SEL for BC Teachers: Integrating SEL, Digital Technologies and the BC Curriculum

by

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We accept the Process Paper as conforming to the required standard.

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Abstract

Significant changes are occurring in society and with that comes inevitable change in the education system. These changes are centred around technological innovation and have altered the way in which we communicate with one another. The new BC Curriculum along with the BC Education Plan outline initiatives for students to utilize technology to empower their learning. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is also becoming part of the change we are witnessing with the implementation of the new curriculum. The introduction of Core Competencies has altered the way educators approach their practice. This paper addresses the question; ‘How can BC elementary school teachers integrate SEL strategies using the Personal and Social Core Competencies by engaging technology-based resources to support student success?’ A website, SEL for BC Teachers, was developed as a result. The website hosts a repository for digital tools (apps/games/online programs) that relate directly to the Personal and Social Core Competencies of the new BC Curriculum. It was intended to be a comprehensive resource for elementary school teachers seeking to teach SEL through the use of technology. The website hosts additional information relating to SEL, technology and the BC Curriculum. It was sent to a broad base of educators for review. The results of beta testing were very positive in nature demonstrating an increasing interest in the field of SEL and a demand for resources relating to the BC Curriculum. Collaboration and sharing of SEL and technology-based tools amongst educators in BC should be a consideration for further growth and development of SEL for BC Teachers.

Major Project url: http://selforbcteachers.weebly.com/

Keywords: Blended Learning, Core Competencies, Game Based Learning, Personal and Social Core Competencies, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), Social and Emotional Skills (SES), 21st Century Skills
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I would like to thank all of the family and friends who have provided support and encouragement while I worked through the OLTD/MEDL graduate programs. Thank you to my parents who instilled a work ethic in me that pushed me to engage in a project such as this. The power of determination and never giving up is a credit to them.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Critical Challenge Question

At a time when great change is occurring in both society and the education system, it is important to look critically at where these changes can be positively supported for long term student success. The ways in which students are being educated now will set them on a path for their future. The education system in British Columbia strives to develop 21st Century learners who are able to navigate the ever-changing world we find ourselves living in (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2015b). Currently, much of this change is digitally-focused and influenced to a large extent. As a result, the critical question which has driven this Major Project presents the challenge ‘How can BC elementary school teachers integrate SEL strategies using the Personal and Social Core Competencies by engaging technology-based resources to support student success?’

Purpose of the Major Project

Teachers often enter the field of education to make a difference in some way be it large or small in the lives of their students. They are passionate about learning and making a difference in the world through their students. I am no exception to this, in fact I have always cared a great deal when it comes to my students’ well-being, social preparedness and overall happiness. I view this as being an important step in the learning process and one necessary to fully reap the benefits of the education system. My philosophy of teaching is grounded in the ability to communicate with peers and students and gain a strong sense of trust and community in the classroom. As a result, this Major Project closely identifies with my personal beliefs as an educator.
It is becoming increasingly clear, that when Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is incorporated as a key focus, students benefit in a multitude of areas (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). In my personal practice, the foundations of SEL have always been at the forefront leading me to better comprehend the benefits of teaching with this insightful approach. I feel strongly about placing a focus on SEL and integrating it with current pedagogy. Times are changing in our world and education is among the many aspects of society that are being directly affected. Nothing is driving this change more so than technological innovation.

In recent decades, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) has been gaining interest as a means of increasing outcomes across a number of areas in the field of education. Studies have shown that the development of SEL has positive effects on self-regulation, self-awareness, relationship development, problem solving and academic success (Durlak et al., 2011). With this increased interest has come a growth in programs targeting SEL in schools; however, this is the 21st Century and digital resources should be a focus if we are truly preparing 21st Century learners for the future. It is difficult to ignore the fact that technology has become such a presence in society with many relying on it for communication and information retrieval. This project aimed to demonstrate how technology could enhance and support the effective delivery of SEL programming in elementary schools.

With the introduction of the BC Education Plan and the new BC Curriculum, this project satisfied goals of each by integrating SEL with digital tools in order to meet the requirements of three of the six Core Competencies. Coming from two very different places, SEL and digital technologies can be combined to deliver curriculum in ways that better meet the needs of 21st Century learners and support them in unique ways that were not previously considered common
practice. Due to vast and rapid changes occurring in our education system, it’s necessary to have resources to draw upon for information, support and communication. Without proper teacher training and development, a new program has little chance of sustainability and therefore the likelihood that students benefit from it decreases (Osher et al., 2016).

The Major Project was initiated to help better inform educators and parents about SEL and its importance within the education system, as well as provide a much-needed resource to support SEL integration into teacher practice. As is often the case with new initiatives, many programs have been introduced in schools, often with little prior information and research into whether the pedagogy is sound and in keeping with the educators’ philosophy is yet to be seen.

The website developed as the deliverable for this Major Project was intended as a repository for information regarding the specifics of SEL, a presentation of the research and the competencies involved to support the integration of SEL into the BC Curriculum. Furthermore, the main intention was to design a resource where educators could gain information and knowledge regarding how to use digital tools to support student learning when teaching SEL through the Core Competencies as introduced in the new BC Curriculum. It is meant for use in a brick and mortar or blended learning environment. The resources made available on this website could also assist parents who are seeking assistance and further information on the topic.

**Justification of the Major Project**

In recent years, our education system here in British Columbia has been taken in a new direction in response to the changing times and the needs that our students now face upon graduation. The New Horizon Report Preview (2017) suggested K-12 education is now placing more emphasis on deeper learning approaches that include critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration and self-directed learning. As a result, the introduction of the new BC Curriculum
places greater significance on the process of learning rather than the acquisition of knowledge and facts. Educators are now more focused on how students learn, problem solve and question the world they live in. “Pedagogical approaches that shift the dynamic from passive to active learning allow students to develop ideas themselves from new information and take control of how they engage with a subject” (New Horizon, 2017, p.4). In acquiring these skills, students will be more adaptable and more readily suited to function in an unknown future. Students who possess Social and Emotional Skills (SES), will be able to better navigate the changes offered by the new curriculum.

One of the most significant changes that comes from the new BC Curriculum is the introduction of Core Competencies. The Core Competencies are meant to be achieved through the integration of materials across subject areas. What is shockingly clear is that SEL has been noted as an all important aspect of the learning process, as its goals are seen embedded in three of the six Core Competencies identified. This simple fact highlights the need for more information on the topic complementing programs and tools that can effectively be utilized to ensure its successful implementation. SEL has been of interest to researchers and educators for many years; however, it is only recently that it has become something of a focus in mainstream education (Osher et al., 2016). Osher et al. suggest this is due to the definition of what school success has looked like in the past. It wasn’t until this definition changed to include non-cognitive skills that funding was considered as a priority for development in this area (Osher et al., 2016). Broadly defined, school success now incorporates elements such as student happiness, social and emotional skill development, and well-being in addition to academic performance (Winton, 2013).
Academic achievement has always been at the center of education systems. Society has often measured success against the results of academic testing and scores, but it is now becoming clearer that SES are pivotal in predicting students’ academic progress. Jones et al. (2015) state, “achievement is driven by intellectual ability as well as by the self-regulation, positive attitudes, motivation, and conscientiousness that are required to complete educational milestones (p.2283).” Many recent studies supported that teaching SEL in schools has more than just positive social and emotional effects, but also improves academic achievement levels with evidence of significant gains on achievement test scores (Payton et al., 2008). In order to effectively teach SEL and foster SES, teachers require skills and training to ensure that implementation is successful (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017). Taylor et al. state, “without quality implementation, the potential positive impact of SEL programming is reduced” (p.1168). Educators are in need of resources that aid in making these differences in their students’ futures.

By making SEL a priority in the curriculum the message that these are crucial skills has been clearly emphasized. In the past, SEL was often taught independently of other subjects and without the same commitment. According to Jones & Bouffard (2012), because SEL was not viewed as a core goal, lessons or time allocated to it were frequently skipped due to more pressing academic demands and requirements. SES must extend beyond the classroom as this is where these skills are so very needed for students to be successful citizens. Jones & Bouffard suggest, “even more than academic skills, they must develop in the context of daily life as social challenges and other teaching opportunities arise” (p.3). The tools made available through this Major Project encourage the integration of SEL throughout the curriculum, but also offer
resources that allow extension into students’ personal and home lives with tools that can be used independently and/or with family support.

To integrate SEL into the curriculum as a priority is useful; however, this could be made even more effective by utilizing emerging technologies that are important for our students’ futures. Supporting the use of these technologies will better allow them to connect with peers, and their communities (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2015b). The B.C. Education Plan has outlined the goal for students to learn the competencies through the use of effective emerging technologies both in school and in life (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2015a). It appears there is a lack of resources that complement both the shift towards the incorporation of SEL and the use of technology in education. Osher et al. (2016) suggest “computer-based programs are in no way typical of the prevalent school-based SEL approaches, and their efficacy needs to be further established” (p.659). Thus, the digital tools offered through the website created for this Major Project aimed to help fill this void.

