all be called "adults," they have distinctly different SEL-related needs and embody fundamentally different roles within each museum's SEL story. Among this study's three participating sites, all five categories of adult learners are touched upon.

Approaches to Strengthening Adult SEL Across Study Sites

The next section explores how study sites approached strengthening adult SEL competencies and capacities, revealing variation among the sites. One notable constant, however, was that each focus group interview included a member or members of that museum's team referencing CASEL and elements of the CASEL Wheel (the tool used to identify the five main competency areas of SEL, presented in chapter one's *Fig. 1*) by name without being prompted to do so. This pointed towards a common working definition, or at least format, for conceptualizing school-based SEL. This commonality among the three sites relates directly back to RQ 1, which seeks to understand how museum leaders define SEL. Since participants at all three sites were able to name CASEL and use terms from its framework when talking about their museum's SEL-related programs, it can be assumed that museum leaders are using CASEL resources in building their understanding of SEL in both school and museum settings.

During the interview, the Intrepid Museum's VP of Education, pulled up CASEL'S webpage and reflected on the synergy of CASEL's mission: "[…] we are driven by a vision that all children and adults are self-aware, caring, responsible, engaged, and lifelong learners," adding, "I think that would be the underlying mission of any education department in any museum." While schools often integrate SEL into structured curricula, museums cultivate these same skills through immersive, experiential learning. The emphasis on self-awareness, social engagement, and lifelong learning is reflected not only in CASEL's goals but in the very missions of museums, which seek to inspire curiosity, empathy, and critical thinking in visitors of all ages. Evidence of how these museum leaders view SEL as inherent to their work shows will be discussed in more detail in a subsequent section of this study's findings.

At times, other SEL-adjacent frameworks or related approaches were also mentioned by interview participants, including the Profile of a Graduate's 5 C's (Manager of School and Educator Programs, Virginia MOCA), Whole Child Education (Director of Education, NCMA), Visual Thinking Strategies (VP of Education, the Intrepid), and Project Zero's Circle of Viewpoints thinking routine (Manager of School and Educator Programs, Virginia MOCA). These frameworks were not discussed in-depth and were not the focus of the interview, but their presence in the interviews is evidence that museum leaders who are integrating SEL are likely also broadly aware of other related school-based and museum-based strategies that support social and emotional learning besides CASEL.

Both of Virginia MOCA's program managers stated they entered their current roles with prior experience in and knowledge of SEL frameworks. This was the only site of the three where staff referenced formal training in SEL that predated their arrival at the museum. Consistent with other study participant sites, they described an environment where they were able to share their knowledge and expertise while engaging in collaborative learning within their department. Like the other two study sites, they named CASEL without prompting or assistance and spoke with passion about the role of museums in supporting SEL by being safe, inclusive, and welcoming spaces. While conversation during the focus group interview mainly centered around the Looking to Learn program, it was evident that key elements of SEL had been intentionally built into larger docent training efforts and were being supported across educational programs at the museum, as confirmed by document analysis.

The Intrepid Museum's Manager of Youth Leadership Initiatives characterized their team's SEL-related training as informal while including SEL topics and terms yet not explicitly SEL-specific training. Describing this in more detail, they explained that that SEL "might not be

explicitly stated. It might come secondarily, but the techniques are articulated and shared and talked through and discussed with us as a staff so even if it's not related to a specific program. [...] It's something that's constantly in the back of our minds." While training related to SEL content knowledge is less explicit, many of the same terms and skills are embedded into staff's ongoing training.

All Intrepid Museum interview participants seemed conversant in fundamental SEL and SEL-adjacent terms, but did not appear to have engaged in formal SEL-focused training to build this knowledge. They participated in regular staff training to improve skills and techniques that fall under the umbrella of SEL or are SEL-adjacent and that certainly strengthen their individual SEL skills. Despite evidence of SEL-related training being present in informal ways, however, a gray area remains within the TOA regarding how explicit and how extensive SEL-related training should be to qualify as strengthening adult SEL competencies and capacities.

Interview participants in the Intrepid Museum's focus group were able to name key terms related to SEL, with an emphasis on skills relating to communicating and collaborating with others. The terms "socialization" was used several times, although its application seemed somewhat SEL-adjacent. The VP of Education referred to CASEL by name, noting that they had "been familiar with CASEL for a while." Data from the focus group interview and corresponding document analysis highlighted that the Intrepid Museum's education team viewed SEL as deeply resonant with their museum mission, as well as inherent within their organizational culture and values. The theme of SEL's inherent relationship to the very core of museum education will be explored further in a subsequent section.

Like both other interview sites, NCMA's team referenced CASEL specifically by name, noting that they "have found ways to integrate that with what we see as really easy overlaps with

the arts, with the visual arts specifically [...]." Speaking again to the inherent overlap of SEL and common best practices in museum education, they added "[...] we're pulling strategies that we've used forever. But then we created [...] some stronger transparency in the way that we're talking about SEL." This is an example of museum staff having enough fluency in both museum practice and SEL to notice the parallels and helps classroom-based teachers notice it, as well. This could be considered as a kind of dual language fluency. Describing how NCMA staff might help translate an existing lesson or activity into SEL for a teacher, one interview participant said, "[...] if we're modeling it, we'll usually go "This is a great strategy that you might use for your class to build self-awareness. This is a great strategy you might use for your class to build community and relationships." So I think we try to be as pointed in the way that we're introducing strategies and modeling strategies, whether it's in a program for students or PD for teachers."

To develop dual fluency, NCMA staff sought out formalized training for their manager-level staff, who then shared those training resources with the wider team. Describing this collaborative learning, NCMA's Director of Education recalled that their team "[...] compiled a review of lit together as [the managers] were doing this course [then] we would go off and watch a webinar, or, you know, review an article, and we'd come back and compile that together, and sometimes have, like similar experiences that we did together, and then share out with our team." In this example, leaders are learners together, engaging in collaborative learning and shared experiences to build and practice their SEL skills in the museum space. While this was the strongest example from among the three study sites of a museum team identifying an upcoming SEL initiative within their local schools and positioning themselves to be ready to support that initiative by seeking out formalized training in SEL, all three sites showed evidence of the collaborative team learning they described. In this way, SEL efforts were not a top-down

mandate at any of the three study sites. Instead, each institution engaged in the journey together, with leaders-as-learners being a key theme.

Next Steps in Strengthening Adult SEL

The Vice President of Education at the Intrepid Museum, who had previously described their SEL integration as informal, concluded the focus group by saying that the conversation made them think they should "formally take a look at the CASEL materials as part of a PD." In fact, shortly after the focus group interview concluded, this VP followed up with an email to everyone who participated, highlighting a two-hour online forum on the topic of SEL that would soon be hosted by Ed Week. This stated desire to organize more "formal" SEL professional development for staff, paired with the immediate sharing of related resources points to a sincere motivation on the part of this museum leader and is further evidence of SEL's future trends within museums.

Similarly, the Director of Education at NCMA ended that site's interview by saying that one of their "hopes for [this] research is not only learning from the interviews with other museums, but the opportunity to come back to those museums and continue this discussion." This statement paralleled the Intrepid Museum's executive-level leader's stated wish to pursue more resources relating to SEL, while also specifically highlighting the role of museum-to-museum dialogue in this process. This statement acknowledges that other museums' staff have experience, knowledge, and insights that could benefit other museums who may also be on the SEL integration journey or those planning to join it. Currently, research on SEL in museums remains limited, with gaps in understanding how it relates to and supports the work of museums, how to train an education staff on its components and approach, and what kinds of SEL-related

programs are in existence. As result, no formal community of practice for museum professionals to share with and learn from one another.

This peer-to-peer learning is an important aspect of strengthening adult skills and capacities, the second step in CASEL's TOA. Currently, most of the research and resources available on SEL are for school-based educators. While this is unsurprising, given the origin of SEL and its three decades of evolution within school settings, it puts the responsibility of museum leaders who may be looking to make a bridge to community and school-based partners through SEL to learn their language and to make the necessary interpretations and adaptations on their own. Museum-specific SEL resources do not exist, and as a result, each museum in the study has had to develop their own playbook. The results showed creativity and individuality but resulted in inconsistent approaches and results.

During the interview's conclusion, NCMA's Director of Education also noted that there was "definitely a gap in research in the field" regarding SEL in museums, underscoring the need for further studies and for greater awareness not only within the museum field about these efforts, but also within the traditionally school-based field of SEL research. Expanding the focus from SEL-related efforts within the museum field and how those efforts are planned and executed, the Director of Education pointed to the need for more research regarding "the impact of that on our audience." Noting the need for more field-wide research on the impact of museums' SEL efforts on their audiences, this statement points to a larger systems-level view of integration efforts: one that involves collaboration, resource sharing, and a community of practice.

The TOA's second step, with its focus on strengthening adult SEL competencies and capacities, not only informed this study's findings related to leadership practices for SEL

integration (RQ 2), but also provided a clear and consistent answer for which resources museum leaders are using as they construct their definitions of SEL (RQ 1). Findings from this section also provided additional insights relating to museum leaders' perspectives on future opportunities for SEL and museums (RQ 3). The next section will address themes in the data related to TOA's third step, Promoting SEL for and with Students.

TOA Alignment: Promoting SEL for and with Students

The TOA's third phrase relates to promoting SEL for and with students. CASEL's guide, Systemic Social and Emotional Learning for States (Yoder et al., 2021), recommends that practices for SEL integration aligned with this phase of the TOA should:

> […] create and/or disseminate effective SEL policies, guidance, and tools that prioritize and promote the implementation of systemic SEL [...] identify or define an SEL framework; articulate competencies (or SEL standards); provide knowledge and tools about the selection, implementation, and continuous improvement of evidence-based programs and practices; align SEL to other strategic efforts; and encourage family and community partnerships (p. 17).

As evidenced, these descriptions are well aligned with leader actions illustrated by interview quotes and document analysis across all t study sites. Museum leaders interviewed for this study engagement in identifying CASEL as a primary SEL framework and reference. These museum leaders also articulated competencies by embedding K-12 aligned SEL language and terms into their educational programs and descriptions. In many cases, these SEL terms, found on their museum's websites and program brochures, were used to identify these museums as sites where SEL integration had happened, qualifying them for inclusion in this very study.

Museum leaders indicated a strong emphasis on collaborative learning when identifying and developing SEL competencies and referenced involving community partners and stakeholders when embarking on SEL initiatives. Each site also engaged in formal evaluation and assessment of their SEL-related programs, another recommended action embedded within this TOA area. Although approaches to everything from staff training to program structure and assessment varied, a key unifying aspect among the three participating study sites was CASEL's Framework for Systemic SEL.

