

# Social and Emotional Learning and Community-Based Summer Implementation

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## Abstract

Preschool aged children's social and emotional adjustment impacts their behavior across settings. Providing high-quality early intervention services that enhance social and emotional skills can help prepare children for formal schooling and improve social and behavioral outcomes. The summer prior to Kindergarten presents a unique opportunity for community-based settings to implement social and emotional learning initiatives. One program that has been found to be efficacious in increasing social and emotional competence and reducing problem behaviors with younger populations is the Preschool Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (Preschool PATHS) program. The purpose of this study was to examine implementation fidelity and social validity of the Preschool PATHS program offered in a community-based setting in the summer. Findings suggest that agency staff can independently implement the Preschool PATHS program with fidelity. Furthermore, ratings revealed that the intervention is socially valid and deemed acceptable by agency staff. The results are presented along with implications for future practice.

Key Words: social–emotional learning, summer learning, implementation, community-based program, Preschool Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies

## Introduction

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process of integrating thinking, feeling, and behaving to become aware of oneself and of others, manage one's

own behaviors and those of others, and make responsible decisions (Brackett & Rivers, 2014). The core competencies of SEL include the ability to recognize and manage emotions, set and achieve goals, take the perspective of others, establish and maintain relationships, engage in responsible decision making, and manage interpersonal feelings successfully (Durlak et al., 2011; Zins & Elias, 2006). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) identified five core competencies associated with social and emotional learning as (1) self-awareness, (2) self-management, (3) social awareness, (4) relationship management, and (5) responsible decision-making (Brackett & Rivers, 2014). In terms of SEL, learning emerges in the context of supportive relationships that make learning challenging, engaging, and meaningful (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). SEL is fostered through successful relationships over the course of the lifespan.

### **Early Intervention and SEL**

Young children who display patterns of persistent disruptive behaviors can later develop more intensive behavioral challenges that are difficult to change. In turn, these children spend less time accessing the educational curriculum and fall behind in many academic and developmental domains. Access to early intervention programs is a critical component of a child's later success in life (Denham, 2006). Currently, there is an increased need for services that address the mental health, social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive needs of children at an early age to mitigate negative influences on development. What Works Clearinghouse published a practical guide on preparing young children for school to identify actionable, evidence-based practices that support early learning and to better prepare children to enter formal schooling. The first key recommendation in the practice guide is to consistently provide engaging instruction in social and emotional skills (Burchinal et al., 2022). Research has indicated that children from low socioeconomic backgrounds demonstrate 40% more delays in social-emotional functioning, and almost 20% exhibit disruptive behavior problems that impact school adjustment (Bierman et al., 2008). This is consistent with the research conducted by Fantuzzo et al. (2007) who found that early classroom disengagement was associated with lower cognitive, social, and motor outcomes, as well as lower performance on math standards. Several researchers have reported that preschool children who have difficulty connecting socially to others and the learning environment perform poorly in school readiness domains prior to Kindergarten (Coolahan et al., 2000; Fantuzzo et al., 2003, 2004, 2007). As children transition into formal schooling years, emotional expressivity, or outward expressions of positive or negative emotion, may be an important marker of adjustment (Denham,

2006). Maladjustment and poor social and emotional skills impact academic, behavioral, and social functioning, exacerbate further mental health concerns, and can impact the trajectory of a child's life.

### **Preschool Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)**

The Preschool Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (Preschool PATHS; Domitrovich et al., 2007) curriculum is one program that has been found to support the social and emotional needs of young children and has been implemented in various settings. According to Bierman and Motamedi (2015), Preschool PATHS is based upon four basic domains of SEL which include friendship skills and prosocial behavior (e.g., sharing, helping, taking turns), emotional knowledge (e.g., recognizing and labeling core feelings), self-control (e.g., using the “turtle technique”), and social problem solving. The turtle technique includes recognizing your feelings, stopping your body, tucking inside your “shell” and taking three breaths, and coming out when you are calm and can think of a solution (Domitrovich et al., 2007). Researchers who have examined the possible benefits of the Preschool PATHS program have recently found that after completing the curriculum, children made significantly greater gains in emotional knowledge and emotional recognition skills, vocabulary and literacy skills, and social problem-solving skills (Domitrovich et al., 2007). Furthermore, in recent studies of the Preschool PATHS curriculum, researchers found that children made greater gains in emotional knowledge and emotional recognition skills and concentration and attention skills (Hughes & Cline, 2015; Mihic et al., 2016). After completing the curriculum, children demonstrated a reduction in relational aggression, conduct problems, and hyperactive and impulsive behavior (Bilir Seyhan et al., 2019; McClelland et al., 2017; Sanders et al., 2020). The literature base regarding the Preschool PATHS curriculum consists mainly of studies in which the curriculum was implemented in a school context.