**Brief Overview of Major Project**

The development of a comprehensive website titled *SEL for BC Teachers* (Appendix A) geared towards the needs of the BC elementary school teacher began in July of 2017. This website which served as the Major Project for this study, was created to provide a space where educators could gain access to much needed information surrounding SEL. Along with this information, it includes many aspects of the new BC Curriculum in combination with direct links to digital tools that would allow teachers to enhance the quality of the education that they are to provide in the 21st Century. In order to bring this objective to life, I used Weebly as a design platform. This Major Project was developed as a qualitative study, which is intended to grow and transform as time passes and trends shift.
My goal was to provide a space for digital programs and resources that target the three areas of the Personal and Social Core Competencies that would allow BC teachers to more easily integrate SEL in their classrooms. I sought to find existing online resources that have been tested, are effective and are varied in nature. Some areas of SEL have more digital resources available, whereas others have little evidence of inclusion or success to date. The goal was to provide resources that are comprehensive and target all of the social and emotional competencies within the BC Curriculum. Incorporated into the website were existing classroom programs as well as online and mobile programs such as apps or games. As a result, I expected to find technology-based resources, when combined with the correct implementation methods would aid in supporting student success in the area of SEL.

**SEL.** The website includes an area for teachers to better familiarize themselves with SEL and the positive benefits that come from its implementation. Upon landing on the homepage, one is given the option to delve into the SEL section of the website. Included within the SEL component of the site, is detailed information regarding the specifics of what SEL consists of, evidence based information to support the inclusion of SEL in the classroom, as well as links to resources and videos that provide further information which could be helpful to both teachers and parents in an effort to better educate themselves on the topic. The objective was to ensure that educators were fully informed prior to implementing a recommended tool in the hopes that increased education would better the chances of success.

**Core Competencies.** The secondary option when landing on the resources homepage, is to explore the BC Curriculum. There are three options to choose from. Each link takes the user to a page dedicated to one of the three identified Core Competencies as outlined in the new BC Curriculum that directly relate to SEL. These Core Competencies are Positive Personal and
Cultural Identity, Personal Awareness and Responsibility, and Social Responsibility. Within each of the Core Competencies’ specific webpage, is information outlining the expectations for students and how these competencies could be successfully met. The major goal of these aspects was to provide the user, most commonly the teacher, a repository for digital tools that complement each Core Competency.

Digital Tools. The tools made available on the Core Competency webpages vary in their purposes and are unique to each specific outcome. The digital tools that have been recommended, are divided into two sections; a) online programs b) app based mobile programs. Each tool comes with a summary, hardware and software required for use, as well as the specific facet of the competency that it aligns most closely with. Some of the tools made available on this site can be used as a complete program, whereas some can be used as supplemental activities within already existing programs being used in the classroom. This bank of resources was compiled to assist in making the integration of digital technology and SEL more accessible and effective in meeting the requirements of the new BC Curriculum.

Collaboration. In keeping with the unparalleled ability to communicate online, this Weebly site was designed as a collaborative tool in addition to a resource and information repository. When users visit the unique Core Competency pages of the website, they find an area where they are able to upload their own digital tool, unit or lesson plans that link specifically to that Core Competency. In doing so, the idea was to create a collaborative space where teachers could assist one another in more effectively meeting their students’ needs, and demonstrate how each tool could successfully be integrated into the current curriculum. In a time when things change so rapidly, it’s key to involve oneself in an initiative that encourages communication and sharing in the digital world.
Table 1. **Definition of Terms**

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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Blended Learning</td>
<td>Blended learning is an education program (formal or non-formal) that combines online digital media with traditional classroom methods. It requires the physical presence of both teacher and student, with some element of student control over time, place, path, or pace.</td>
<td><a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blended_learning">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blended_learning</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Competencies</td>
<td>Core Competencies are sets of intellectual, personal, and social and emotional proficiencies that all students need to develop in order to engage in deep learning and life-long learning.</td>
<td><a href="https://www.curriculum.gov.bc.ca/competencies">https://www.curriculum.gov.bc.ca/competencies</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game Based Learning</td>
<td>Game based learning (GBL) is a type of game play that has defined learning outcomes. Generally, game based learning is designed to balance subject matter with gameplay and the ability of the player to retain and apply said subject matter to the real world.</td>
<td><a href="http://edtechreview.in/dictionary/298-what-is-game-based-learning">http://edtechreview.in/dictionary/298-what-is-game-based-learning</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal and Social Core Competencies</td>
<td>Personal, and social and emotional proficiencies that all students need to develop in order to engage in deep learning and life-long learning. The competencies identified here are positive personal and cultural identity, personal awareness and responsibility and social responsibility.</td>
<td><a href="https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/competencies">https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/competencies</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)</td>
<td>Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.casel.org/what-is-sel/">http://www.casel.org/what-is-sel/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and Emotional Skills (SES)</td>
<td>Communicating effectively, ability to work cooperatively with others, emotional self-control and appropriate expression, empathy and perspective taking, optimism, humour, and self-awareness, ability to plan and set goals, solving problems and resolving conflict thoughtfully and non-violently, and bringing a reflective learning to learn approach to all domains of life.</td>
<td>(Elias &amp; Weissberg, 2000. p.187)</td>
</tr>
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21st Century Skills | Learning and innovation skills, digital literacy skills and career and life skills. Information and communication skills, thinking and problem solving skills and interpersonal and self-directional skills. | (Trilling & Fadel, 2009) (Naylor, n.d., p.10)

**Project Timeline**

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<td>Chapter 1 - Introduction</td>
<td>July 5 – August 31</td>
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<td>Major Project Build</td>
<td>July 25 – October 23</td>
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<td>Chapter 3 – Procedures and Methods</td>
<td>October 16 – November 3</td>
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<td>Chapter 4 – Field and Beta Testing</td>
<td>November 3 – November 15</td>
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<td>Chapter 5 – Final Recommendations and Conclusions</td>
<td>November 16 - December 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Process Paper to Supervisor for Final Review</td>
<td>December 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of Process Paper for sign off and final submission to VIU</td>
<td>December 5</td>
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The critical challenge question which has driven the course of this Major Project has stemmed from both personal experience as well as research based information. The literature that has informed the Major Project is explored in detail in the following chapter, and has proven to be continually changing and evolving throughout the development of this Process Paper.
Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Introduction

When a major shift occurs within a society in terms of communication, how information is accessed and the way in which daily life is lived, there must too be a shift within the education system. The education system is meant to produce students who are able to function as contributing members of society (Durlak et al., 2011). In their book, MacDonald and Hursh (2006) state, “training is a preparation for a future we know. Education prepares for a future we don’t know” (p.1). Educators and psychologists have become increasingly interested in the positive effects that Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) are proving to have on children’s development due to the rise in alarming behavior including school violence and bullying occurring on a global scale (Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Osher et al., 2016). Combine the rise of technology, the task of educating students in a time when the future is very unknown and a focus on SEL, and that will lead to the critical challenge question investigated in this review: ‘How can BC elementary school teachers integrate SEL strategies using the Personal and Social Core Competencies by engaging technology-based resources to support student success?’ In order to fully explore this question a number of areas must be examined. An in-depth analysis of the meaning of SEL, the importance of SEL, the impact of the new BC Curriculum, how it affects 21st Century learners, current practices and strategies for implementing SEL, as well as how the integration of SEL with technology can enhance learning.

What is SEL?

While having been recognized as important for over a century, SEL has only gained traction in the education system over the last two decades in consideration of the intentional development of our youth. In examining Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences, theorists
and educators began to realize the significance of SEL in relation to his theory (Coryn, Spybrook, Evergreen, & Blinkiewicz, 2009). The ability for multiple intelligences to interact in ways that affect one another, particularly in the realm of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, helped people to view SEL differently. Previously, deficits such as substance abuse, disruptive behaviour, aggression and more, were viewed as distractions rather than opportunities to promote one’s personal success (Coryn et al., 2009). In recent decades, SEL has been increasingly adopted due to interest from educators and psychologists in the positive effects that development of these non-cognitive skills can have on several domains.

Figure 1: Theory of Multiple Intelligences by Howard Gardner. (Intellectual Inspirations Websites, 2015).

Weissberg, Resnik, Payton, and O’Brien (2003) suggest those who possess the skills that are derived from SEL have the ability to effectively manage emotions, hold care and concern for others, maintain positive relationship, and are able to problem solve and manage challenges. SEL as described by the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), [as] “the process of developing the ability to recognize and manage emotions, develop caring and concern for others, make responsible decisions, establish positive relationships, and handle
challenging situations effectively” (2003, p.1). Further, CASEL defines a framework that consists of five main competencies: Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.