During data analysis, one surprising and unexpected theme emerged that embodies friction with this TOA area: Museum Silos. Museum Silos became evident when leaders referenced SEL integration in some programs, but not—or not yet—in another. While Museum Silos intersect with various points of the TOA, particularly initial planning stages and continuous improvement, this section will explore them in relation to Systemic SEL. CASEL's Framework for Systemic SEL (Fig. 1) emphasizes that SEL efforts are most successful when integrated throughout and at all levels of the school environment. Within classrooms, a systemic approach to SEL integration suggests that SEL will be found within both instruction and classroom climate. Within the broader school context, it is "schoolwide culture, practices and policies." As previously discussed, the framework extends the concept of systemic SEL to include 'Families & Caregiver," as well as "Communities," which is where museums align themselves as educational partners in supporting schools' SEL efforts.

While all three study sites referenced SEL as being present within their existing teaching and learning practices, as well as within their museum's educational mission, integration efforts suggested a more focused and narrow effort. Interview participants tended to speak only about the programs that they worked most closely on. For example, at the Intrepid Museum, Manager-

level participants oversaw teen programs, and their illustrations of SEL efforts at the Intrepid Museum focused exclusively on those teen programs. At one point, when asked to say more about a lesson plan found on their website, there was a moment of confusion about what it was and where it might have come from. The VP of Education replied that the resource in question had been created by a member of the school programs team, who were not represented among the focus group participants. The VP characterized "the school programs people" as being "way more aware of these buzz terms or copyrighted terms […] so they know what teachers are looking for when they put these together."

Adding that "[...] they would be the ones that were most likely connect the concepts to the label. But they're the ones who would use it the least," the VP of Education highlighted an aspect of Museum Silos. Without a member of the school programs team there to represent their efforts, it remains unclear whether they would agree with this characterization of their programs. Not wishing to speak on their behalf, but expressing a personally held perspective, the VP of Education concluded, "[…] they mostly deal with field trips [...]. And when you have 45 minutes, you're not building a whole lot of social emotional learning generally." This perspective suggests long-touch teen programs were best suited to supporting SEL skill building. While that opinion may include valid observations relating to differences between single-visit field trip programs and programs where the same educators work with the same teens over a number of weeks, also highlights the question of opportunities for systemic SEL integration across other aspects of the museum's educational programs.

At the NCMA, conversations centered mostly around the museum's efforts related to the creation of their Art and SEL online course for classroom teachers. Again, that corresponded with the titles and roles of two of the museum staff participating in the interview: the Manager of

Teacher Programs and Resources, and the Manager of School Outreach. These individuals

identified North Carolina teachers as a community stakeholder group with an SEL-related need

and subsequently engaged in formal training in SEL before creating a program designed to

support classroom teachers' SEL using the museum's collection and resources.

NCMA's interview reflected a more systemic approach to SEL, though the Director of

Education acknowledged they were not yet where they would "like to be" regarding being "truly

integrated." Indicating that "Managers are definitively leading this effort within the museum,"

the Director of Education observed having seen "an improvement just in the past three years of

using terms like self and social awareness in how [volunteer docents are] constructing tours"

adding that tours are not just "knowledge-based," but are also about "understanding the role that

teaching the whole child has for the way that we're approaching things." The Director of

Education noted that some docents "excel and have shown a lot of progress, even modeling it to

their peers." These comments and observations hint at a more systemic view of SEL within the

education department, extending from the structured approach to supporting classroom-based

teachers to involving gallery tour programs led by volunteer docents and providing training to

help support this effort.

Managers within NCMA's interview also spoke about broader institution-wide efforts to

integrate SEL. Their comments indicated that the K-12 education team was more aware of

formal terms, and that members of the museum's public (adult) programs staff were also very

much aligned with SEL-related goals and approaches. NCMA's Manager of School Outreach

noted "significant movement in museums around wellness and mindfulness" that gained

popularity around the same time that the K-12 education team was formally integrating SEL

within their program offerings for classroom-based teachers. This manager expressed the opinion

that "those [adult public] programs were developed during that time period and just stuck and did well. And now there's some overlap in language that we'll use. [...] SEL as a term specifically is more in [K-12] education."

Responding to the conversation around inter-departmental SEL collaboration, NCMA's Manager of Teacher Programs and Resources recalled having "conversations between teams" during which the adult public programs team was at first unfamiliar with the SEL terms themselves, "But then, when we would talk about what it entailed, they're like, "Oh, yeah, that makes sense." But it's not, like, a conscious […]." Comments like this one indicate the beginnings of a more systemic and organization-wide integration effort, but also underscore that formal SEL, at least for now, remains largely within K-12 programming efforts.

Institutional and departmental team structures looked different at the Virginia MOCA, which was the smallest museum to participate in this study. Within their two-person focus group interview, both study participants were manager-level museum leaders. These two managers oversee all aspects of Virginia MOCA's SEL programming, from its conception to staff training, program delivery, and evaluation, so they were well-positioned to represent their museum's SEL efforts in this study.

When asked to say more about their roles as the leaders of SEL integration within their site, they described a structure that initially mirrored aspects of Museum Silos, with SEL programs primarily focusing on K-12 student and caregiver audiences. Within their small team, however, close collaboration soon resulted in cross-pollination of ideas and resources. "I see [...] SEL," commented the Studio & Programs Manager, "being a part of everything that we do. [...] facilitating this program over time has instilled these topics to us in a really formal way. But I think it has leached its way into our educational practices in general [...] from children's

programs all the way up to adult programs." This manager credited their director, whom they described as compassionate and empathetic, for supporting these efforts. Agreeing, the Manager of School and Educator Programs notes close alignment with the museum's vision statement, characterizing it as "embodying" the goals of SEL. Connecting these points, they added: "Our goal is not that we're, you know, churning out art enthusiasts. Our goal is that we're churning out people that understand their neighbors better. And care about the things their neighbors care about."

Noting that this goal was the unifying vision behind all their programs and that all programs "kind of implement that," these comments point toward a possible model for a more systemic approach to SEL integration within a museum; however, the term itself was not used. The inherent presence of SEL within museums' existing educational missions will be explored further in a subsequent section of this chapter relating to museum-specific topics and museum leaders' perspectives. Implications for systemic integration within and among museums, supported by this inherent relationship, relate to action-based recommendations in chapter five.

TOA Alignment: Reflecting on Data for Continuous Improvement

The TOA's fourth and final phase emphasizes using data for continuous improvement. All three study sites demonstrated how museum leaders instituted policies or developed tools to aid in the formal evaluation of SEL-related programs. As seen with other aspects of SEL integration, each museum approached program evaluation differently, assessing student learning, teacher perspectives, and community opinions via a range of methods.

Although the Intrepid Museum's participants indicated a more informal approach to SEL integration than the other two study sites , they provided multiple examples of formal evaluation data, which they use for internal program assessment and grant reporting. One of the approaches

used at the Intrepid Museum is called "participant perception indicators," or "PPIs." The VP of Education described PPIs as a tool for measuring "skill attainment, largely around self-efficacy." Feeling confident, explaining things to others, and "knowing how to collaborate or problem solve" were provided as examples of PPIs.

During the interview, one of the Intrepid Museum's Youth Leadership Educators further described how they measured success within a program, noting that three times throughout the program they asked students to fill out a PPI. These PPIs are designed to track the growth in confidence related to certain SEL-related skills as self-reported by the students. Programs were described to "nurture their ideas and make it a safe space for them to explore [...]." The Intrepid Museum's manager described results from those PPIs as indicating that students "gain confidence in a lot of different [SEL] areas."

These characterizations of the program goals and PPI approach to measuring success within that program correlated closely with the formal grant language provided by the Intrepid Museum for document analysis:

> Education programs are measured through quantitative and qualitative data to track participant engagement, changes in confidence levels and knowledge, and application of learning. The primary measurement tool is called Participant Perception Indicators, a multi-part survey tool administered at the beginning, middle and end of their respective program to measure changes over time across different learning areas. The team uses observation rubrics to track levels of participation. We evaluate the work product, analyze students' self-assessment journal entries and collect survey feedback to qualitatively evaluate for demonstration of increasing proficiency and deepen

understanding of concepts and for evidence of skills-building. These observation rubrics indicate academic, social and skills-building progress.

The Intrepid Museum's commitment to collecting and tracking evaluation data was also evident in another document shared for analysis purposes. This document was a program evaluation for the 2024 Inspiration Academy, a professional development for classroom-based teachers in New York City. Of the 48 respondents, 35, or 72.9% of teachers indicated that they "strongly agreed" with the statement that "Resources and information shared today supported my understanding of the role of social/emotional learning in the classroom." The remaining 13 teachers, or 27% agreed with that statement. No respondents indicated a neutral or negative response, seeming to indicate that although the Intrepid reflects on its approach to SEL integration as informal, and while they have not, to date, engaged in specific training on formal aspects of SEL content, classroom-based teachers report that their efforts are successful.

At the NCMA, the Manager of School Outreach described evaluating programs with the help of "teacher advisories." Museum staff consult with these school-based teachers "about the needs of classrooms and students and teachers," responding to the needs they hear, and "tweaking" the museum's SEL-related resources accordingly. During the annual evaluation, "the [online] course and some of the programs are reviewed specifically by a group of teachers and language or strategies are changed."

NCMA's Director of Education added that the museum received a federally funded grant to support digital learning, which they used to "create an immersive [...] learning about ancient cultures." Noting that the program, NCMA Explore, is "rooted in SEL self and social awareness, opening perspectives, empathetic listening skills [..]," reflecting on the results of early evaluation

efforts, staff "discovered that [...] it's really difficult to measure those skills" in the "isolated" context of digital learning. To address this issue, the Director of Education said they are now "at a point where we're engaging with teachers and piloting ways to incorporate this into school outreach projects." This example of an initiative starting in one form and being adapted into another shows actions resulting from a reflection on data.

While the NCMA detailed their evaluation process, the Virginia MOCA provided an example of their Looking to Learn program exit survey for document analysis. Many survey questions related to learning more about what motivated community members to attend the program. Possible answers included "curiosity about the program's content and themes, desire for a cultural and educational experience, interest in meeting new people and/or socializing, fun, and unique art activities, and creating together as a family is important to [them]." It then asked respondents to rate to what extent the program did or did not deepen their understanding of contemporary art, and whether and how deeply it made them feel more connected to the community. Other themes relating to this study's topic areas that were addressed in the program exit survey included identifying that the Looking to Learn program "explored decision-making and collaboration through art" and then asking, "Did you find the social-emotional content of this program to be of value," "did you learn anything new," and "were the museum staff and presenters knowledgeable and approachable?"