### **Community-Based SEL Programs**

Young children spend most of their time in non-school contexts (Downey et al., 2004). Summer can serve as a pivotal time in intervening with young children prior to the start of formal schooling to ensure that they have the social-emotional competence to engage in goal-oriented learning and prosocial interactions in kindergarten. This is especially true for young children growing up in poverty. SEL programs can be implemented in various settings, and summer-based programs have been beneficial for preschool aged children (Graziano et al., 2014; Gullota, 2015; McDaniel et al., 2021). In one of the very limited studies available that focus on SEL as an early intervention tool to enhance

school readiness for children the summer prior to Kindergarten, Graziano et al. (2014) examined the impact of an eight-week summer learning program for preschoolers. Graziano et al. (2014) found that the program was implemented with fidelity, was well received by families as evidenced by high levels of attendance and satisfaction, and led to large and reliable improvements in the domains of school readiness, behavioral, academic, and self-regulation as documented by observational and standard assessments. However, the program was implemented by university-based researchers and not local summer community agency staff. The most recent study that examined Preschool PATHS in a local neighborhood YMCA summer day camp setting was the study conducted by (McDaniel et al., 2021). Intervention groups were led by graduate research assistants. Ratings were completed by teachers across three time points, and they found positive outcomes for children who participated in the area of social–emotional well-being.

Environments in which children spend time offer prime opportunities to offer interventions so that children can utilize social and emotional skills across contexts (Devaney et al., 2006). Community-based programs including after-school programs offer children the unique ability to foster social–emotional skills (Durlak et al., 2011; Schwartz et al., 2020). Out-of-school programs can enhance social and emotional skills because there is often a more relaxed schedule in which children can engage in hands-on activities with peers with adult feedback and modeling (Schwartz et al., 2020). However, community-based settings and afterschool programs also face considerable difficulties with implementing SEL interventions for children as well. Barriers to offering SEL programming include a lack of available tools and resources and a lack of professional development opportunities (Durlak et al., 2011; Schwartz et al., 2020). Programs offered during the summer face challenges such as limited time in the summer to offer interventions as compared to having an entire academic year to implement, as well as limited staff and organizational buy-in (Terzian et al., 2009). Implementation of these evidence-based programs and the social feasibility and usability of these programs needs to be explored further.

### **Implementation Fidelity Issues With Community Programming**

Program implementation is a critical component that is examined in relation to the use of evidenced-based interventions in schools and in community contexts. The degree to which a program is administered as intended is a prominent definition of implementation fidelity that is found in the literature (Durlak, 2017; Yeaton & Sechrest, 1981). Implementation fidelity is one of the single greatest factors that can impact the effectiveness of an intervention (Bruhn et al., 2015; Durlak, 2017; Durlak & Dupre, 2008). Durlak et

al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of 213 school-based SEL programs and found that only 57% of school-based SEL programs included implementation data. Collecting fidelity information in community settings for SEL programs can be complex due to factors such as lack of funding, lack of available resources, and privacy laws (Domitrovich et al., 2010). For example, research on implementation fidelity of the Preschool PATHS program has typically included self-report data as opposed to data collected from independent observers (Humphrey et al., 2018). The information available regarding strategies and components that support successful implementation of SEL programs are scarcely reported, use only self-report methods to gather implementation fidelity ratings, and provide limited information into the dimensions that support implementation fidelity.

### **SEL Programs and Social Validity**

According to Wolf (1978), social validity is: (a) the assessment of the social significance of the goals of an intervention, (b) the social acceptability of the intervention procedures, and (c) the social importance of the effects of the intervention (Finn & Sladeczek, 2001; Kazdin, 1981; Schwartz & Baer, 1991; Van Houten, 1979). Perceptions of relevant stakeholders can be obtained from questionnaires and interviews, and gaining this critical information can offer insight into the contextual fit of an intervention and ensure that early learning centers offer these needed interventions. Research conducted by Marchant et al. (2012) indicated that higher levels of implementation fidelity are associated with higher ratings of acceptability or social validity. Social validity research is often underreported, and research stops short of addressing perceptions of out-of-school staff and SEL programs.