A set of commonly adopted Core Competencies combined with students’ abilities to acquire them, is believed to be an influencing factor for the development of a multitude of social and emotional skills contributing to student success (Durlak et al., 2011). In other words, the more students are exposed to and are able to understand and utilize the Core Competencies, the greater chance they will have for developing the social and emotional skills necessary for success. As reported by Osher et al. (2016) the goal of SEL takes two main points into consideration. First, SEL encourages supportive learning environments that are engaging, participatory and positive in nature. Second, they conclude that it serves to foster the development of the five competencies as described above by CASEL (2003). Osher et al. believe that the field of SEL is currently being positively and optimistically received, which enhances the push for educators to become more informed of its importance related to their teaching practices.

**Why is SEL Important?**

Educators and schools strive to graduate students who are meeting academic requirements set forth by each province or state, and also students that are good citizens who possess the skills to be positive functioning members of society. There is no doubt that intellectual ability drives achievement, but it is not alone in its efforts. Positive attitudes, motivation, and self-regulation all of which fall under SEL are partly responsible for academic achievement levels (Jones, Greenberg, and Crowley, 2015). Elias & Weissberg, (2000) suggest that “social and emotional skills are essential for building and sustaining learning relationships.
necessary for academic success, a safe and civilized classroom, and inclusive communities” (p.187). These non-cognitive, or ‘soft skills’ as they are sometimes referred to, have been proven through various studies to be indicative of future success across a number of indicators (Durlak et al., 2011). Many of these indicators such as self-regulation, self-awareness, relationship development and problem solving directly correlate with the Core Competencies as set forth in British Columbia’s new curriculum (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2017a). Additionally, Durlak et al. report to reductions in high risk behaviours in early adulthood as a result of SEL being integrated and taught in schools.

The implications of introducing SEL to students is only now becoming clear as the first longitudinal studies on the topic have just recently been completed and analysed (Durlak et al., 2011; D. E. Jones et al., 2015; Payton et al., 2008). To best prepare students for future success, it’s important that they are introduced to these skills at developmentally appropriate times in their lives (Osher et al., 2016). A recently completed study spanning two decades has revealed that when examining future outcomes in early adulthood such as education, employment, criminal activity, substance abuse and mental health, the analysis and development of prosocial skills at the kindergarten level may have strong significance (Jones et al., 2015). As teachers are working towards shaping 21st Century learners into well-rounded and contributing members of society, the ability to potentially influence these outcomes through SEL planning in the early years is significant. While Jones et al. (2015) state the results indicate “perceived early social competence at least serves as a marker for important long term outcomes” (p.2289) and is influential in affecting the [student’s] life course. Durlak et al. (2011) propose a differing approach. In contrast, they state, “it also appears that SEL programs are successful at all educational levels (elementary, middle, and high school) and in urban, suburban and rural
schools” (p.417). Based on these opposing opinions, results seem to indicate there are benefits to implementing and teaching SEL at all levels and ages.

Many studies evaluating the benefits of implementing SEL into programing for children often look at independent risk factors such as academic success, substance abuse or criminal activity later in life, but according to Durlak et al. (2011), few examine how successful implementation of SEL can affect or predict multiple outcomes. A large scale universal meta-analysis found that after implementing programing aiming at multiple outcomes, “students demonstrated enhanced SEL skills, attitudes, and positive social behaviours following intervention and also demonstrated fewer conduct problems and had lower levels of emotional distress” (CASEL, 2010, p.2). The implications of this study are great and point to the education system needing to focus their efforts on ensuring the teachers and schools are informed and prepared to integrate social and emotional skills into the curriculum. This meta-analysis examined 213 studies of which 52% were performed at the elementary school level, and concluded that academic improvement was also significantly improved as a result of SEL programming (Durlak et al., 2011). According to Payton et al. (2008) “SEL programming yielded an average gain on achievement test scores of 11 to 17 percentile points” (p.7). Gains such as this make it difficult to justify why SEL would not be a key component in any school curriculum.

Teachers and schools are often hesitant to reform their programs or adopt new ones due to the high costs associated with change, however a benefit cost analysis of improving SEL proves it to be well worth the investment. Belfield et al. (2015) report that benefits can considerably exceed the cost across numerous SEL intervention strategies. He furthers this by offering that the benefit cost ratio was reported as 11:1-- meaning a return of $11 for every $1
spent. Evidence shows that with proper implementation, the time and cost of integrating SEL programs in schools is worthwhile. Time and money that will aid in the development of students in British Columbia learning under the newly introduced curriculum.

**The Impact of the BC Curriculum on SEL**

As of the 2016-2017 school year, elementary schools across British Columbia have fully adopted the new BC Curriculum (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2017a). While it has been recognized that education in British Columbia is good, the introduction of the new BC Education Plan intends to make it great (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2015a). The basic skills related to academic development will be maintained; however, there is increased emphasis on skills that will enable students to become better prepared for their futures. Rather than teaching to specific prescribed learning outcomes, teachers are tasked with teaching the Core Competencies (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2017a) while still maintaining the fundamentals of the traditional core subjects. The main difference is that teachers need not be as concerned with students knowing the facts, but rather the ‘processes’ they experience to reach the facts.

The modernization of BC’s new curriculum (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2017b) recognizes “the way we interact with each other personally, socially and at work has changed forever” (para.1) and that we are living in a “technology rich world where communication is instant and information is immediately accessible” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2017b, para.1). To support this, the curriculum now includes essential learning to facilitate deeper learning in BC’s students. To accomplish this, the Core Competencies have been created and divided into three distinct categories. The one of importance in regards to the critical challenge questions, is the Personal and Social Responsibility Competency. Within this competency are three foci: *positive personal and cultural identity, personal awareness and*
responsibility, and social responsibility (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2017a). Each competency lists more specific goals such as self-regulation, personal relationships, personal awareness etc. A detailed definition provided by the (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2017a) explains:

Personal and social competency is the set of abilities that relate to students’ identity in the world, both as individuals and as members of their community and society. Personal and social competency encompasses the abilities students need to thrive as individuals, to understand and care about themselves and others, and to find and achieve their purposes in the world (para.4).

As previously mentioned, these Core Competencies are very much in agreement with the inclusion of the broader definition of SEL put forth by CASEL (2003).

**Effects of 21st Century Skills on SEL**

If there is one thing that most people would likely agree on it is that the 21st Century has brought about much change and change that occurs quite rapidly in many facets of life. Society is very different than it was just twenty years ago mostly due to the rise of technology and the transformation of people’s everyday communication styles. The Ministry of Education defines 21st Century skills as “the combination of specific skills, content knowledge, expertise, and literacies that are essential for today’s graduates” (n.d., p.1). Trilling & Fadel (2009), provide a more comprehensive outline of the skills deemed necessary for learning in the 21st Century: learning and innovation skills (critical thinking and problem solving, communication and collaboration, creativity and innovation), digital literacy skills (information, media and ICT literacy), and career and life skills (adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross cultural interaction, productivity and accountability, leadership and responsibility) (p.45-84). It is clear that with these changes come new goals, which also means that educators must shift their
practices to accommodate and foster the skills necessary to produce citizens who will succeed in the 21st Century.

Under the BC Education Plan, 21st Century skills will focus on competencies such as self-reliance, critical thinking, inquiry, problem solving, innovation, teamwork and collaboration, cross cultural understanding as well as technological literacy (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2015a). Within the BC Education Plan, five key elements are outlined including one titled ‘learning empowered by technology’ which closely ties to the critical challenge question that has been posed. Learners today are preparing for life in a digital world that past generations have not experienced. The skills needed for their future are unique. The BC Ministry of Education supporting the use of technology in schools that will prime learners to prosper in a digital world (2015) should come as no surprise. By promoting learning empowered by technology, “students will have more opportunity to develop competencies needed to use current and emerging technologies effectively, both in school and in life” (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2015, p.7).

Boyer and Crippen take a more critical approach to examining the new curriculum and Education Plan. With the rise in digital technologies and online learning, it’s crucial the use of technologies in education be purposeful and targeted. There are challenges associated with the implementation of technology in the new curriculum. Boyer and Crippin (2014) suggest:

recognizing how technology can be used in K-12 not simply as a word processing tool, glorified repository for games, or part of the classroom reward system for the completion of work, but rather as an extension of the interactive, discovery-based, and collaborative learning mode necessary to be a part of the global community (p.350).

**Current SEL Strategies and Practices**
It is important to examine current strategies and practices prior to recommending new approaches to assess what is known to be presently effective. SEL can be implemented as a universal program (offered to all students in a population), targeted to early intervention or as a treatment program. Prior to recent decades, SEL was most commonly used as an intervention strategy and in treatment programs, but more comprehensive and consistent research indicates that universal implementation programs have greater benefits.