In all, there were twelve questions designed to invite thematic or "to what extent" responses from participants. Another three open-ended questions relating to what participants found most personally relevant or meaningful, or what suggestions they may have for program improvements followed. Lastly, four demographic-related questions for participants to share, if they wished to, a little more about their age, racial background, and level of education. While

Virginia MOCA staff did not share the results of these program evaluations as part of their document set for analysis, a review of their Looking to Learn exit surveys gives a good sense of the museum's efforts regarding audience evaluation of their SEL programs. The content addressed by the evaluation questions also indicates a commitment not only to gathering basic satisfaction-related data about this program but also digging deeper and prompting visitors to reflect and share personal responses regarding their own SEL-related experience during the program.

Each of the three study sites approached SEL integration differently but shared an ongoing commitment to evaluation and continuous improvement. Although only one site provided actual evaluation data, available feedback suggests that these museums successfully engage their communities in SEL programs. Just over 2,000 individuals, or 10% of Virginia MOCA's annual visitation, participate in SEL-related youth programs; attendance numbers alone suggest that the program's goal of appealing to the local community's SEL-related needs and interests is working. Similarly, NCMA's SEL and Art online course, also now in its fourth year, continues to expand, with over 900 classroom teachers participating last year. Museum leaders across all study sites show a commitment to both collect and reflect on data, doing so in a way that ensures they are delivering mission-aligned educational programs that address a community need.

Museum-Specific Topic Areas

The previous four sections examined how museum leaders aligned their actions with CASEL's TOA for Systemic SEL, illustrating how museum leaders planned, implemented, and evaluated SEL initiatives. However, not all aspects of SEL in museums fit neatly within the TOA framework. The following section explores a key perspective shared across all study sites: that

SEL is inherently embedded in museum education, shaping institutional culture, program design, and staff practices—even when not explicitly labeled as SEL.

SEL's Inherent Relationship to Museums

Participants across all three sites emphasized a shared belief that SEL was inherently already part of the museum's mission, culture, and approach to museum education. NCMA's Manager of School Outreach observed that while their education team wasn't using the formal "term" SEL prior to 2020, they were "doing [those] things before." Comments like these indicate that museum leaders not only view SEL as naturally present and preexisting in their efforts, but that the change in language around terms and messaging may, in some cases, represent a bigger change in practice than the actual adoption of SEL practices. Museum leaders recalled h they learned to align their terminology with K-12 and school-based language. They provided examples of programs that were created to prioritize building SEL skills for various audiences, but no one spoke about SEL integration as resulting in concrete changes to or within their teaching practices.

Like the other two study sites, NCMA staff echoed the belief that SEL is inherent to the work of museum education. One manager explained, "All of our programs model [components of SEL]," adding, "So whatever we present for a classroom or present to teachers would model what we would hope teachers might use [...] whether it's a way to transition a strategy that helps students transition from one space to another, or a reflection journal entry that has students thinking about what they learned, and goals they have for the class[...]." At another point in the interview, when describing how classroom-based teachers often request SEL-related professional developments to be paired with other existing trainings, the education manager noted that "it's quite easy for us to integrate it into, like most of what we do."

While actions related to staff training or program format differed from site to site, each museum's focus group emphasized that SEL naturally aligns with best practices in museum education. Unlike schools, where SEL is often structured into curricula and formal interventions, museums provide open-ended, experiential learning environments that encourage self-directed exploration and emotional engagement. This distinction may contribute to museums' perception of SEL as inherent, as their educational models already emphasize collaboration, perspective-taking, and emotional connection through art, history, and cultural programming. Virginia MOCA's Manager illustrated this idea when describing their reasons for beginning the Looking to Learn family program: "When I proposed that idea to my director," they said, "it was not out of left field. So that makes me think that makes me think that regardless of whether the terminology of SEL was being used at the time or not, the approach was not something that was unfamiliar."

The Intrepid Museum's Manager of Youth Leadership Initiatives also described having "seen it being incorporated throughout [the museum]." Elaborating on the inherent nature of SEL at the Intrepid Museum, they described a "strong dedication to accessibility throughout the institution, adding that "[...] when you have an entire institution that's embracing that mindset, I think it inherently comes in to everything that we do, whether it is explicitly stated as learning goals and objectives or whether it's just coming in organically because we're all on board with this being an important element in our teaching."

The inherent nature of SEL in the work of museum education contributed to some grey areas around formalized integration efforts at the Intrepid. Voicing that "[...] it's something that's always been there since I've started," the Manager of Youth Leadership Initiatives went on to say that "it was never a question of whether or not we were going to do this. It was always just like

whether or not we explicitly state that this is being done specifically or not. Like the techniques are there, the mindset is there, and we're going to embrace it."

Study participants described how SEL's alignment with best practices in museum education influenced their approach to integration, with some noting benefits and others acknowledging complexities. As the three case studies illustrate, the absence of a standardized framework for museum-based SEL means that institutions define and integrate SEL in ways that align with their existing missions rather than following a uniform approach. This significantly affects the results of each museum's decisions, from how they train their staff to how they message their programs and evaluate their outcomes. In the case of the Intrepid Museum, data suggests that SEL is embedded within existing practices rather than framed as a distinct, formalized initiative. "[...] we're not sort of all formal about it," joked their Vice President. Because SEL principles are woven into the institution's accessibility mission and educational approach, museum leaders may see little need to label or structure SEL separately. This contrasts with other study sites that have implemented explicit SEL training and evaluation measures while maintaining the belief that SEL is already a natural fit for museum education.

The Intrepid Museum's Manager of Access Initiatives added that SEL aligns with "being a museum that [has] such a robust education program," characterizing helping students and visitors to socialize as being something that "just comes naturally." Suggesting that deeper SEL integration results from intentional next steps that stem from that natural occurrence, they added, "And when you see that already happening, then you really want to think about, okay, how can I capitalize on this? Like, we are a great place to help kids socialize, be more flexible. Learn more about other communities. So how can we really capitalize on that? And put that into our and integrate it into our education programs."

SEL-related education programs were the focus of interview questions, but participants sometimes indicated that SEL-related values and practices could be found across their organizations. The Intrepid Museum's VP of Education observed that "[...] If you ran up to two-thirds of our staff and asked what [is] social-emotional learning, they wouldn't know that by that title. But if you said, do you have programs which do X or do Y [...] They would be like, oh, yeah, we do." Again illustrating the point that inherent SEL might not need to be formal or explicit to be considered important to museum staff, the Intrepid Museum's Manager of Youth Leadership Initiatives noted that "it may not be specifically identified as social emotional learning, but it's a lot of things that are just coming through inherently because of the way that our department and our institution is structured." Strategies for pairing inherent SEL with intentional practices for systemic integration within and among museums are presented in chapter five's recommendations.

Different Learning Environments: Museums and Schools

Building on the idea that SEL is inherently embedded in museum education, museum leaders emphasized that museums provide learning environments fundamentally different from schools. This distinction, they argued, allows museums to foster SEL in ways that may not always be possible in formal classroom settings. Unlike formal classroom teachers, museum educators often engage with students in informal, hands-on learning experiences that emphasize exploration over direct instruction. This flexibility allows museum staff to foster SEL in ways that complement, rather than replace, school-based learning.

The Intrepid Museum's Manager of Access Initiatives spoke to this point, sharing a belief that museums provide an environment that's uniquely different from a school's learning environment:

[...] we are, you know, the fun aunts and uncles of the education world because we are not in a sit-down classroom with students all day. [...] And oftentimes these interactions are after school programs or school field trips or for internship and after school activity, and so I think just the timing of it all or the, you know, given [that] it's a field trip [...] it sets it up to be a more fun, a more social experience than just then classroom learning might be. And so I think as a museum, it's such a great opportunity to incorporate SEL and these concepts and everything discussed because you know, we're fun. We're a cool space. We, you know, have airplanes and we have a space shuttle and it's really fun and exciting stuff. And I love that we are able to bring education into that conversation as well as continuing to work with students on their social emotional learning and doing it in a very, very cool environment as well.

Responding to points made by both program-level educators and managers, the VP of Education coupled the idea of museums as fun and welcoming spaces in which to learn with the inherent synergies between CASEL's stated vision and the very mission of museum education by adding:

I think there is this awareness that we are a place where we can bring a little joy back in the learning experience and, again, build that self-efficacy, that self-identity, that "I am a learner. I am a scientist, I am an artist," whatever it is, because there isn't that feeling that there's only one right way, and if you don't get it right, that means it you're not good at it. We're here, I think, in informal settings, there's this awareness that we can give children and young adults, and adults, and anyone a chance to find themselves [...] in a safe and supportive environment [...] that welcomes many ways of addressing an issue, many modalities of learning.

The distinction between schools and museum and museum learning environments, and its impact on teaching and learning emerged as a recurring theme. The Intrepid Museum's Manager of Youth Leadership Initiatives reflected on conversations with classroom teachers during which they discussed some of the differences between teaching in a school versus teaching in a museum. They described feeling "in our day-to-day work with these kids, more [...] flexibility, more opportunity." The manager expressed a personal preference for teaching in a museum environment over a school-based environment, noting, "[we] just have a little bit more freedom to create that space that's ideal for bringing in social emotional learning." They noted that museum-based educators are "not restricted by standards and state testing and administrations and many, many restrictions," suggesting that this freedom from school-based testing standards afforded museums more flexibility and creativity with their approach to SEL.

While museum education is often categorized as informal in nature, museum leaders emphasized that this does not mean that it lacks intentionality or integrity. As the Intrepid Museum's VP of Education explained, museum educators carefully design programs that align with SEL principles, incorporating reflection, collaboration, and self-exploration into visitor experiences. This structured approach to informal learning allows museums to cultivate SEL skills in ways they hope might feel organic rather than prescriptive. Reflecting that whether an educator in a museum is integrating SEL outcomes in a conscious way, the VP of Education characterized "any educator in a museum" as being "[...] aware of the fact that they have the power" to create an experience that cultivates and embodies SEL. They do this by "[making] it welcoming, making it supportive, making it safe, making it joyful. Giving students a chance to find themselves and work together in a less constrained non-competitive way [...]."

These perspectives reinforce SEL's relationship to museum learning and the distinct ways museum leaders differentiate museum spaces from school-based learning environments. Museums are places for fun, experience-based learning where it's okay to experiment and fail and where, above all, a person should feel safe and welcome. While these characterizations need not be at odds with how school-based education leaders might view their learning spaces too, it is nonetheless notable that museum-based education leaders articulated these points in similar ways across all three study sites.