There is an extensive evidence base that supports the effectiveness of early intervention services and SEL programs in schools. However, there is a gap in the literature examining implementation fidelity and social validity of the Preschool PATHS program in a local neighborhood YMCA summer camp setting led by agency employees. There is an identifiable link between higher rates of implementation fidelity and social validity (Wollersheim Shervey et al., 2017); however, there is limited information regarding these topics in relation to early SEL interventions for preschoolers. To truly assess whether children are benefiting from SEL programs, we need to better understand the degree to which teachers or out-of-school staff can implement the Preschool PATHS program as it was designed and their overall perceptions and beliefs about the program. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine implementation fidelity and social validity of the Preschool PATHS in a summer camp setting. The present study was designed to answer the following quantitative research questions:

Research Question 1 (RQ 1): How effectively can community implementers implement the Preschool PATHS Program with fidelity in a summer camp setting? Do implementers differ on fidelity?

Research Question 2 (RQ 2): Do outside community implementers view the Preschool PATHS Program implemented in a summer camp setting as socially valid for their community? Are there differences between types of community implementers (e.g., graduate research assistants and YMCA counselors)?

## **Method**

### **Participants and Setting**

The study was conducted at a YMCA in the United States with a historically minority predominantly Black/African American and high poverty population. The location locale code is “small city” as the YMCA served and was located in a diverse community with around 100,000 community members. The local neighborhood YMCA offered a summer day camp for children in the community. The YMCA is a 175-year-old faith-based organization that focuses on youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. The YMCA provides services and opportunities to children who are from a lower socioeconomic background. The children attended the camp Monday–Friday from 7 am–3 pm. Extended hours after 3 pm were considered after care hours for parents who needed childcare.

There were four adult participants who served as group leaders for this study. Participants were selected from the University of Alabama and local YMCA staff. The adult participants varied in terms of their education, ethnicity, and years of working with children. The first research assistant was a Caucasian female, and the second research assistant was an Asian American female. The two YMCA camp counselors were both African American females. Out of the four adult participants, two were pursuing bachelor’s degrees in education (i.e., sophomore and senior classifications). The other two adult participants were pursuing advanced graduate degrees in school psychology. All four adult participants had at least one year’s experience working with children at the local neighborhood YMCA. A substitute group leader was trained in case of a leader being absent; however, her assistance was not needed. The inclusion criteria for the research assistants were as follows: (a) must be currently enrolled as a graduate student at the University of Alabama, (b) must have completed the Preschool PATHS training, (c) must have experience working with children, and (d) must be approved for employment through the university. Inclusion criteria for the YMCA camp counselors were as follows: (a) must be approved for employment by the YMCA, and (b) must have experience working with

children, and (c) must have completed the Preschool PATHS training. The consent for participation for this program was obtained from the participants.

The YMCA setting was chosen due to the demographics and availability for a summer enrichment opportunity. The YMCA provided two separate learning spaces to ensure that noise and interferences were minimized. The intervention room was conducive for lessons as it resembled a typical classroom environment. Children were recruited to participate in the groups through the YMCA summer camp's enrollment sessions. Parents were invited to register their children for summer camp, and a table was set up that provided information about the Preschool PATHS program. There were eight six-year-old Black/African American preschool-aged children in each group, totaling 16 children. Group one was led by the research assistants; group two was led by the camp counselors. For this study, parental consent was obtained from the parents and caregivers of children in the intervention groups. Informed consent was also obtained from the four adult participants. Once recruitment was complete, participants were randomly assigned to the two groups that were coled by the adult participants.

### **PATHS Training and Implementation Procedures**

The adult facilitator participants were asked to complete a training session with the primary researcher that consisted of a one-day, face to face preparation that included reviewing the procedures of the study, the primary intervention tools, and information related to teacher and child prosocial interactions and positive behavior management strategies. Materials in the training included a formal overview of the theoretical framework of SEL, SEL rationale and domains, overview of school readiness, and foundational principles of the Preschool PATHS programs. Each lesson and unit of the Preschool PATHS curriculum was reviewed as well as data collection procedures and confidentiality. All materials were provided for participants by the primary researcher. Materials were kept in a locked storage space on the university campus.