Zins & Elias (2007) indicate that the economic benefits of SEL as a universal program far outweigh that of targeted early intervention or treatment programs because their ability to reach more students is much greater, leading to reduction of need for early intervention or targeted treatment programs later on. When considering cost per student across all implementation options, the cost is much higher for early intervention and treatment than it is for a universal program (Zins & Elias, 2007). In their meta-analysis of 213 studies, Durlak et. al. (2011) surprisingly revealed that they did not find positive results when examining a multicomponent program versus single component programs such as the classroom (p.418). They concluded that this might be due in part to the lack of effective implementation style when compared to the implementation in a single classroom, highlighting the importance of quality programming in the classroom (Durlak et al., 2011).

Understanding the importance of SEL in the development of children and youth is a great start, but possessing the knowledge and skills to implement effective programming is critical. Teachers must be properly educated to acquire competency towards SEL to create a more positive climate in their classrooms (Oberle, Domitrovich, Meyers, & Weissber, 2016). It is not enough for educators to just understand the steps to implementation, they require the skill to create an environment that fosters supportive relationships between all members of the classroom.
community as well as one that encourages involvement and success at multiple levels (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004; Taylor et al., 2017).

Jennings and Greenberg (2009) propose a model that highlights the importance of teachers’ social and emotional competence as it relates to the creation of a positive classroom climate furthering enhancement of outcomes for students’ SEL (p.494). According to Ecological Systems Theory, development is influenced by the settings youth are provided to learn in (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The classroom and school environment can work in a way that either helps shape student development or hinder it (Rivers, Brackett, Reyes, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2013). In addition to interpersonal and instructional supports, a caring environment is thought to aid in academic performance through heightened expectations for academic success, caring bonds between student and teacher, proactive and engaging classroom learning and teaching techniques, as well as safe environments (Durlak et al., 2011).

In addition to ensuring that SEL programs are developmentally and culturally appropriate, studies indicate that evidence based systemic programming following an implementation plan known as SAFE (Durlak et al., 2011), have higher rates of overall success. As explained by Durlak et al., SAFE was created to represent: Sequenced, Active, Focus, and Explicit. To add, Jones & Bouffard (2012), reveal four principles of SEL development they feel could assist in creating greater effectiveness with a schoolwide approach. 1) Thought should be given to continuity to allow the skills to be followed through on a consistent basis 2) Social, emotional and academic skills are not uniquely different, but rather rely on and affect one another 3) Social situations such as school are the very environments that social skills develop in. 4) Schools and classrooms are interdependent and thus what occurs in one can have effects on
the other. To further this, one must remember that technology now plays a large role in the personal and social identities of students and should be factored into planning.

**Using Technology to Enhance the Delivery of Social and Emotional Learning Skills**

There is a push to teach students 21st Century skills (Trilling & Fadel, 2009) to ensure they are prepared for a future that has yet to be determined. Combine this with the key component ‘empowering learning through technology’ in the BC education plan (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2015a) and the introduction of the personal and social responsibility Core Competencies, and it should be expected that the next step would be to integrate the SEL related Core Competencies with technology to facilitate the development of 21st Century citizens. Besides being a means for communication and socializing, Naylor (n.d.) agrees that technology is “increasingly a means for empowering students” (p.8).

**Game Based Learning.** The integration of SEL and technology has already begun with the development of virtual role playing programs and Game Based Learning (GBL), but according to Osher (2016) it has yet to be determined if these types of programs are effective. GBL might seem an unusual choice of platform given that SEL typically requires social interaction of sorts; however the digital based programs provide safe arenas for navigating experiences of self and others and reflecting upon various thoughts, feelings and attitudes (Osher et al., 2016). Enz et al. (2007) add to this in their study of a virtual role playing program called FEARNOT! that focuses on bullying. The technology in the program allows for students to interact with victimized characters and explore various forms of bullying while remaining in a safe environment (Enz et al., 2007). Enz et al. indicate that interactive role playing is one example of how technology can effectively be used to address sensitive social issues in the classroom. Results from the evaluation of FEARNOT! revealed that students were in fact able to
empathize with the victimized characters that they interacted with virtually (Enz et al., 2007). Additionally, Osher et al. explain that some programs such as Zoo U include social skills assessment tools. The ability for teachers to gather data on student’s SEL levels could potentially help them to target more specific issues and offer intervention when deemed necessary.

Craig, Brown, Upright, and DeRosier (2016) discuss how emerging technologies such as virtual GBL are able to more broadly deliver SEL programming to students. They introduce four benefits of integrating SEL though technology: 1) They believe there is greater cost efficiency, flexibility with regards to scheduling and it offers enhanced opportunities for students to practice 2) Games are able to eliminate human error upon implementation, which allows programs to maintain fidelity 3) Children’s interest in technology is leveraged to provide a more engaging and motivating platform for learning SEL skills 4) The use of technology provides an easy and effective way to collect and analyse data related to student performance and engagement. To further add to their argument, Craig et al. (2016) claim:

Evidence suggests adaptive games can be an effective route to improving prosocial knowledge and behavior, including awareness of how to cope with bullies and the respectful treatment of friends, as well as greater self-control and appropriate timing when engaging with peers (p.960).

**Conclusion**

It is clear that SEL is necessary for children’s holistic development and is directly related to academic success (Durlak et al., 2011). Before students are able to fully engage and perform academically, they must possess the appropriate social and emotional skills necessary to enhance and encourage learning. To ensure students obtain these skills and are able to apply them to real life situations, implementation of effective programing is vital. Durlak et al. stress that systemic
evidence based programming and implementation prove to be the most effective way to teach SEL in schools. This method applies consistency and maintains higher fidelity with delivery. With changing times, there is no longer the option of including technology in the classroom, it is now essential. This is especially important when considering the introduction of the New BC Curriculum (2017), and BC Education Plan (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2015a), which incorporate the development of students’ digital literacy with the Core Competencies. If our schools want to graduate true 21st Century learners and citizens, SEL must be integrated through the use of technology. Where information is lacking and opportunity awaits, the answer might be found in the development of effective technology-based SEL programs that can be integrated universally. As evidenced in this Literature Review, the process has begun but there is much work to be done before SEL strategies can be fully implemented to support student and societal success.
Chapter 3 – Procedures and Methods

Upon completion of the post graduate Online Learning and Teaching Diploma (OLTD) program from Vancouver Island University (VIU) in June of 2017, I immediately commenced work on the Master of Educational Leadership (MEDL) Major Project and Process Paper. The idea behind this project developed over the course of my time in OLTD, and aimed to answer the question: ‘How can BC elementary school teachers integrate SEL strategies using the Personal and Social Core Competencies by engaging technology-based resources to support student success?’

In OLTD 501, we were tasked with posing an inquiry question that would guide our studies and form the basis of our MEDL work if we chose to pursue that route. When I initially began my studies, I immediately knew I would explore ways in which blended learning could be effectively used in the elementary school classroom in some manner. Over time as I gained more knowledge and had greater opportunity to explore varying areas of need in the education system, I came to realize my passion was closely linked to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). The foundation of my Major Project combines this topic with digital tools and relates them directly to the new BC Curriculum.

The new BC Curriculum became a focus for the Major Project as it had become evident over the course of my time in OLTD that educators in BC were lacking resources that connected directly to the new curriculum. The curriculum was gradually rolled out during my time in OLTD, so it seemed a natural fit to create a resource local colleagues could benefit from while also addressing something I viewed as crucial to our students’ social, emotional and academic development.

Major Project Design
After careful consideration of all factors, I elected to create a website presenting the important, useful and relevant information I had compiled over time. The development of *SEL for BC Teachers* was set in motion once the decision was made.

**Platform.** When deciding on a platform to present the information being gathered to aid in answering the critical challenge question posed, a number of aspects of design were taken into account. Accessibility became a primary consideration when determining which platform would be best able to reach the greatest number of the targeted individuals as possible. Originally, thought was put into developing an app that would allow educators access to digital tools and technologies that help integrate SEL with the new BC Curriculum. While this would have been a valuable resource, after much thought it was decided that a website would be far more beneficial to a larger audience. Not only can it be accessed on a mobile device, but it can also be accessed and shared from any laptop or desktop connected to the web.

Mobile devices are steadily becoming the norm with many people having access to one, however it’s not safe to assume that it is a majority at this point. According to Kemp (2016), global web traffic from laptops and desktops still exceeds that of mobile devices. Additionally, while there were many valuable mobile SEL resources to share, the number of worthwhile online resources that do in fact require a computer to access could not be ignored or omitted from the goal of this Major Project. A selection of very useful mobile apps has been included along with many online programs. Overall, the decision to create a website rather than an app, has enabled the creation of a much more comprehensive and usable resource for SEL that presents both online, cloud based and mobile learning tools and resources. A vast selection of apps is encompassed as part of the resource package presented on the website.
The website titled *SEL For BC Teachers*, was created using Weebly for Education. I researched and started with a google site; however, I quickly returned to Weebly for Education due to a greater familiarity and comfort level with the program. I was happy with the themes and templates provided and felt proficient enough using the Weebly editor to know it would not deter me from designing and developing my resource.