Museum Leaders Look to the Future of SEL

While previous sections explored how museum leaders conceptualize and integrate SEL, this section examines how museum leaders anticipate sustaining SEL efforts in the face of political and policy changes. All three museum sites expressed a firm intention to continue offering inclusive, empathy-based SEL programs, regardless of shifting school-based policies or national politics. This pointed to each museum's commitment to their SEL goals, as well as to their staff's belief in the importance of their efforts in this area. It is worth noting that data for this study was collected in January and February 2025 amid a Presidential administration change. During the two-week interview period, the new administration quickly moved to roll back and dismantle diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs and initiatives nationwide. In every interview, themes of SEL's relationship to efforts support DEI were present. Changes in state and national politics may impact school-based curricula and funding priorities. Museum leaders noted that these changes will likely also affect the grant landscape, though to what extent is still unknown.

In interviews, museum leaders acknowledged that while the term SEL may wax and wane in popularity due to politics and policy changes, their essential commitment to the core values

represented by SEL is unlikely to change. Virginia MOCA's Manager of Studio & Community Programs reflected on this point, noting:

> [...] I see our role as museum educators and engagement facilitators [as] filling those gaps that maybe the schools aren't able to fill, or policies prevent various people from allowing to happen. So, I think, kind of like [the Manager of School and Educator Programs] said, whether it's written or not, I do see us as a team continuing to make those connections regardless of the policies that are in place. And it being our mission to do so.

Here again, the idea that SEL is fundamental to the work of museums and museum educators shined brightly along with the observation that museums and schools, while closely-aligned community education partners, are fundamentally different spaces with fundamentally different resources—and restrictions—applying to them. Virginia MOCA's Manager of School and Educator Programs noted that "even before the new Presidential administration came in," Virginia was in a time of change, resulting from its new Governor:

> I heard fear from teachers about [...] whether they could bring up certain topics or not in their classroom and [...] what they were allowed to say and not say." Adding that, even if it couldn't be written into a museum's policy or defined by specific, potentially politicized, language, that "I think our goal of still [...] embedding that in the people that we work with, that we train with, and that we partner with around the community. I am hopeful that if that is a core value of the people that we work with and do programs with that that, you know, it doesn't have to be in writing for it to be, you know, a value [...].

Adding that "Most of what we plan and hope to do is going to happen regardless," Virginia MOCA's Studio & Community Programs Manager noted that these questions of

messaging would likely have a significant impact on the grant landscape, especially for federal grants. Acknowledging that most federal grants that the museum had applied for "specifically ask for DEI inclusion" and that many of the grants they applied for were specifically in support of DEI-related efforts, the Studio & Community Programs Manager added that "that kind of leaves a big giant looming question mark above what next year is going to look like."

The topic of politics, nuances around messaging, and relationship to grant funding was echoed in NCMA's interview, as well. Director of Education noted that while state and federal policies influenced how SEL was framed in official communications, these changes did not alter the museum's core SEL programming. They explained that "leadership within the state had for some reason a target on things that were SEL," leading to shifts in how the Department of Public Instruction presented the work. However, despite adjustments in terminology or public-facing messaging, the museum's commitment to SEL remained intact, reflecting a broader trend among study sites.

As museum leaders navigate uncertainties in grant funding, they also contend with broader political pressures shaping the discourse around SEL. While external funding sources and school partnerships may be affected, museums' commitment to SEL remains firm. This intersection of financial realities and political discourse adds complexity to the work of museum educators, who must balance institutional priorities with shifting external expectations.

Speaking again to the politics surrounding the SEL as a term, NCMA's Manager of School Outreach described teachers within certain counties that were "nervous and would question, "does this/could this/would I get in trouble if"" due to misinformation surrounding "buzz and buzzwords." Museum staff observed that SEL was understood and viewed differently among different areas of North Carolina. Nothing that their focus was on "serving teachers all

across the state," they realized that while certain districts and counties "embrace equity and SEL, but [...] go 40 minutes down the road and have a very different experience." Ultimately, they said, "the museum stayed the course and committed to the work and the process." Rather than scaling back their efforts, NCMA chose to refine its program messaging by incorporating language acknowledging the broader discourse around SEL. This strategic adjustment reflects an awareness of external discussions without compromising the core intent or content of SEL programming.

Unlike public schools, which must adhere to state or district mandates, museums have greater autonomy in shaping educational priorities. This flexibility allows them to maintain SEL programming even as school-based policies shift. The intent expressed by museum leaders to continue their SEL work—despite political tensions surrounding equity-focused education—illustrates the unique role museums play in the broader SEL ecosystem. While the future remains uncertain, museum leaders continue to uphold their commitment to SEL.

The findings from this study highlight three museum-specific perspectives: the belief that SEL is inherently embedded in museum education: the distinctions between museum and school-based learning environments, and the commitment to SEL values despite potential political challenges. While most SEL research focuses on school-based implementation, this study underscores museums' critical role in extending SEL beyond the classroom. By examining museum leaders' perspectives, this research broadens the understanding of SEL in non-traditional learning environments and offers insights to strengthen future partnerships between schools and cultural institutions. By examining museum leaders' perspectives, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how SEL is sustained and adapted in non-traditional

learning environments, offering insights that can inform future partnerships between schools and cultural institutions.

Summary of Findings

This study explored museum leaders' perspectives and practices regarding SEL integration in schools. Three sub-questions further guided the research: (RQ1), How museum leaders define SEL; (RQ 2), What leadership practices they use when integrating SEL into museums' educational programming; and (RQ3), What opportunities they identify for SEL and museums. Findings were derived from qualitative data collected during focus group interviews and via document analysis from museum leaders with experience leading SEL efforts at three museums informed these findings. This section will summarize the study's main findings, organized by their alignment to each of the three research questions. Following that, section five will address recommendations, presented in the form of an action plan.

How Museum Leaders Define SEL

RQ 1 examined how museum leaders define SEL. The most elemental response to this question was loud and clear: all three sites look to CASEL for key terms and definitions. Given CASEL's long history and prominence within SEL research and practice, this consistency is unsurprising. However, while all three museums referenced CASEL, their pathways to understanding and applying SEL varied significantly. These differences were shaped by each museum's institutional culture, staff expertise, and access to professional development opportunities. As the following examples illustrate, some museums integrated SEL seamlessly into existing work, while others pursued structured training to deepen their engagement with SEL concepts.

At the Intrepid Museum, staff embraced SEL terms and goals, recognizing them as values that were already embedded within their work. SEL language was integrated into program descriptions, website text, and evaluation tools. At the Intrepid, staff recognized SEL as a set of values already embedded within their educational programming. Unlike other study sites, which pursued formal SEL training or introduced structured SEL initiatives, the Intrepid Museum's approach was largely organic. There was no formal "launch" of SEL programming; rather, interview participants described a longstanding commitment to the social-emotional dimensions of museum education. Over time, the museum increasingly incorporated SEL terminology into program descriptions, evaluation tools, and public-facing materials, aligning language with an approach they felt had always been present.

Museum leaders at NCMA and Virginia MOCA embodied examples of sites that delved deeper into constructing their definitions of SEL. In each case, interview participants referenced more formal training experiences relating to SEL; NCMA staff sought professional development in the form of a course in SEL and paired that with discussions and a literature review back at their museum, and Virginia MOCA staff applied their own prior knowledge and formal training in SEL to their new roles at the museum. In both cases, museum staff participated in SEL training designed for school-based educators and then adapted the content for application within the museum environment.

Leadership Practices for SEL Integration

RQ 2 explored leadership practices for integrating SEL in museums. while each study site enacted SEL differently, leadership practices revealed more similarities than differences. Firstly, data analysis showed evidence of leaders as learners. Museum leaders who engaged in formalized SEL integration were familiar with school-based SEL language and frameworks,

having sought out additional training on these terms or worked in partnership with community-based stakeholders to increase their understanding of community-based needs. Leaders created SEL-aligned programming for specific audiences, measured outcomes from those programs, and reflected on the future of their SEL practices amidst a changing political climate.

The leadership practices identified in this study align with CASEL's TOA and well-established leadership models. Specifically, these practices correspond to the five Core Leadership Capacities (CLCs) embedded within the Ontario Leadership Framework. The Ontario model is particularly useful in this context because it emphasizes the role of leaders in fostering collaborative learning cultures, strategically allocating resources, and using data for decision-making—key components evident in how museum leaders approached SEL integration. These five CLCs include: Setting Goals, Aligning Resources with Priorities, Promoting Collaborative Learning Cultures, Using Data, and Engaging in Courageous Conversations.

Leadership practices for SEL integration also aligned with the Distributed Leadership model in the which leadership practice is distributed among the leader, followers, and the situation (Spillane et al., 2004). In this study, SEL integration served as the leadership practice, the followers are the museum's wider education team and frontline educators, and the situation is the museum's SEL-related programming—sometimes based within the context of the museum itself, sometimes delivered digitally, but always referring to the museum's exhibits and mission. In each participating study side, the museum leaders interviewed referenced training and evaluation practices consistent with follower-level distribution and were similarly able to speak to the museum's situation as unique from school-based SEL settings. Each interview included discussion of manager-level leaders sharing responsibility for SEL integration, not just director-level leaders, and while only the Intrepid Museum's interview included program-level educators,

their presence in the interview suggested that those three levels of leadership—director, manager, and educator—work collaboratively to design, deliver, and evaluate SEL programs.

In all three study sites, leadership responsibility for SEL integration was distributed across multiple levels of staff. At NCMA and Virginia MOCA, managers played a particularly active role in sharing their SEL knowledge, both upwards to directors and downwards to program-level staff. The Intrepid Museum also reflected aspects of Distributed Leadership, as program-level educators were directly involved in shaping SEL programming, evaluations, and learning strategies—demonstrating collaboration across leadership levels.

Opportunities for SEL and Museums

This study's final research question, RQ 3, sought to understand what opportunities museum leaders identified for SEL and museums. Looking back and reflecting on their motivations for SEL integration, all museum leaders interviewed for this study expressed the belief that SEL was not only aligned with the educational work of museums, but that SEL is inherently present at the core of museum education itself. The opportunities surrounding SEL integration were largely driven by community-based need, such as support for teachers tasked with adding more SEL strategies and content to their classroom-based curriculum; creating a safe place for teenagers to practice new skills and collaborate with one another; and prompting conversations for children and their caregivers that centered around identifying and expressing emotions. In each instance, museum leaders described the need to learn more about the specific needs within their communities, as well as learning the language of school-based SEL, however, they did not describe a fundamental shift in their teaching practices. The opportunity their SEL-related programs and learning sought to address were in the name of better serving their community stakeholders through specific program design and language.