The Preschool PATHS program was offered Monday–Thursdays during the months of June and July. The summer camp day consisted of breakfast, swimming or other designated activity, free play, Vacation Bible School, brief academic lessons, and then lunch. When children were dismissed for lunch, the four adult participants were able to work with children from 12 pm–3 pm. Two lessons were covered daily by the YMCA counselors and the research assistants. Modifications to the dates or any needed make-up dates were set aside for the first week of August. Children regularly attended the groups, and makeup dates were not utilized. Fidelity checks were implemented weekly by the primary researcher.



## **Preschool PATHS Curriculum**

The Preschool PATHS curriculum consists of 44 brief (15–20 minute) lessons that include stories, pictures, and puppets that coincide with explicit skill instruction (Bierman & Motamedi, 2015). There are nine units that comprise the Preschool PATHS curriculum. According to Bierman and Motamedi (2015):

Preschool PATHS focuses on basic social–emotional skills in four domains: (1) friendship skills and prosocial behavior (e.g., helping, sharing, taking turns); (2) emotional knowledge (e.g., recognizing and labeling core feelings); (3) self-control (e.g., using the “turtle technique”); and (4) social problem solving. (p. 142)

## **Measures**

### *Fidelity*

Implementation fidelity was measured by utilizing a treatment fidelity checklist that was created by the primary researcher. The checklist included a detailed description of the overall objectives and specific objectives in the Preschool PATHS manual. The number of components of each objective and the degree to which they were covered were noted (e.g., not at all, partially, or fully). The Likert scale for the Fidelity Checklist was designated as 1, 2, and 3 (1 = “not at all,” 2 = “partially,” 3 = “fully”). This scale was designed because the graduation of the objectives could not be further delineated. The scoring for each section of the lesson was summative and multiplicative. Twelve lessons across two intervention groups at the early, middle, and end phases of implementation were observed by the researcher, totaling 30% of all lessons taught in each intervention group.

### *Social Validity*

Social validity was measured at the middle and at the completion of the study by administering a questionnaire to the group leaders. The acceptability of the intervention program was assessed by using an adapted version of the Intervention Rating Profile, 15, (IRP-15; Witt et al., 1984). The IRP-15 is a measure that is based upon the construct of social validity which refers to a stakeholder’s view of the social significance of the intervention goals, acceptability of the intervention procedures, and the social importance of the intervention goals. This scale takes 10 minutes to complete. The composite scores for the IRP-15 rating scale range from 15 to 90, with the highest scores indicating the highest levels of acceptability of the treatment. According to VonBrock and Elliott (1987), mean ratings on the IRP-15 of 52.50 are considered acceptable ratings. Witt et al. (1984) have reported excellent internal



consistency or reliability (coefficient alpha = .98) for the total score, which is calculated by summing item ratings (range 15–90), and Rhoades and Kra-tochwill (1992) and Witt et al. (1984), indicated that the IRP-15 has a factor loading that ranges from .82 to .95 on a single factor, which supported the construct validity of a general acceptability measure.

## Results

### Implementation Fidelity

Implementation data were collected to ensure that the program was implemented with fidelity and consistency according to this study's protocol. Table 1 contains the descriptive findings which address Research Question One. The research assistants obtained a mean fidelity rating score of 90%. The YMCA camp counselors obtained a mean fidelity rating score of 82%.

Table 1. Implementation Fidelity Percentages Across Lessons (Research Assistants' Lesson Percentages by Lesson with Mean)

L2	L4	L10	L12	L18	L20	L26	L28	L34	L36	L40	L42	M
78	100	72	67	100	100	100	100	100	88	81	95	90

Table 2. Implementation Fidelity Percentages Across Lessons (YMCA Counselors' Lesson Percentages by Lesson with Mean)

L2	L4	L10	L12	L18	L20	L26	L28	L34	L36	L40	L42	M
100	78	67	89	83	67	67	100	67	88	81	95	82

### Implementation Differences

The observer endorsed lesson components as 1 “Not at all”, 2 “Partially”, and 3 “Fully” for each goal and objective that was specific to the lesson observed. An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the research assistants and the YMCA camp counselors with respect to the implementation of the Preschool PATHS program with fidelity. Table 3 shows that Research Assistants were statistically different from YMCA Camp Counselors with respect to the implementation of the Preschool PATHS program with fidelity ( $p = .002$ ) which is statistically significant. Inspection of the two groups indicated that the average score for research assistants ( $M = 2.59$ ) was significantly higher than the score of the YMCA camp counselors ( $M = 2.42$ ). The difference between means was .17 on a 3.00-point scale. The effect size  $d$  was approximately .33 which is a typical or medium effect size according to Cohen's (1988) guidelines for the behavioral sciences.