I initiated the development of *SEL for BC Teachers* keeping in mind the principles of web design as described by Luenendonk (2015). He describes eight principles that web designers should take into account when developing a site. These principles are believed to help facilitate not only how the website looks, but also how it works (2015). The eight principles are as follows:

1. Highly Intuitive Structure
2. Visual Hierarchy
3. Accessibility
4. Hick’s Law
5. Fitt’s Law
6. Communication and Content
7. White Space and Simple Design
8. Regular Testing

**Navigation.** A successful website should possess simple and highly intuitive navigation (Luenendonk, 2015). The less time a user spends searching for what is needed will translate to a more user-friendly experience. Because *SEL for BC Teachers* has many headings and important sections, I attempted to minimize the number of clicks required to reach what I deemed the most important destinations on the website. For example, the section providing details on the three
Core Competencies relating to SEL (Positive Personal and Cultural Identity, Personal and Social Awareness and Social Responsibility), has both direct links via a visual on the home page as well as a link labelled Core Competencies in the navigation bar along the top. It is hoped that this style of navigation will enable all types of learners to view that section with ease and recognize its significance. I felt it was also necessary to include links on each page that allow users to return to the welcome page at any time thus, eliminating the search for new pages and/or links.

When creating a website where links to files, sub-pages and external websites are included, one must consider how these pages should be effectively linked. In the case of SEL for BC Teachers, I chose to link any standard pages within the website as internal. In opposition to this, I opted to link to any files and/or outside webpages as external links opening a new window. I followed this strategy as I felt that when researching, people often keep several links open to refer back to for additional information or comparison. Since this is a resource based website one might assume that users might operate this way when visiting. Each link provided on this website is a simple one click to the source. This easy navigability ensures that my design meets the standard principles of web design as indicated by Luenendonk (2015).

**Visual Design.** Not only does one have to take into consideration the navigation in terms of links and toolbars, but also the visual layout and appearance of the website. During my Major Project build, I took this into great consideration. I sought to create a site free from clutter, clean and simple, as well as designed in such a way that users would intuitively recognize based on physical appearance, which areas were of greatest importance. As illustrated on my welcome page, I have created a visual hierarchy that transports users to the section of the website containing digital tools to support SEL integration into the BC Curriculum through the Core
Competencies. This is the main resource of this Major Project and where I want to ensure ease of access.

The accessibility of this website in terms of colour, images and typeface, closely align with the accessibility principle of web design (Luenendonk, 2015). Throughout the site, the typeface alternates between three different fonts with consistency. The colours were chosen purposefully to create the clean and consistent look. With some variation in shade, the site remains constant on each page. Images are used in a very purposeful way matching the intent of the title and/or source it links to. Since images capture the attention of users, what better way to promote online tools than to link to the resources with a photo from the actual app or webpage. The inclusion of visuals as well as text works to accommodate a variety of learning styles. The design was carefully thought out to ascertain an ease when informing oneself on SEL.

**Major Project Development**

While MEDL 680 did not officially begin until July of 2017, the development of this Major Project was already well under way. During the final Spring semester of OLTD, I had discovered and confirmed that I would indeed move forward with integrating SEL with blended learning. OLTD 509 *Emergent Environments*, presented a great deal of choice in which I found myself continually returning to analyze SEL related topics. Immediately after the completion of OLTD 509, I commenced my studies in OLTD 508 *Mobile Learning and Gaming*, where the development of this Major Project officially began. I opted to complete an inquiry project on integrating SEL into the classroom using mobile technologies.

It was at this time that the bulk of the apps found on *SEL for BC Teachers* were discovered. I searched for mobile apps relating in some way to the new BC Curriculum. What I found was a significant variety of resources seemingly of great value at relatively low costs. I
independently investigated the apps and sought out online reviews and articles that made mention of them. Common Sense Media (www.commonsense.org) provided many thorough reviews, which aided in the selection of SEL apps to include in this resource. During this process, select apps appeared to be rated poorly or not updated at which point the decision to omit them from the resource package was made. At this stage in the process I had a solid direction in which I was headed, but it required narrowing my focus to become more specific. I questioned whether mobile apps were sufficient or whether additional resources and information should be included.

At the completion of OLTD in June of 2017, I came to realize the resource package I had planned to create would require more than simply mobile apps. I began to search for online programs which educators could use in the classroom or as supplemental home activities. These applications included animations, games, online interactive lessons and comprehensive online programs. The inclusion of web based resources linking to the Core Competencies enhanced the website and made for a more comprehensive SEL resource aimed to specifically assist BC educators.

**Core Competencies.** *SEL for BC Teachers* is intended to be an easy to use resource for BC teachers, therefore the content within the website is linked directly to the new BC Curriculum. As part of this new curriculum, educators are expected to teach and integrate six Core Competencies throughout the subjects they teach (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2017a). Exactly three of the Core Competencies (*Positive Personal and Cultural Identity, Personal Awareness and Responsibility and Social Responsibility*) relate directly to SEL, and were included in the website. Within each Core Competency, are facets of that specific competency that teachers are expected to teach.
Users of SEL for BC Teachers will find a direct link from the welcome page to each of the three SEL related Core Competencies. This link provides the user with detailed information regarding the chosen Core Competency as well as links to both apps and websites that correlate with the requirements of that Core Competency. This particular section of the website was the driving force for this Major Project. It contains a multitude of useful digitally based resources relevant to the new BC Curriculum.

**Digital Tools.** The objective of the apps and websites presented in the ‘*A Guide to Integrating SEL into the Curriculum Using Digital Tools*’ section of *SEL for BC Teachers* vary. Some are meant to be used independently as needed, whereas others are offered as comprehensive programs. Regardless of the intent of each digital tool, they were listed on this site with the purpose of easily integrating in the classroom to meet the requirements of the Core Competencies and the new BC Curriculum (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2017b). When a user examines a digital tool, they will find which Core Competency it aligns with and the specific facet within the Core Competency it relates to. Also found here is the targeted age group, platform needed to utilize the tool, cost to the user and a summary of the program. Each digital tool is represented by an image icon that links to the external webpage or the iTunes and/or Google Play store where it is available for purchase or download. The objective was to have teachers integrate SEL through the use of digital technologies as seamlessly as possible.

**Selection of Resources.** The internet hosts a vast number of resources, so it’s imperative they are examined with a critical eye. It was important in my process to search for reviews and critiques of each tool to ensure its credibility and effectiveness. When selecting an app, website or game to include in the ‘*A Guide to Integrating SEL into the Curriculum Using Digital Tools*’ section of the website I investigated at the following:
1. **Target Age**: the resource is intended for elementary school teachers, however; I’ve included some resources at the upper intermediate/middle school level as target age ranges can often be subjective. I aimed to find resources suitable to all levels of elementary school students.

2. **Accessibility**: Can the resources be used on iPhone, iPad, android, Chromebook or other mobile tools that are commonly used in BC Public Schools?

3. **Core Competency**: How closely do the resources align with the BC Core Competencies?

    Some resources were really fantastic, but did not necessarily align with the new BC Curriculum.

**Research and Additional Information.** SEL is a complex topic and one of significance in our society. Simply providing a resource bank containing digital tools is not sufficient. One must develop a complete understanding of what SEL is, the reasons for teaching it and the benefits of integrating it into the classroom. For these reasons, *SEL for BC Teachers* is much more than just a repository for digital tools relating to SEL.

Included in this website is information and research that helped guide me in developing this resource and companion Process Paper. Studies proving the benefits of SEL as well as convincing research based information regarding why SEL should be integrated with technology are made available to the user under the ‘What is SEL?’ tab. I believe in the importance of this topic so much that I chose for it not to solely involve digital technology. I opted to create a ‘Resources’ tab on the website that hosts a large number of videos, articles, free online lesson plans and SEL programs that might not necessarily be digital in nature. The most important goal is to have all students receiving quality instruction in some form around SEL. With greater adoption of SEL will come more significant and widespread positive results.
**Collaboration.** The internet promotes communication, and *SEL for BC Teachers* takes advantage of this aspect by including a section for teacher collaboration. Within each Core Competency’s individual webpage is an area encouraging educators to upload and share unit or lesson plans integrating SEL, technology and the Core Competency. Over time, the sharing of resources between BC teachers will hopefully lead to an even more dynamic resource to aid the integration of SEL in the classroom.

**Delivery and Implementation of Major Project**

*SEL for BC Teachers* was completed on October 23, 2017. This Major Project is a resource designed for elementary educators in British Columbia, therefore the audience is a rather broad one. Upon completion of the website, it was required that colleagues and/or other informed educators review the resource and provide educated feedback. A request for feedback was sent on October 24, 2017.