Museum leaders identified increased museum-to-museum collaboration as a key opportunity for SEL integration. While museums may be uniquely situated to support various stakeholders' SEL needs, without clear guidance and museum-specific resources to inform this practice, SEL integration is likely to remain inconsistent and individualistic in approach. Museum leaders participating in this study frequently described museums as being uniquely different spaces from schools and, as such, learning environments in which SEL might be practiced and applied differently from schools. However, the data also indicate that CASEL's TOA, while useful, does not fully account for the unique contexts of museum education. Unlike schools, museums operate without standardized curricula, and their SEL integration is often shaped by community needs rather than policy mandates.

Conclusion

Before conducting this study, it was unclear whether museum leaders' SEL integration efforts parallel those of school-based educational leaders. However, alignment with CASEL's TOA suggest meaningful comparisons can be made. Museum leaders all engaged in practices relating to Building Foundational Support and Plan (TOA 1), Strengthening Adult SEL Competencies and Capacities (TOA 2), Promoting SEL for and with Students (TOA 3), and Reflecting on Data for Continuous Improvement (TOA 4). Notably, no two museums approached SEL integration in the same way. While all three sites used CASEL's resources to guide and inform their understanding of SEL, some adopted an informal approach, others relied on prior knowledge and experience, and some sought out formal training designed for classroom teachers and then adapted it to their needs. No two sites created the same SEL-related program, though all referenced responding to an identified community-based need as the motivation for their efforts. Additionally, each sites characterized SEL as deeply resonating with and even

inherent within the very core of museum education, itself, and expressed an intent to continue those efforts.

Findings indicate that community stakeholder needs played a significant role in shaping SEL integration efforts at each museum. However, museum leaders described varying degrees of alignment with school-based SEL frameworks, sometimes requiring adaptations to fit the museum context. Several participants noted that clearer expectations and shared language between museums and SEL stakeholders could improve alignment and communication.

Chapter four presented findings from qualitative data collected for this muti-site comparative case study. Themes related to museum leaders' perspectives on SEL and museums as well as leader actions for SEL's integration by those leaders. While some museums have explicitly incorporated SEL terminology into programming, others described engaging in SEL-related practices without formally labeling them as such. Museum leaders expressed interest in continued learning and dialogue around SEL, particularly in relation to their roles as community education partners. The following section will present recommendations for museum leaders and their community partners. Findings from this study illustrate the various ways museum leaders have engaged with SEL, including both informal and formal integration strategies.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed to address a gap in research related to SEL integration within an important community educational partner: museums. While school-based SEL has been the focus of over three decades of research, little is known about SEL in museums despite increasing examples of its integration across the museum field. This study sought to address that gap in research by exploring the perspectives and practices of museum leaders at three museums that have integrated SEL language and theory into their museum's programming. In doing so, it hoped to inform how museum leaders define SEL (RQ 1), what leadership practices they used in that process (RQ 2), and what opportunities they identify for SEL and museums (RQ 3). The study's conceptual framework applied CASEL's four step TOA as a tool for comparing leader actions for SEL integration against best practices for school-based integration and considered the role of museum leaders' perceptions of SEL on these integration efforts.

Data analysis revealed that museum leaders engaged in all four areas of the TOA, although each museum's approach to SEL training, programming, and evaluation were unique to each site. The sites that showed the most evidence of formal integration efforts, NCMA and Virginia MOCA, were the same sites that were most intentional about SEL-related staff training and community engagement. By contrast, SEL at the Intrepid Museum was more informally embedded in their programs, with the same informal approach was also true for their training. All three sites engage in evaluation and assessment for their SEL programs which have resulted in very positive feedback from program participants. So, while no two sites can be said to be integrating SEL the same way, all can point to evidence that they are doing it well. Unifying findings among all three study sites included their unanimous reference of CASEL, their

characterization of SEL as being an inherent part of their existing educational efforts and organizational culture, and an expressed interest in continuing their SEL efforts.

One surprising finding from interview data pointed towards evidence of museum silos, sometimes within the organization itself, but also field wide. While museum leaders referenced SEL as being present across many aspects of their work, they also cited examples of SEL being an intentional focus within certain programs and training but absent from or not yet formally acknowledged within others. Museum leaders who participated in this study referenced adapting school-based SEL resources for use in the museum setting, but did not identify museum-specific tools or resources, pointing to a potential need for those.

For a more systemic approach to SEL integration within each museum, SEL efforts could be broadened throughout the institution via more explicit program connections, staff training, and overall awareness. While many museums have incorporated SEL, there is a need to extend these organization-wide and to foster collaboration between institutions already engaged in SEL and those interested in the process. Additionally, developing museum-specific resources and tools to guide SEL integration are necessary to provide consistency across institutions.

Although CASEL's TOA aligns well with leader actions for SEL integration, variations in staffing structures, SEL experience, and institutional goal suggest the need for a more flexible and adaptable framework tailored to the museum context. Standardizing SEL integration, while maintaining flexibility could enhance consistency, improve partnerships and ensure alignment with educational initiatives. CASEL's TOA provides an excellent reference point, but museum-based SEL practitioners would be best served by a TOA that considers and reflects their educational context's unique characteristics and considerations, rather than applying a tool that was created with school-based settings in mind. A museum-specific TOA might include

references to ensuring SEL efforts are mission-aligned, for example, and delineate adult learning by audience (i.e. museum education staff; general museum staff; teachers engaging in professional development; adult museum visitors, etc.). A museum-specific TOA might also embed stakeholder collaboration in a way that CASEL's model does not, and could also address other museum-specific considerations such as funding language, inter-departmental communication, and evaluation efforts.

To address these museum-specific needs and create these resources, this study recommends establishing a Museums and SEL Community of Practice (COP). This COP would serve as a collaborative network for museum SEL practitioners and leaders while fostering partnerships with SEL researchers, school-based educational partners, and other community stakeholders. The COP would facilitate the exchange of knowledge resources, create and share museum-specific best-practices to support and inform SEL integration, and cultivate wider systemic integration within the museum field. By providing opportunities for collaboration, professional development and shared learning, this initiative would help strengthen museums as critical partners in SEL while ensuring equitable access to resources and expertise. While the COP itself might take many forms, its three main goals should mirror those presented below.

Action Plan: Create a Museums & SEL Community of Practice

This action plan calls for the creation of a Museums & SEL COP to support museum-based educators' SEL knowledge and skills. It aims to create a museum-to-museum network through which SEL-related expertise can be shared within the museum field. By engaging educational partners, researchers, and other community stakeholders through intentional and collaborative efforts this COP will ensure that museum-based SEL keeps pace with the evolution of school-based SEL, emerging research, and changing state and national policies. Through

collaboration, museum leaders can help build broader awareness of the role museums can—and do—play in systemic SEL, and they can create museum-specific resources to guide best practices in SEL integration within museum settings.

This action plan. uses the metaphor of a skybridge to illustrate collaboration across professional organizations. In building design, a skybridge is a walkway that connects two separate buildings, allowing safe movement between them, serving as an exchange of people between two otherwise separate buildings without exposing walkers to the elements or to the traffic below. Similarly, an SEL Skybridge facilitates knowledge sharing between museums and key stakeholders, creating connections while maintaining the unique identities of each participating group.
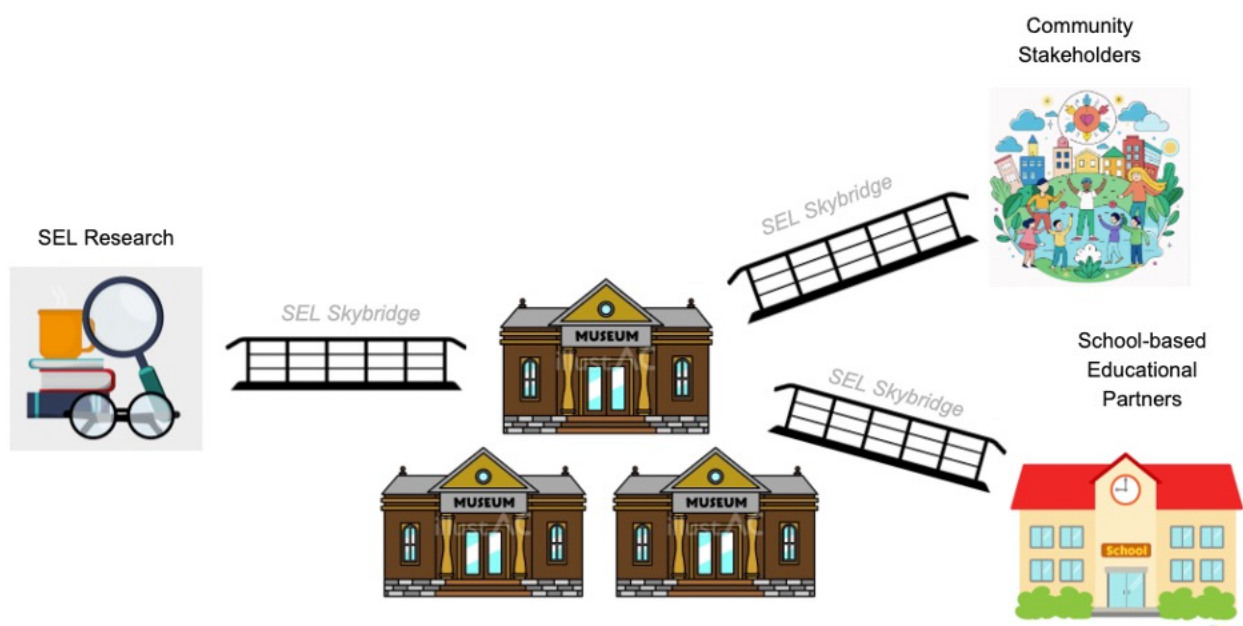

Figure 3: Museums & SEL: Community of Practice Skybridge Model for Systemic Integration

Fig. 3 is a visual representation of the multidirectional collaborative nature of this COP; at its center, museums engage with one another regarding their SEL experiences and resources. Contributing to those museum-centric efforts are several other preexisting groups, including SEL

researchers, school-based educational partners, and community stakeholders. Each group is its own educational context or practice-based community. Each understands and enacts SEL in its own way. But each group benefits from access to resources that may originate in another context.