Table 3. Implementation Fidelity Scores

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>DF</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>D</i>
Implementation With Fidelity						
Research Assistants	2.59	12.60	3.20	72	.002	.33
YMCA Counselors	2.42	11.80				

**Social Validity**

The impact of research assistants and camp counselors implementing the Preschool PATHS program at a YMCA summer camp on their perceptions of social validity was assessed using a pretest and posttest Intervention Rating Profile-15 (IRP-15) by Witt and Elliott (1985).

*Research Assistant Perceptions*

The score on the IRP-15 ratings for Research Assistant 1 was 45 at the midpoint of the intervention, which was reflective of a low level of treatment acceptability. Research Assistant 1 provided a score of 79 at the endpoint of the intervention, indicating a high level of treatment acceptability. Research Assistant 2 provided a social validity score of 76 at the midpoint of the intervention, indicating a high level of treatment acceptability. Research Assistant 2 also provided a social validity score of 77 at the endpoint of the intervention, indicating a high level of treatment acceptability.

Table 4. Perception of Social Validity of PATHS by Graduate Research Assistants

Participants	Midpoint Rating	Endpoint Rating
Research Assistant 1	45	79
Research Assistant 2	76	77

\*\*Scores range from 1–90, acceptable level of social validity is 52.5

*YMCA Counselor Perceptions*

The score on the IRP-15 ratings for Camp Counselor 1 was 64 at the midpoint of the intervention, indicating a moderate level of treatment acceptability. Camp Counselor 1 provided a social validity score of 76 at the endpoint of the intervention, indicating a high level of treatment acceptability. Camp Counselor 2 provided a score of 55 at the midpoint of the intervention, indicating a moderate level of treatment acceptability. Camp Counselor 2 provided a social validity score of 72 at the endpoint of the intervention, indicating a high level of treatment acceptability.

Table 5. Perception of Social Validity of PATHS by YMCA Counselors

Participants	Midpoint Rating	Endpoint Rating
YMCA Counselor 1	64	76
YMCA Counselor 2	55	72

\*\*Scores range from 1–90, acceptable level of social validity is 52.5

### *Differences in Perceptions*

An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the research assistants and the YMCA camp counselors with respect to their views of the social validity of the Preschool PATHS program with fidelity. Table 6 shows that there was no statistically significant difference between research assistants and the YMCA camp counselors with respect to their views of social validity of the Preschool PATHS program with fidelity ( $p = .263$ ). Inspection of the two groups indicated that the average score for research assistants ( $M = 5.20$ ) was not significantly higher than the score of the YMCA camp counselors ( $M = 4.94$ ). The difference between means was .26 on a 6.00-point scale. There was no effect size because the test was not significant.

Table 6. Differences in Perception of Social Validity of PATHS

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>DF</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>D</i>
Social Validity With Fidelity						
Research Assistants	5.20	.01	1.743	2	.263	NA
YMCA Counselors	4.94	1.90				

## **Discussion**

SEL is quickly becoming one of the most important initiatives in schools to meet the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of children (Gibson et al., 2015). Although much of the existing literature base focuses on K–12 SEL, researchers are now focusing on the critical developmental period of the preschool years to provide early intervention services to children to create better outcomes in adolescence and adulthood. Because of constraints and limited resources, community partnerships have emerged as key contexts that can be utilized to support social and emotional development for young children (CASEL, 2021). Community contexts and early learning centers offer extended educational opportunities for children, especially during the summer months. To better prepare children for kindergarten and to sustain growth from Pre-Kindergarten, the

summer months provide a critical period to intervene with the preschool-aged population (Graziano et al., 2014). Although extensive research has been conducted into the efficacy of SEL programs (CASEL 2021), little attention has been paid to what supports fidelity of implementation. Furthermore, little attention has been paid to the social validity of preschool SEL programs.