Rather than sending the website to specific educators with a specialization for detailed review, the website was sent out to a broader audience for general feedback. The request for feedback was presented in an email. The OLTD and MEDL graduate communities were given the opportunity to review and provide feedback regarding the resource as were some VIU undergraduate education students. In addition, I reached out to some trusted elementary school colleagues, including several with specific training in online learning. Those who accepted the request to provide anonymous feedback had the opportunity to assess the website’s Navigation, Design and Content. A new curriculum poses numerous challenges to educators, so the hope is that this resource appeals to many in the province and can be used as a primary resource for their SEL needs moving forward. The feedback which will be discussed in the following chapter, will be used to critically reflect upon where changes could be made to further improve the resource.
Chapter 4 – Field/Beta Testing and Findings

To aid in answering the critical challenge question, ‘How can BC elementary school teachers integrate SEL strategies using the Personal and Social Core Competencies by engaging technology-based resources to support student success?’ the SEL for BC Teachers website was developed. This website was the basis of the Major Project that accompanies this Process Paper.

Beta Testing – Methods and Processes

A request for review of SEL for BC Teachers website was sent out to potential reviewers between October 24, 2017 and November 6, 2017. The request was sent via email (Appendix B) to both past and present students of the OLTD and MEDL graduate programs. To broaden the scope of review, it was also sent to some of VIU’s undergraduate Education students. Additionally, I sent the request for review to some select and trusted elementary school colleagues, some of which have training in online learning. Because the resource I created is intended to reach a very broad audience, I felt it most beneficial to survey a broad range of reviewers who could provide their varying perspectives.

Google Forms was the chosen method collecting reviewer’s feedback of SEL for BC Teachers (Appendix C). Google Forms enabled the creation of a questionnaire that utilised several different styles of questioning. I was able to use a rating scale, ‘yes’ or ‘no’ questions as well short and long written answer questions. The differing styles were selected to provide a more comprehensive picture of each reviewer’s feedback, leading to a better understanding of why a rating of ‘4’ or ‘5’ was chosen versus a rating of ‘3’. Secondly, Google Forms allows its users to provide feedback anonymously, which was required for the beta-testing of this Major Project. At no point in time did reviewers feel as though their comments would be viewed biasedly or judged since the identity of each reviewer could not be revealed. As part of the
MEDL graduate program, Ethical Review was not required for the completion of this Major Project.

The Google Form was created and titled *SEL for BC Teachers Resource Feedback*. For ease of use, this form was embedded into the *SEL for BC Teachers* website for reviewers to easily access and complete as they explored and reviewed the site. Reviewers were able to comment and rate the different components of the website directly from the form provided under the *MEDL Feedback* link in the toolbar. This made for a convenient and hassle free experience and one I hoped would encourage potential reviewers to participate in providing valuable feedback. This also meant only one link to the website was sent to participants eliminating unnecessary steps and/or confusion.

The Google Form focused on three main components: Navigation, Design and Content. This resource is a digital tool; therefore, it is very important that users are able to efficiently navigate the site and recognize its main purpose. Questions regarding navigation centered around intuitiveness and ease of use. Design questions focused on the physical design of the website and included both a scaled rating (1-5) and written feedback component. I was hoping to receive feedback regarding the effectiveness of the physical appearance and whether the chosen design would lend itself well to its educational purpose. Lastly, the website content was of particular importance to me. The purpose of the Major Project was to provide a valuable and usable resource for BC teachers, thus the need for feedback from teachers on their perceived usefulness of the website’s content. Not only was I looking for whether the content itself was thought to be useful, but also whether it aligned well with the new BC Curriculum and if teachers could envision themselves using the digital tools presented. I viewed this as one of the most important
components of the review as it would ultimately be a driving force behind users’ decision to revisit the site or not.

At the conclusion of the beta testing period, I was pleased with having received feedback from 17 reviewers from many educational backgrounds. The feedback varied due to the broad range of reviewers used; however, the comments and feedback were appreciated and definitely assisted in improving this resource.

**Findings of Beta Testing**

Upon completion of *SEL for BC Teachers*, I was hopeful the resource created would be positively received by reviewers and viewed as a valuable and usable tool. Of the 17 reviewers who provided valued feedback, each users’ experience with online learning was quite distinct. Overall the responses were very positive in nature. The three main areas of focus for feedback on the Google Form (navigation, design and content) are detailed following.

**Navigation.** I expected that users of *SEL for BC Teachers* would find it easy to navigate and clearly understand key areas of importance without a great deal of difficulty. The majority of reviewers reported the site was indeed easy to use and very intuitive in nature with one reviewer stating, “logical placing of buttons and sequencing of pages” and another claiming, “the navigation is intuitive and logical in presentation of content.” Of the 17 reviewers, 12 rated the navigation as a ‘5’ (easy to use and very intuitive), 4 rated it as a ‘4’ and 1 rated it as ‘3’. One reviewer reported:

I found the whole site to be very easy to use. I especially liked the homepage and the links at the bottom taking me to resources straight off the bat. Similarly, I loved the research page where the buttons took me to different research with ease. Very intuitive and easy!
Another reviewer echoed a similar opinion stating, “There is a natural and intuitive feel to the navigation of this site. As soon as I scanned the headings, I knew exactly where to go for each item that came to mind.” Remarks such as these were noted in most of the reviews leading me to believe I had accomplished what I had intended in terms of an easy to use and intuitive website for teachers.

While most comments were quite positive, some reviewers provided observations regarding areas they found somewhat less intuitive. A common area of confusion seemed to surround the ‘Resources’ section of the website. The main purpose of this website was to provide an area for teachers to access digital tools that connected directly to the BC Core Competencies. In addition, I provided a separate section that housed a varied selection of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) resources not necessarily digital in nature. It is my understanding that some reviewers were confused between the two areas, perhaps not comprehending that some were digital tools and others not. One such reviewer commented, “It wasn’t immediately clear if this was a repository or program. I think I was a little distracted by all the content. The directions at the bottom clarified but maybe re-consider placement.” Based on some of these reviews, I was able to alter some placement of buttons and add more descriptive information in the headings that helped to clarify each page’s purpose. Further discussion on the recommendations provided have been incorporated into chapter 5 of this Process Paper.

**Design.** When designing the physical layout and appearance of my website, I tended to choose aspects of design that incorporated best practice in terms of instructional design. I wanted a design that was simple and accessible to all. I took into account many of the 8 Principles of Web Design as stated by Luenendonk (2015). I wanted the physical appearance to promote and highlight the key areas of the site that were meant to be most important. The Google Form results
indicated that the physical design is very subjective and most individuals have a very personal opinion of what constitutes an appealing or unappealing website. While the feedback I received was very insightful, I found many of the comments contradicted one another creating a somewhat confusing message. Comments such as, “the colour palate is soothing” and “my first impression of this website was the sleek design. The modern feel and colour choice are a reflection of how this tool represents the most current and up-to-date research in this area of study” to other comments to the contrary such as “I think that you have a very nice site as is, but could “brighten” it up a bit” and “I found the visual style to be kind of bland.” The contradictory nature of these comments speaks to individuality and the reality that finding a specific style that will successfully please all users is quite a challenge.

Aside from whether respondents appreciated the colour scheme, I was concerned with whether the design was a distraction to the overall goal of the website or whether it complemented it. It seems the majority of those who answered felt the design was complementary to the website’s content and topic. Of the 17 respondents, 7 rated the design as a ‘5’ (Design is aesthetically pleasing and complements the content), 8 rated it as a ‘4’ and 2 rated it as a ‘3’. \textit{SEL for BC Teachers} has been designed in a very visual way with icon links and embedded websites and videos throughout. Again, the comments were positive overall with a tendency to be somewhat contradictory to one another further convincing me that individuals’ opinions on design are quite personal and unique. These results also lead me to assume that varied learning styles might interpret this website in different ways.

\textbf{Content.} Arguably the most important aspect of this website was the content. If this resource is meant to be a useful tool for BC teachers, then the content should be usable and relevant. 11 respondents rated the usable content of my website as a ‘5’ (Content (both digital}
and otherwise) is very relevant to your teaching practice. You would definitely use it in your practice), while 6 others rated it as a ‘4’. With regards to the BC Curriculum content links, 12 people indicated the content aligns very well with the BC Core Competencies with a rating of ‘5’, 2 people provided a rating of ‘4’, 2 provided a rating of ‘3’ and 1 respondent rated the alignment of the content with the BC Core Competencies as a ‘1’ (Content does not align well with the BC Core Competencies). I believe the rating of ‘1’ to be in error as the written comment accompanying this rating read as “there are lots of clear links to the BC Core Competencies”.