SEL Skybridges connect each of these interest groups, indicating a topic-specific area of collaboration that each group has relevant experience and expertise in. For example, museums benefit from insights and data available from the SEL research community and likewise represent an SEL context that has yet to be thoroughly studied by that community. School-based educational partners might find value in partnering with museum-based educators on SEL training or curriculum development and might use the metaphorical SEL Skybridge for those purposes. Community stakeholders may present themselves as an audience for SEL-related programming, but also as a thought partner and resource. For example, imagine a museum presents an exhibit sharing the art and artifacts of a local population. Collaborating both behind the scenes and via public programming with members of that community would not only strengthen the content presented in those efforts, but also embody SEL-related skills such as developing positive relationships, practicing teamwork, recognizing strengths in others, and several additional aspects of the CASEL framework. Engaging in each of these partnership efforts while supporting mutually beneficial SEL-related goals would be in each group's self-interest, as well as for the greater good of the collective.

Through these multidirectional collaborative skybridge connections, knowledge, support, and resources flow in both directions, improving SEL outcomes and supporting the following three Museums & SEL COP goals:

Goal 1: Increase awareness regarding SEL and museums, both within the museum field and more broadly among school-based SEL partners and researchers.

To achieve this goal:

1. Conduct more museum-specific research, such as a national survey through the American Alliance of Museums or an independent study, to assess how many U.S.-based museums currently integrate SEL, in what ways, and to what extent. Additionally, research should explore museums' interest in SEL integration and their identified needs.

2. More formal SEL research studies that include museum-based participants and perspectives, as well as perspectives on museums as SEL partners from school and community-based stakeholders.

Goal 2: Create and share museum-specific resources to support and inform SEL integration.

To achieve this goal:

1. Develop a resource bank of tools and materials to aid museums in the four areas of CASEL's TOA, including:

   a. Building Foundational Support and Plan: Create SEL audit tools to help museum leaders identify their goals, existing connections, staff knowledge and skill level, and opportunities related to SEL. Provide guidance on grant language and up-to-date information on state and national policies, school curricula, and community interests.

   b. Strengthening Adult SEL Competencies and Capacities: Compile training materials that include standard school-based SEL staff development resources as well as examples of museum-based SEL programs, such as: NCMA's *Art and SEL* online course or the MET's *SEL Through Art* book of lesson plans, so that museum leaders can consider different formats and approaches for their SEL efforts. This resource

bank might also include resources that would be appropriate to use in staff training efforts, such as the MoMA's video *Art as a Tool for Social and Emotional Learning*, the impact report from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum's *Thinking Through Art: A Transformative Museum-School Partnership* (2024) report, Eppley's *Museums as Partners in PreK-we Social-Emotional Learning* (2021), and other museum-specific SEL resources as they evolve. Museum staff would engage with these resources during training and discuss their relevance to their museum's mission and goals.

c. Promoting SEL for and with Students: Curate a collection of relevant resources for systemic SEL integration, including an inventory of SEL-related frameworks beyond CASEL's, such as Harvard's EASEL Lab materials to help museums align with different educational models.

d. Reflecting on Data for Continuous Improvement: Provide adaptable assessment rubrics, including CASEL's evaluation tools and a resource bank of examples of assessments and evaluations being used by other museums would also be helpful for museums in the process of creating their own.

Goal 3: Cultivate wider systemic integration of SEL among museums through collaborative and multidirectional SEL Skybridges.

To achieve this goal:

1. Enhance museums-school collaboration and creating their SEL-related programs and curriculum. This could be achieved through quarterly meetings between museum leaders or education staff and local school or district-based leaders. Creating a teacher advisory group is another way for museums to stay connected with school-based educators. That

group can be focused on local efforts or expanded to include broader national and

international perspectives, depending on the need.

2. Create joint training opportunities that invite museum-based educators to grow and

   practice their SEL skills alongside school and community-based educators. Schools can

   invite museum staff to SEL training sessions, while museums can include educators in

   training on SEL-infused museum programs.

3. Increase cross-sector engagement by presenting at each other's conferences and

   professional organizations. This would allow museum leaders to stay informed about

   SEL integration and school-based policy, while also giving museums the opportunity to

   share their efforts with school-based educators and SEL researchers.

Conclusion

SEL has been a topic of interest within the education field for over three decades. Only

recently, however, have museum-based educators begun to be recognized within formal SEL

research. As interest in SEL integration grows within the museum field, much remains to be

learned about the role these institutions, and their educators, play in supporting SEL. The three

museums represented in this study are evidence that SEL efforts can take many different forms

in the museum setting and that there is no one path to correct or successful SEL integration.

Although this study's findings help illuminate this topic, further investigation will be needed to

better inform and understand these efforts on a broader scale. SEL-related efforts are certain to

evolve in both school and museum settings, and the future of SEL policy remains unknown. One

thing is certain: museums have the opportunity to play a vital role in that future. Understanding

museum-based educational leaders' perspectives and practices should be at the forefront of

expanding SEL research beyond school and classroom walls.

REFERENCES

Anderson, W. (Director). (2001). *The Royal Tenenbaums*. Touchstone Pictures.

Ateş, A., & Lane, J. F. (2019). Analysing school-museum relations to improve partnerships for learning: A case study. *Education & Science/Egitim vs Bilim, 45*(201).

Bailey, J., & Weiner, R. (2022). Interpreting social-emotional learning: How school leaders make sense of SEL skills for themselves and others. *School Leadership Review, 16(2), 4.*

Brackett, M. A., Bailey, C. S., Hoffmann, J. D., & Simmons, D. N. (2019). RULER: A theory-driven, systemic approach to social, emotional, and academic learning. *Educational Psychologist*, *54*(3), 144–161.

Brackett, M., Elbertson, N., & Rivers, S. (2015). Applying theory to the development of approaches to SEL. In J.A. Durlak, C.E. Domitrovich, R. Weissberg, & T.P. Gullotta (Eds), *Handbook of social emotional learning: Research and practice* (pp. 20-32). Guilford Press.

Casciano, R., Cherfas, L., & Jobson-Ahmed, L. (2019). Connecting arts integration to social-emotional learning among special education students. *Journal for Learning through the Arts: A Research Journal on Arts Integration in Schools and Communities*, *15*(1).

CASEL. (n.d.) *Community Partnerships—CASEL Schoolguide*. https://schoolguide.casel.org/focus-area-3/community-partnerships/

CASEL. (n.d.) *SEL policy at the state level.* https://casel.org/systemic-implementation/sel-policy-at-the-state-level/

CASEL. (2020). *SEL: What are the core competence areas and where are they promoted?*

Creswell & Creswell. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.

Crow, W., & Bowles, D. (2018). Empathy and analogy in museum education. *Journal of Museum Education*, *43*(4), 342–348.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Cook-Harvey, C. (2018). Educating the Whole Child: Improving School Climate to Support Student Success. *Learning Policy Institute.*

Denham, S. A. (2015). Assessment of SEL in educational contexts. In J.A. Durlak, C.E. Domitrovich, R. Weissberg, & T.P. Gullotta (Eds), *Handbook of social emotional learning: Research and practice* (pp. 285-300). Guilford Press.

DeWitt, J., & Storksdieck, M. (2008). A short review of school field trips: Key findings from the past and implications for the future. *Visitor Studies*, *11*(2), 181–197.

Durlak, J. A., Domitrovich, C. E., Weissberg, R., & Gullotta, T. P. (2015). *Handbook of social and emotional learning: Research and practice*. The Guilford Press.

Edgar, S. N., & Morrison, B. (2021). A vision for social emotional learning and arts education policy. *Arts Education Policy Review*, *122*(3), 145–150.

Elias, M. J., O'Brien, Mary Utne, & Weissberg, Roger P. (2006). Transformative leadership for social-emotional learning. *Principal Leadership*, *7.4*, 10–13.

Elias, M., Zins, J. E., Weissberg, R.P., Frey, K.S., Greenberg, M.T., Haynes, N.M., Kessler, R., Schwab-Stone, M.E., & Shriver, T.P. (1997). *Promoting social and emotional learning: Guidelines for educators*. ASCD.

Eppley, H. (2021). Museums as partners in PreK-12 social-emotional learning. *Journal of Museum Education*, *46*(4), 509–518.

Hancock, D.R. & Algozzine, B. (2017). *Doing case study research: A practical guide for beginning researchers*. Teachers College Press.

Hegstrom, D., ZumBahlen, K., & McGuire, S. (2024, February 23). Identity, choice, and emotion: New approaches to touring. *American Alliance of Museums*. https://www.aam-us.org/2024/02/23/identity-choice-and-emotion-new-approaches-to-touring/

Hein, G. E. (2004). John Dewey and museum education. *Curator: The Museum Journal*, *47*(4), 413–427.

Hitt, D. H., & Tucker, P. D. (2016). Systematic review of key leader practices found to influence student achievement: A unified framework. *Review of Educational Research*, *86*(2), 531–569.

Hughes, J. (Director). (1986). *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. Paramount Pictures.

Institute of Museum and Library Services. (n.d.). *Advanced* Search. https://www.imls.gov/grants

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. (2024, May). *A transformative museum-school partnership: Executive summary.* https://www.gardnermuseum.org

Jagers, R. J., Rivas-Drake, D., & Williams, B. (2019). Transformative social and emotional learning (SEL): Toward SEL in service of educational equity and excellence. *Educational Psychologist*, *54*(3), 162–184.

Jagers, R. J., Skoog-Hoffman, A., Barthelus, B., & Schlund, J. (2021). Transformative social and emotional learning. *American Educator*, *45*(2), 12.

Jennings, P.A. & Frank, J. L. (2015). Inservice preparation for educators. In J.A. Durlak, C.E. Domitrovich, R. Weissberg, & T.P. Gullotta (Eds), *Handbook of social emotional learning: Research and practice* (pp. 422-437). Guilford Press.

Kaspar, K. L., & Massey, S. L. (2022). Implementing social-emotional learning in the elementary classroom. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *51*(4), 641–650.

Kisida, B., Bowen, D. H., & Greene, J. P. (2016). Measuring critical thinking: Results from an art museum field trip experiment. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, *9*(sup1), 171–187.

Kisiel, J. (2005). Understanding elementary teacher motivations for science fieldtrips. *Science Education*, *89*(6), 936–955.

Konigsburg, E. L. (1967). *From the mixed-up files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*. Athenum Books for Young Readers.

Krantz, A. (2020, April 29). *Social and emotional learning is imperative and in museum educators' wheelhouse*. RK&A. https://rka-learnwithus.com/social-and-emotional-learning-is-imperative-and-in-museum-educators-wheelhouse/

Kraybill, A. (2014). Inside the black box: What happens on a one-time field trip? *Journal of Museum Education*, *39*(3), 302–311.