There were two main findings drawn from this study, both regarding implementation science variables and with research to practice translation implications. It is imperative that educators not only use evidence-based interventions that produce positive effects, but also understand the acceptability of the intervention, and whether it is feasible and can be implemented under varying conditions (such as a summer program). Studying these important variables is gaining traction in the U.S., but for PATHS, specifically, is still in the preliminary stages. For the first finding, the Preschool PATHS program may be an acceptable intervention and a socially valid intervention for summer format delivery. Second, university-based researchers and community stakeholders, together, can implement the Preschool PATHS program with fidelity in a summer camp setting under real-world conditions.

### **Social Validity**

Most of the PATHS literature has reported quantitatively on social-emotional competency outcomes resulting from PATHS implementation and compared to other conditions. Less is known about the social acceptability from the perspectives of students and children, their families, and educators. The Humphrey 2013 study reports qualitative findings from interviews completed regarding the need for PATHS and intervention acceptability. However, these are elementary students and educators. Even less is known regarding the acceptability of the Preschool PATHS curriculum. The first primary finding that the PATHS program was perceived as acceptable was not surprising, but given the novel application in a summer program, was important. Overall, participants rated the Preschool PATHS program as socially valid. The participants' ratings of social validity increased from the midpoint to the endpoint of the intervention. The ratings are consistent with large-scale survey data which suggests that most teachers feel that SEL is valuable and has positive outcomes for children in schools (Buchanan et al., 2009). However, the findings from this study of the acceptability of this intervention across both research assistants and camp counselors is in contrast to the report by Aarons (2005), who found that a higher level of education or being an intern was related to more positive attitudes and perceptions of evidenced-based programs in general. Preschool PATHS specifically has been implemented across numerous Head Start and preschool programs and elementary schools with success (Bierman et al., 2008; Crean & Johnson, 2013; Domitrovich et al., 2007; Nix et al., 2013).

## **Implementation Fidelity**

Implementation fidelity refers to the level of adherence to how the intervention was designed, and includes quality of implementation. Across the PATHS literature, implementation fidelity is poorly reported. Only a few studies report intervention dosage (Berry et al., 2016; Humphrey et al., 2016) which is one critical component of implementation fidelity, along with quality. In this study, research assistants and camp counselors collaboratively implemented the Pre-school PATHS program with moderate levels of implementation fidelity. There was a significant difference between Research Assistants' and Camp Counselors' abilities to implement the program with fidelity, even though the effect size was small. Research assistants achieved a level of 90% implementation fidelity over the course of this intervention, with camp counselors achieving a level of 82% implementation fidelity. The manualized program included group leader prompts and step by step directions that guided implementers through the lesson goals and objectives and helped them to achieve moderate levels of implementation fidelity. This aligns with findings from a 2003 PATHS implementation quality study regarding the importance of implementation quality, adherence to fidelity, and the ability of facilitators to implement with fidelity (Kam et al., 2003). Furthermore, implementation fidelity findings from this study are consistent with research conducted by Elliott and Mihalic (2004), Fagan and Mihalic (2003), Gottfredson and Gottfredson (2001), and Spoth et al. (2011), indicating that high levels of implementation can be achieved under real world settings for universally based interventions. The quantitative findings from this study were consistent with findings from Spoth et al. (2011), who found that evidence-based programs can be implemented by community stakeholders, with the primary responsibility of implementation being led by community members rather than university-based researchers. One major limitation to this study was the small sample size, which limits the generalizability of this study. However, this study does create a path for further analysis of community-based summer SEL programming implemented by community staff.

## **Implications for Future Research**

A large-scale adoption of a SEL program is driven by the quality of the intervention and the perceived usefulness or importance of the intervention. Future research and practice should provide guidelines or best practices for community-based SEL programs in summer camps or out-of-school learning environments for children. Exploration of what factors lead to the greatest implementation fidelity and successful adoption of a program in these varied contexts would contribute to this literature. Researchers should also examine

what training and professional development opportunities lead to high levels of SEL program implementation in community-based settings. Information regarding ways to monitor implementation should be explored to inform practice for community stakeholders to determine how community settings can ensure that quality implementation is sustained over time. Future studies should address the longitudinal impact of SEL programs in community-based summer learning contexts and how social validity impacts long-term support and use of SEL programs. Additionally, researchers should ask parents social validity questions and address parent perceptions of children's growth with attention to qualitative methods that would include open-ended questions or conducting focus groups. Finally, longitudinal studies related to community scale-ups of SEL programs will provide useful information for policymakers and key stakeholders.

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