Feedback that was supportive in nature of the alignment between the content on the website and the BC Core Competencies was exactly what I was seeking. One reviewer stated, “your content absolutely aligns with the Core Competencies. You have truly demonstrated just how important SEL is in the classroom.” Another reviewer responded:

I had no idea how much content was out there. I liked the way you arranged the content in age groupings. There was so much information it would have been difficult if it wasn't so well organized. The competencies have been one of the most difficult aspects of the new curriculum for teachers to incorporate. You have provided some really tangible ideas to target certain ones.

The consistency of comments received for this component of the website was helpful in they provided me with the assurance that the goal of this Major Project was being met.

When reviewers were prompted with the question of whether they would use any of the digital tools presented through this resource, the results were highly positive. 13 reviewers responded that ‘yes’ they would use these tools, 3 responded ‘maybe’ they would use these tools whereas 1 responded ‘no’ they would not use these tools explaining, “I see screen time as
harmful to developing brains and plan to opt for resources and activities that do not require that students use computers.” One respondent articulately explained:

I would use the tools she has selected because it is obvious she has put much consideration into selecting her tools. When I am online looking for up-to-date information or tools to use, I find there to be a firehose of information. Stefanie has done a great job of streamlining the necessary information into one inviting website. As teachers, we have a responsibility to stay up-to-date with our education and resources. For lack of time, it is tools like this website that help to alleviate the time it takes to find appropriate resources.

Based on these observations I am hopeful many teachers will benefit from the resources made available through the development of this Major Project.

**Suggestions for Improvement.** The final component included on the Google Form was a section requesting anecdotal feedback on ways to further improve this resource. Some very useful suggestions and advice were received that aided in overall improvement of the site. One reviewer suggested including more Canadian based content. They stated, “There was a certain amount of Canadian content overall. It is sometimes hard to find a lot and I get this - would have liked to see more.” Multiple reviewers suggested eliminating some of the text as they felt the website was a bit text heavy, although which areas of the site they were referring to is unclear. One particular reviewer suggested adding a rationale as to why the resources that were chosen for the website were selected over others also currently available online. An additional reviewer presented the idea of adding some of the lesson plans (currently available in the Resources section) onto the pages with the apps and websites that relate directly to the Core Competencies.
All suggestions were very much appreciated. Some had been taken into consideration during the process of creating the website, whereas others had not and presented a new outlook.

Overall, the development of the Google Form and the procedure of receiving reviews from other professionals in the field was an informative experience. With the information that was gathered, the successful integration of the insightful suggestions helped to further develop this resource for the benefit of BC teachers and students. The power and value of peer review is evident now, having completed the beta and field testing. The process of beta testing and collecting data for *SEL for BC Teachers* has led me to make some significant conclusions based on the successes and perceived limitations of this Major Project.
Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

This Process Paper has examined in depth the benefits of and need for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) to be taught in schools. There has been a push in British Columbia in recent years to include these elements of learning into the curriculum with the recent BC Education Plan and the newly introduced BC Curriculum. It is evident that arguments for the inclusion of SEL are highly persuasive and demonstrate results difficult to dismiss (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; D. E. Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015; Payton et al., 2008; Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017). In keeping with the changing times, the new BC Curriculum and BC Education Plan also incorporate the use of technology as a key component of student learning (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2015a, 2017b). Technology is the way of the future; therefore, students should be given opportunities to learn with and from it ensuring the development of skills necessary to function in a technology-based society. This Process Paper and accompanying Major Project have combined SEL and digital technologies with the requirements of the Core Competencies as outlined in the new BC Curriculum. It began with a critical challenge question that formed the basis of all research, development and analysis throughout this process; ‘How can BC elementary school teachers integrate SEL strategies using the Personal and Social Core Competencies by engaging technology-based resources to support student success?’

SEL for BC Teachers was the product resulting from the critical challenge question which developed throughout my time in the OLTD program. The website hosts information on the specifics of SEL, information on integrating SEL with technology-based tools, details about the new BC Curriculum and the Core Competencies, extra resources and most importantly a guide to
integrating digital tools with SEL to meet the requirements of the Core Competencies. The website was developed to serve as a resource for teachers looking to integrate SEL into their practice through the use of digital tools while at the same time meeting the requirements of the curriculum. The easy to use toolkit available on the site includes a wide variety of apps, websites, lessons and games that target specific facets of three Core Competencies related to SEL. Upon completion, the beta testing portion of this process began and a request for review was sent to a broad audience of educators from differing backgrounds including student teachers, OLTD and MEDL graduate program students, and trusted colleagues. The overall response was extremely positive and encouraging creating the impression that SEL and technology can and should be combined when being taught in BC classrooms.

Having been a noted topic in Education circles over the past few decades, it wasn’t until recently that SEL was a topic of more widespread interest as documented by the new, revised BC Curriculum (Coryn, Spybrook, Evergreen, & Blinkiewicz, 2009). The feedback received during the beta testing portion of this process serves as evidence to support the notion of SEL becoming ever more popular in Education. When examining the number of responses to the request for review of the website accompanying this Major Project, I have assumed the topic of SEL was at least in part responsible for the appeal. The written and rated scores of the content portion of SEL for BC Teachers were very positive with many reviewers expressing appreciation for the valuable information that had been collated and commending the direct links to the new BC Curriculum. Many respondents reported intentions to utilize the information presented either in their classrooms or for their own family’s personal use. Increased interest is sure to have a positive impact on the development of SEL programming in schools in the future.
SEL when integrated in schools and classrooms, has proven to have positive results on academics, behavioral outcomes and other risk factors later in life (Durlak et al., 2011; D. E. Jones et al., 2015; Payton et al., 2008) These findings are what I believe are driving the interest of parents and teachers in the field of SEL and why there was such a favourable response from participating reviewers of this website. Further, Payton et al. (2008) revealed significant gains in academic scores when SEL is taught in a school setting. The statistics they refer to cannot be ignored, and it seems schools are taking notice and working to foster these skills in their students. Based on the ever-increasing amounts of research presented on teaching SEL in schools, I believe overall interest from educators is growing; therefore, resources such as the one presented through SEL for BC Teachers are in high demand.

New focuses or changes in curriculum will lead to a higher demand for resources that accommodate these changes. SEL for BC Teachers bridges the gap between SEL, the new BC Curriculum and digital technologies, all of which are relatively new to teachers in BC today. Because this unique relationship between different facets of education would be time consuming and daunting to mitigate alone, a resource such as this one would seem an appealing choice. It allows teachers the peace of mind that they are meeting curriculum requirements while also integrating a crucial topic through the use of digital tools—both of which are important for students’ futures. Technology will continue to advance, so exposure to digital technologies is relevant and necessary. If the focus is on educating 21st Century learners and empowering them through the use of technology (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2015a), then it is the responsibility of teachers to ensure students are receiving sufficient instruction and practice with it. Incorporating it into SEL studies is just one small step towards students becoming 21st Century learners.
The website created for this Major Project provided a multitude of links to engaging websites, online lesson plans, games, and apps that help teach SEL either as a whole program or as a supplemental resource. During my quest to find valuable tools, it came to my attention that many online tools already exist that work to meet the criteria of the BC Core Competencies. *SEL for BC Teachers* helps to bring these resources to the attention of teachers with a carefully chosen selection of relevant and functioning tools to choose from. When analyzing which Core Competency each tool linked to, it became clear that certain topics were covered heavily whereas others were quite limited. Digital tools related to *Personal Awareness and Responsibility* were most abundant with the greatest number of resources focusing on the facet of self-regulation. This came as no surprise to me. I have personally witnessed greater adoption of self-regulation programs in schools I have worked in over the past decade with programs such as Mind-Up and Zones of Regulation being adopted school wide with continually increasing staff support. With so many existing tools relating to the Core Competencies, it was evident that a place to host them together with a classification system was needed. *SEL for BC Teachers* worked to fulfill this missing piece of the puzzle.

Technology-based resources can be an effective and meaningful way in which to teach Social and Emotional Skills (SES) to students. Because time, financial and other barriers can often restrict the number of students who are able to gain access to training focusing on SES, online resources such as online games can alleviate some of these restraints (Craig, Brown, Upright, & DeRosier, 2016). According to Osher et al. (2016) technological innovation and blended learning are being increasingly adopted by schools to lessen the financial burden and improve student outcomes compared with face to face SEL instruction. *SEL for BC Teachers* supports these notions and promotes innovation and change in education. The vast majority of
resources presented on the website are free or low cost, eliminating what once was a large barrier to teaching these skills schoolwide.

The intent behind the creation of the website *SEL for BC Teachers* has never been clearer than it is today. With the development, beta testing and reflection now complete, I fully see the potential of what has been created as a possible turning point for the inclusion of SEL in BC. The new BC Curriculum and BC Education plan proposed fresh ways of approaching education (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2015a, 2017b). We now look at the ways in which we educate through new lenses. Lenses where we are required to think outside the traditions of academic achievement and through what our students are able to know, do and understand on a path to deeper learning (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2017b). What is required of students under the new curriculum, necessitates students to possess SES, which have proven over time to increase academic success rates. Teachers are more focused on the process of how students reach conclusions and how well they are able to draw on their skills to solve problems and navigate diverse situations. With the introduction of Core Competencies, it has become increasingly important to help facilitate growth in SEL and not just academic achievement. With the creation of *SEL for BC Teachers* there is a resource to turn to which can assist in effectively increasing the presence of SEL in classrooms.