Langholtz, Jacqueline. (2024, February 19). *"SEL skybridges": Museums as partners in social and emotional learning*. CASEL. https://casel.org/blog/sel-skybridges-museums-as-partners-in-social-and-emotional-learning/

Luke, J. J., Brenkert, S., & Rivera, N. (2022). Preschoolers' social emotional learning in children's museums and community playgrounds. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, *20*(2), 229–241.

Maximos, C. (2020, October 22). *Social and emotional learning starts with the arts*. The Aspen Institute. https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/social-and-emotional-learning-starts-with-the-arts/

Merriam & Tisdell. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Metropolitan Museum of Art. (2022) *Social and emotional learning through art: Lessons for the classroom*. https://www.metmuseum.org/learn/educators/curriculum-resources/social-and-emotional-learning-through-art

Moisan, H. (2009). Partners in process: How museum educators and classroom teachers can create outstanding results. *Journal of Museum Education*, *34*(1), 23–40.

Monk, D. F. (2013). John Dewey and adult learning in museums. *Adult Learning*, *24*(2), 63–71.

Montalvo, M. (2019). The museum education department as training ground for scholar-educators. *Journal of Museum Education*, *44*(2), 210–217.

Murtie, G. M., Walls, J., Merriman, N., & Segerdahl, R. (2021). Into the classroom: Making museum education essential in school curriculum. In T. Young (Ed.), *Creating meaningful museum experiences for K-12 audiences: How to connect with teachers and engage students* (pp. 157-166). Rowman & Littlefield.

Museum Facts & Data. (2018, January 24). *American Alliance of Museums*. https://www.aam-us.org/programs/about-museums/museum-facts-data/

Raphael, L. (2024, January 18). *Art as a tool for Social and Emotional Learning*. Museum of Modern Art. https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/1019

Newman, J. Z. (2020). Supporting the out-of-school time workforce in fostering intentional social and emotional learning. *Journal of Youth Development*, *15*(1), 239–265.

Omasta, M., Graham, M., Milling, S. L., Murray, E., Jensen, A. P., & Siebert, J. J. (2021). Social emotional learning and the national core arts standards: A cross-disciplinary analysis of policy and practices. *Arts Education Policy Review*, *122*(3), 158–170.

Ovans, A. (2015, April 28). How emotional intelligence became a key leadership skill. *Harvard Business Review*. https://hbr.org/2015/04/how-emotional-intelligence-became-a-key-leadership-skill

Pascale, R., Sternin, J., & Sternin, M. (2010). The power of positive deviance: How unlikely innovators solve the world's toughest problems. Harvard Business Press.

Peak Experience Lab. (2019, July 8). *We need more than empathy: A call for social-emotional learning in museums*. http://www.peakexperiencelab.com/blog/2019/7/8/we-need-more-than-empathy-a-call-for-social-emotional-learning-in-museums

Project Zero. (n.d.). *About Project Zero.* https://pz.harvard.edu

Proulx, N., & Schulten, K. (2019, January 23). Empathy and resilience, responsibility and self-care: Resources for social and emotional learning. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/23/learning/empathy-and-resilience-responsibility-and-self-care-resources-for-social-and-emotional-learning-from-the-new-york-times.html

Rosenzweig, R. & Thelen, D. (1998). *The presence of the past: Popular uses of history in American life*. Columbia University Press.

Salinger, J. D. (1964). *The catcher in the rye*. Little, Brown and Company.

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

Schonert-Reichl, K. A. (2019). Advancements in the landscape of social and emotional learning and emerging topics on the horizon. *Educational Psychologist*, *54*(3), 222–232.

Shriver, T. P., & Weissberg, R. P. (2020). A response to constructive criticism of social and emotional learning. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *101*(7), 52–57.

Smithsonian Institution. (n.d.) *Visitor Stats*. https://www.si.edu/newsdesk/about/stats

Spillane, J. P., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. B. (2004). Towards a theory of leadership practice: A distributed perspective. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *36*(1), 3–34.

Straughn-Navarro, R., Martin-Hamon, A., & Walker, K. (2021). Sparking innovation in museum/K–12 programs through self-care and social–emotional learning. In T. Young (Ed.), *Creating meaningful museum experiences for K-12 audiences: How to connect with teachers and engage students* (pp. 211-220). Rowman & Littlefield.

Tishman, S. (2018). *Slow looking: The art and practice of learning through observation*. Routledge.

Trendswatch: Museums as Community Infrastructure. (2022). American Alliance of Museums.

Uppin, H., & Timoštšuk, I. (2019). "We'll be back by Christmas" – Developing historical empathy during a museum activity. *Journal of Museum Education*, *44*(3), 310–324.

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. (n.d.) *SEL at VMFA*. https://vmfa.museum/learn/resources/sel-at-vmfa/

Weissberg, R.P., Durlak, J.A., Domitrovich, C.E., & Gullotta, T.P. (2015). Social and emotional learning: Past, present, and future.

Yoder, N., Martinez-Black, T., Dermody, C., Godek, D., & Dusenbury, L. (2021). Systemic Social and Emotional Learning for States. Theory of Action. *Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning*.

Young, T. (2021). Unpacking the Field Trip. *Creating Meaningful Museum Experiences for K-12 Audiences: how to Connect with Teachers and Engage Students, 7*.

Zhao, Y. (2020). Another education war? The coming debates over social and emotional learning. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *101*(8), 42–48.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: IRB Initial Electronic Correspondence for Consent from Museum

Study Title: Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in Museums: Perspectives and Practices of Museum Leaders
IRB #: 6799

[Date]

Dear [Individual Name],

I am writing as a Doctoral Candidate at The University of Virginia to request the [insert name of] Museum's participation in a research study. This study will focus on the efforts of three US-based museums, including this one, to integrate Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) into their educational programming. In doing so, it aims to address a research gap around museums and SEL and inform future practice in this area.

I am specifically looking at how museum leaders understand SEL and the steps taken at their institution to integrate SEL into programming. This study is not an evaluation of SEL programs or an assessment of effectiveness. Rather, its goal is to compare the steps in museum-based SEL integration to documented school-based integration to see if and how those processes are alike or different. Additionally, since this is a multi-site comparative case study, information gathered from the three museum sites will also be compared to one another to find similarities and differences among the three sites' motivations and approach. In many ways, this study will shine a light on the efforts of this museum and its educational team to pioneer the way as a leader among US-based museums in SEL integration.

Thank you for considering participation in this study. This research has the opportunity to contribute in a truly meaningful way to the field of museum education, community partnerships, and school-based SEL efforts. Please let me know by responding to this email if provisional approval is granted for this request and if the [insert museum name] is willing to participate in this study. At that point, I would ask for your assistance in nominating an appropriate member of the museum's executive-level leadership team, such as the Director of Education or equivalent position, as well as 2-4 individuals instrumental in the program's management or delivery to represent the museum in a 45-60-minute focus-group format interview.

I am happy to answer any additional questions you may have. Thank you for your time.

Gratefully,

Jacqueline Langholtz, Doctoral Candidate
Education Leadership, Foundations & Policy, The University of Virginia
Telephone: 757-870-5877 / Email address: jcl7u@virginia.edu

For more information about this study, please contact:
Jacqueline Langholtz, Principal Investigator
The University of Virginia
405 Emmet Street S
Charlottesville, VA 22903
Telephone: 757-870-5877 / Email address: jcl7u@virginia.edu

Michelle M. Beavers, Ph.D., Faculty Sponsor
Coordinator, Administration & Supervision
Associate Professor, Administration & Supervision
School of Education, Leadership, Foundations and Policy
The University of Virginia
Ridley Hall 290
405 Emmet Street S
Charlottesville, VA 22903
Telephone: 804.677.8371 / Email address: mmb2sb@virginia.edu

Study Title: Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in Museums: Perspectives and Practices of Museum Leaders
IRB #: 6799

Appendix 2: IRB Individual Recruitment Email

Study Title: Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in Museums: Perspectives and Practices of Museum Leaders
IRB #: 6799

Subject line: Invitation to participate in Museums & SEL Doctoral Research Study (University of Virginia)

Content:
Dear [insert individual name] at [insert name] Museum,
I received your information from [insert individual name], who recommended that I contact you regarding a research study I am conducting through The University of Virginia regarding Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and museums. This study, #6799, has received IRB approval and the [insert name] Museum has granted permission for me to conduct research at the museum and involving members of its staff who wish to participate.

The purpose of this study is to explore how museum leaders view and understand (SEL) and the steps taken at their museum to integrate SEL into educational programming. Ultimately, it will address a research gap related to museums and SEL and help to inform both the museum field and the traditional school based SEL field about the efforts of museums, and their staff, in pioneering these efforts. Since the [insert name of museum] has publicly advertised its SEL-related programming, it presented itself as a potential case study for better understating SEL integration in the museum setting.

Participating in this study will involve joining one 60-minute focus group interview, to be conducted virtually over Zoom between January 10 and February 14, 2025, and an additional 15-30 minutes of administrative/email time. This study is currently enrolling individual participants who are currently employed by the participating museum sites who have experience related to the museum's SEL-related efforts. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary; there is no penalty for declining to participate and there is likewise no compensation for participating in this study.

A copy of this study's Informed Consent Agreement is attached to this email. All participants will be required to return a signed and completed Informed Consent Agreement via email prior to participating in the research study. Please look it over, if you're interested, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for considering this request and I look forward to speaking with you further if you wish to participate.
Sincerely,

Jacqueline Langholtz, Doctoral Candidate
The University of Virginia
Jcl7u@virginia.edu

For more information about this study, please contact:

Jacqueline Langholtz, Principal Investigator
The University of Virginia
405 Emmet Street S
Charlottesville, VA 22903
Telephone: 757-870-5877 / Email address: jcl7u@virginia.edu

Michelle M. Beavers, Ph.D., Faculty Sponsor
Coordinator, Administration & Supervision
Associate Professor, Administration & Supervision
School of Education, Leadership, Foundations and Policy
The University of Virginia
Ridley Hall 290
405 Emmet Street S
Charlottesville, VA 22903
Telephone: 804.677.8371 / Email address: mmb2sb@virginia.edu

Study Title: Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in Museums: Perspectives and Practices of Museum Leaders

Appendix 3: IRB Informed Consent Agreement for Individual Participants

Study Title: Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in Museums: Perspectives and Practices of Museum Leaders
IRB #: 6799

Please read this consent agreement carefully before participating in the study.

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of this study is to explore how museum leaders view and understand Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and the steps taken at their museum to integrate SEL into educational programming. Ultimately, it will address a research gap related to museums and SEL and help to inform both the museum field and the traditional school based SEL field about the efforts of museums, and their staff, in pioneering these efforts. The lessons learned from this study will be shared broadly, including via publication.

What you will do in the study: You will participate in one focus group consisting of 3-6 individuals whose roles were instrumental in leading SEL integration efforts at this museum. Focus group questions will pertain to the participants' understanding of SEL, motivations for integrating it into museum programming, and steps taken to do so.

The interview will take place over Zoom and will be recorded for transcription purposes. You may choose to keep your video turned off. The video recording will be deleted once a written transcription is complete. You have the right to revoke your individual participation at any time. You also have the right not to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable.

 You will be asked to collect and share documents that are connected with SEL integration efforts at your museum. This may include internal memos, meeting agendas, slideshows, training documents, or program descriptions. Please note, however, that these documents should not include any information about other people, including other study participants, even if redacted.

Time required: Participating in this study will require about 1-1.5 hours of your time. The focus group interview should take between 45 and 60 minutes, with an additional 15 to 30 minutes spent collecting and forwarding relevant documents related to the study.

Risks: There are no anticipated risks associated with participating in this study.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. Participation in the study will support a field-wide understanding of how museum leaders understand and approach SEL integration. The study may help us understand best practice in this area. The lessons learned may benefit other museum educators, museum leaders, and SEL leaders, broadly speaking.

Confidentiality: Because of the nature of the data and focus group format, I cannot guarantee your data will be confidential. Your individual identity will be replaced by a generic description corresponding to your role at this museum (i.e. Director of Education or Program Manager, etc.); your given name will not be used in any reporting of data. However, there is no claim of

confidentiality in this research study, as the museum's institutional name, as well as current program names, will be used. All interview recordings and collected documents will be stored in a secure workplace and destroyed five years after the study is completed.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no effect on your employment.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you decide to withdraw, any data you have shared will be deleted or redacted from the group interview transcript.

How to withdraw from the study: Participation is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from participating in this study at any time. If you want to withdraw during the focus group interview, you may stop contributing to the conversation, turn off your camera, or leave the group. For any questions regarding withdrawing from the study, you may contact Jacqueline Langholtz using the contact information below. There is no penalty for withdrawing.

Payment: You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

Using data beyond this study: The data you provide will not be used beyond this study. It will be retained securely by the researcher five years after the study is completed and then destroyed.

If you have questions about the study, contact:
Jacqueline Langholtz, Doctoral Candidate
The University of Virginia
405 Emmet Street S
Charlottesville, VA 22903
Telephone: 757-870-5877 / Email address: jcl7u@virginia.edu

Michelle M. Beavers, Ph.D.
Coordinator, Administration & Supervision
Associate Professor, Administration & Supervision
School of Education, Leadership, Foundations and Policy
The University of Virginia
Ridley Hall 290
405 Emmet Street S
Charlottesville, VA 22903
Telephone: 804.677.8371 / Email address: mmb2sb@virginia.edu

To obtain more information about the study, ask questions about the research procedures, express concerns about your participation, or report illness, injury or other problems, please contact:
Tonya R. Moon, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences
One Morton Dr Suite 400
University of Virginia, P.O. Box 800392 Charlottesville, VA 22908-0392

Telephone: (434) 924-5999
Email: irbsbshelp@virginia.edu
Website: www.virginia.edu/vpr/irb/sbs Website for Research Participants:
http://www.virginia.edu/vpr/participants/

Agreement: I agree to participate in the research study described above.

Print name:_____

Signature: _____ **Date**: _____

You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Appendix 4: Interview Protocol

Study Title: Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in Museums: Perspectives and Practices of Museum Leaders

IRB #: 6799

Date:	Zoom Focus Group Interview #:	Participating Site:
Roles of participating interview subjects: 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.		

Before starting Zoom recording,
1. Confirm that signed individual permissions are in hand for each study participant.

2. Once confirmed, read:

"Thank you all for agreeing to be interviewed today. As we have discussed, I am a longtime museum professional and currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Virginia. The information I gather here today will inform my research on Social Emotional Learning in museums. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Virginia, as well as by this museum's leadership. I will now provide all participants a copy of what I am about to read in the chat box so we can review it together:

This is a semi-structured interview, which means I'll be asking all interview participants the same basic information. You have the freedom to ask for clarification or skip questions as you may wish to. Feel free to ask me any questions, as well. This interview should last approximately 60 minutes. All individual names in this study will remain anonymous via the use of generic position titles. Reply to all prompts via direct message chat feature:

At this time, please change your Zoom "name" to reflect your current role, i.e. "Director of Education" or "Manager of Student Programs." You may substitute a comparable generic title if you prefer. This title will be used in lieu of your name. *(Wait for everyone to do this before proceeding.)*

As a reminder, this study has been sanctioned by this museum institution, whose leadership has provided written permission for you to participate in this interview as a representative of the museum. Please let me know if you have not yet seen that permission or wish to.

This interview is a focus group style, meaning we will all hear one another's answers. This format was selected because the nature of the work this study examines is collaborative. If you are uncomfortable with the focus group format, please let me know and other accommodations can be made. Everyone is welcome to answer all questions, or you may decide as a group who is best suited to answer certain questions. Questions may also be skipped or returned to.

I would like to record this interview so that I may accurately quote it in my paper. Do I have your permission to record this interview? *(Participants can give a visible/written/or verbal reply).* I will also be taking notes to aid my memory, if that's okay with you. Do I have your permission to take notes?" *(Participants can give a visible/written/or verbal reply).* **If granted permission, begin recording and proceed with interview.**

Expositional questions
1. Confirm roles and titles(s) of interviewee(s).

SEL program-related information
2. How does the [name of museum] currently integrate SEL? *If necessary, prompt with:*
   a. How are SEL-related programs delivered/what format do they take?
   b. Who is served by these programs?
   c. Who leads them?

Perspectives on SEL
3. What specific resources helped you gain that understanding of SEL as a concept? *Probe:* Please describe any formal training, professional development, or mentorship related to SEL.

4. What were the primary motivations for integrating SEL at this museum?

Practices for SEL integration
5. I want to talk a bit about how the team went about integrating SEL at this museum. As staff who were involved in the process, will you describe for me the approach and steps taken to lead SEL's integration and implementation? *If needed, probe with:*
   a. What had to happen before you launched/unveiled this program?
   b. What resources or people supported that process along the way?
   c. Did you face any challenges?

Reflecting on SEL integration

6. What type of feedback have you received about these programs? *Probes:*
    a. How have the [students/visitors/audiences] for these programs responded to them?
    b. Was there any form of review or assessment, or is one planned?

7. What do you view as the future of SEL and museum learning? *Probes:*
    a. What do museums and SEL offer one another?
    b. What impact might national politics and policy have on the future of museums and SEL, or on this site, specifically?

8. Is there anything else you'd like to share about SEL at this museum, or more broadly?

Before the Interview Concludes: As outlined in the recruitment and consent documents, this study involves artifact analysis. Do you have any internal documents (such as staff training notes, email, or memos) you can share that correspond with these descriptions of SEL programs and this museum's integration process?

Thank you so much for your time today and for participating in this study. I will leave you with my contact information in case you have any follow-up questions.

End Zoom Interview.

Appendix 5: Draft Codebook

Code	Description
LP / Leadership Perspective	Respondent's thoughts or perspectives relating to:
LP: Knowledge	SEL theory or frameworks, including but not limited to the CASEL Framework for Systemic SEL
LP: Motivations	Justification or reasons for the museum deciding to integrate SEL.
LP: Critiques	Challenges, concerns, or critiques of SEL or SEL integration in the museum setting
LP: Implications	Implications for future practice, including needs and opportunities within both the museum field and school-based applications of SEL.
TOA /Theory of Action	Practices for SEL integration relating to:
TOA1: Building Foundational Support and Plan	Advocacy work, allyship, resources consulted, strategic planning, and funding for beginning the integration process.
TOA2: Strengthening Adult SEL Competencies and Capacity	Staff training, resources consulted, and internal or external professional development.
TOA3: Promoting SEL for Students	Connections to onsite, offsite, or digital student learning impacts and outcomes.
TOA4: Reflecting on Data for Continuous Improvement	Formal and informal assessments or program evaluations, both internal and externally based.
TOA5: New Practice Area	Museum-specific integration practice not captured by CASEL's TOA for schools

Appendix 6: Revised Codebook

Note: "ML" means "Museum Leader"

Code Category: Identifying Staff Roles and SEL Programs	
Code	**Description**
Identifying Roles and Responsibilities	MLs identifying staff roles and responsibilities within the museum
Identifying SEL Programs	Descriptions of study site's SEL programs
Code Category: Non-TOA / Museum-Specific Perspectives	
Museum v School Context	ML perspectives highlighting the differences between educational environments found within museums and schools.
Mission-Aligned/Best Practices/Part of Culture	ML perspectives relating to the relationship between SEL and museums' educational missions, inherent relationship of SEL within existing best practices or organizational culture.
Museum Silos	ML references SEL happening in one aspect of museum programming but not another or talks about SEL in a focused and program-specific way, rather than broadly integrated.
Code Category: TOA 1 / Building Foundational Support & Planning	
Collaborating with Community-based Partners	MLs referencing collaborative efforts with school or community-based educational partners (non-museum) during early integration efforts.
Grants	Examples of grant-based planning language, including stated outcomes and SEL terms.
Motivation: Responding to Covid/Pandemic/Mental Health Needs	Community-based justification or reasons cited by museum leader for integrating SEL.
Motivation: Supporting Access/Equity/Inclusion/Empathy	MLs using one of these key terms (access, equity, inclusion, or empathy) when discussing SEL integration goals.
Motivation: Aligning with K-12 Terms	MLs referenced motivation for SEL integration as supporting school-based efforts or curriculum.
Code Category: TOA 2 / Strengthening Adult SEL Competencies and Capacities	
Adult Knowledge	MLs' existing SEL-related knowledge, including prior experience or training.
Related Frameworks or SEL-adjacent	MLs referencing related frameworks or SEL-adjacent terms.
Training	Examples of ML or museum staff training, resources consulted, and internal or external professional development.
Museum-to-Museum: Informing the Field	ML's perspectives on wider museum field knowledge, expertise, or training needs.
Code Category: TOA 3 / Promoting SEL for and With Students	
Student-based SEL	References to supporting student learning or to aligning resources and/or creating tools, policies and structures to support student-based SEL.
Code Category: TOA 4 / Reflecting on Data for Continuous Improvement	
Evaluation	Evidence of formal and informal assessments or program evaluations.