At the conclusion of this process, I believe there to be a great number of successes. The overall intent was to create a tool allowing BC teachers to easily integrate SEL education using digital technologies. Based on the responses from beta testing, I believe this has been accomplished. With the new BC Curriculum posing challenges to teachers seeking information and resources relating to the Core Competencies and altered learning outcomes, *SEL for BC Teachers* is available to alleviate some of the difficulties they might encounter while on a path to
reaching their goals. Furthermore, the website hosts a large enough amount of information for parents to understand and inform themselves on the benefits of SEL and realize the motives for integrating it with technology. This resource was positively received; however, there are elements that could inhibit its success.

**Perceived Limitations.** While this endeavour has been highly successful, there are some perceived limitations associated with this Major Project. Due to the requirements of the MEDL graduate program, during the beta testing period the review of *SEL for BC Teachers* website was based on the reviewers perceived usefulness of the content presented. The content, lessons and digital tools presented on *SEL for BC Teachers* have not yet been used and/or tested by teachers in the field, so the assessment of whether the tools presented through the development of the website were a success in a practical setting is unknown at this point. It is hoped the website will be shared amongst educators in this province and used as intended.

The long-term viability of *SEL for BC Teachers* is also to be determined. While *SEL for BC Teachers* has a large amount of valuable and usable digital resources complementing the BC Curriculum, the other component of this website relies on the participation and contribution of other teachers and their willingness to share their own knowledge and resources. One aspect of further developing this website will be to keep it updated and relevant ensuring the digital resources continue to be effective and current. The second part will be the growth of lesson and unit plans shared by teachers in this province. Without the participation and involvement of individual teachers, the growth and effectiveness of *SEL for BC Teachers* could become limited.

With the new BC Curriculum outlining requirements for the integration of six Core Competencies, *SEL for BC Teachers* and the broader field of SEL has direct relationships with three of them. Included in the website were *Positive Personal and Cultural Identity*, *Personal*
Awareness and Responsibility, and Social Responsibility. While there was much success in locating digital resources for some of the Core Competencies, what became apparent was some specific facets of competencies were quite lacking in usable technology-based resources. At the time of development, Positive Personal and Cultural Identity proved particularly deficient in digitally based tools of quality. It seems there is a gap in the market for digital tools (apps/games/website/lessons) that correlate with the expectations that come from Positive Personal and Cultural Identity and its facets; relationships and cultural contexts, personal values and choices, and personal strengths and abilities. This is an area requiring focus and development in the digital world to help begin to fill the void.

Recommendations

Based on consistent feedback received during the beta testing period of SEL for BC Teachers, changes could be made to enhance its effectiveness. The reviewers who consisted of individuals with varying degrees of knowledge in online learning and SEL, consistently commented on the visual design of the website. While many commended the design, and enjoyed the layout and colour scheme, others provided comments alluding to their preference for a brighter and more colourful design palate. Given that it is a website geared towards teachers of elementary school children, it is easy to understand their perspective. One might notice marketing of products towards children typically tends to be quite colourful. If it were assumed that altering the colour palate to brighten up the website would promote the use of SEL for BC Teachers amongst a larger audience, it would be worth the investment of time to make those changes. Design and colour choice is very subjective, leaving me with the belief that more feedback on this matter might be warranted prior to altering the design of the website. If the
current design does not deter potential users from using it due to the colour and design choice, then perhaps, change is not necessary.

To further advance and develop *SEL for BC Teachers* so it is sure to be a lasting resource for use in BC schools, it would be advisable to focus on including increased numbers of directly related lesson plans that use the digital tools presented. Currently, there are many tools displayed on the website, but few concrete examples of how to integrate them into practice through a lesson or unit plan. The more comprehensive the website becomes, the more useful a resource it will be. Finding ways to promote this website to teachers in British Columbia would be instrumental in growing the space for sharing and collaboration. Perhaps sharing with elementary schools and/or school districts would be a start in commencing the growth of *SEL for BC Teachers*. The BC Teachers’ Federation might provide a useful opportunity to share this resource providing the potential to reach the greatest number of BC teachers.

The website created for this Major Project focused heavily on integrating digital tools into the teaching of SEL. When students are utilizing and interacting with digital tools such as games or apps, it is critical they understand the safety risks involved with learning and communicating online. It might be advisable to add an additional section centring on digital citizenship as a consideration for teachers who plan to have students learning online via the tools presented on *SEL for BC Teachers*. Simply offering tools for students to use and hope they function as planned is not enough. Students and teachers alike must understand the risks involved with learning and communicating online and understand how to mitigate some of these risks to benefit in positive ways.

With the integration of digital technologies also comes increased safety risks. It would be advisable to create a page or at the very least a link to the Freedom of Information and Protection
of Privacy Act (FIPPA) information. Some of the tools available on the website might require students to provide personal information, making it imperative they comprehend the risks associated with providing personal information online as well as obtain mandatory permissions. While this is a departure from the main goals of the Major Project, it is related on a grander scale and will become more relevant with greater adoption of digital technologies in the classroom.

As SEL for BC Teachers is a Canadian based resource, it would be helpful to include an increased amount of Canadian content. As a suggestion for future improvement, it would be useful to identify on the Core Competency app and resource pages, tools that include Canadian content or are hosted here in Canada. Choosing tools hosted in Canada will eliminate some of the safety concerns with regards to FIPPA as mentioned above.

**Conclusion**

At the closure of this process of investigating the effectiveness digital technologies can have on the integration of SEL into the new BC Curriculum, I have been left with great hope for the future of this field in the Education system in this province. Teachers seem to be taking a greater interest in the topic and government has taken note and worked to incorporate facets of SEL and technology into the curriculum and the Education Plan. I feel satisfied knowing that the changes in Education align with my philosophy of teaching and my passion for integrating technology in the classroom. My hope is that with time, teachers will have greater opportunities to learn effective implementation strategies and have access to valued resources that allow for influential instruction of SEL in classrooms across the province.
References


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https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X16673595


https://doi.org/10.1080/10474410701413152
Appendix A

SEL for BC Teachers Homepage

British Columbia's Core Competencies

A Guide to Integrating SEL into the Curriculum Using Digital Tools

Use this online based toolkit to help guide the implementation of Social and Emotional Learning into your classrooms by way of digital technologies that will complement the newly designed BC Curriculum.

Start by choosing the Core Competency that you would like to focus on. From there, you will be guided through a host of online based tools that relate directly to that competency. 

- Positive Personal and Cultural Identity
- Personal Awareness and Responsibility
- Social Responsibility
Appendix B

Request for Review

Dear Colleague/Reviewer,

Thank you for taking the time to review and provide anonymous feedback for my Major Project. This Major Project has been created as part of the Master of Educational Leadership program through Vancouver Island University (VIU).

I have developed a website that explores the topic of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in depth. The goal of this project was to provide digital tools for elementary educators that will allow them to integrate SEL into the new BC Curriculum through the Core Competencies. It is meant to be a resource that allows teachers to educate themselves on the topic as well as effortlessly find easy to use resources that link directly to the new curriculum.

After reviewing the website, please complete the anonymous google form that you will find under the ‘MORE’ tab in the navigation menu. If you have any troubles or further questions, please don’t hesitate to ask.

Your feedback is greatly appreciated!

Stefanie Crema
Appendix C

Google Form – *SEL for BC Teachers* Feedback

SEL for BC Teachers Resource Feedback

Feedback gathered from this form will be used to anonymously inform Chapter 4 of my MEDL 690 process paper. Comments and suggestions may be used to make further edits to the resource. Thank you for taking the time to review my website and provide valuable feedback.

* Required

**NAVIGATION**

Ease of Navigation *

1 2 3 4 5

- Difficult, does not make sense, confusing
- Easy to use and very intuitive

Comments Regarding Navigation *

Your answer

**DESIGN**
### Visual Design *

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Design is distracting & takes away from the purpose of the website.

Design is aesthetically pleasing and complements the content.

### Comments Regarding Design *

Your answer

### CONTENT

### Usable Content *

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Content (both digital and otherwise) is not relevant to your teaching practice. You would not use this material with your students.

Content (both digital and otherwise) is very relevant to your teaching practice. You would definitely use it in your practice.
EC Curriculum Content links *

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</table>

Comments Regarding Content *

Your answer

Would you use any of the digital SEL tools presented (apps/website) with your students

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Why or Why Not? *

Your answer

Further comments or suggestions to improve this resource *

Your answer