

AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF SPORTS PROGRAMMING ON
THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES
IN AT-RISK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Megan L. McVea: An Exploratory Analysis of the Impact of Sports Programming on the Development of Social Emotional Competencies in At-Risk Elementary School Students
(Under the direction of Steven Knotek)

The present study examined the effects of an after-school social emotional sports program on the development of social emotional competencies in at-risk elementary school students. The study also explored participants' experiences in the program to inform the development of future interventions. A paired t-test for dependent samples was used to analyze the effects of the intervention on social emotional development. A hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to determine the best predictors of post intervention prosocial behavior. Mann-Whitney U tests were used to determine differences in program experience based on gender, grade level, and prior participation in the intervention. The results indicated that the intervention did not have a statistically significant impact on social emotional development at the conclusion of the intervention. Ratings on a program survey, demographic variables, and pre-intervention social emotional competency scores significantly predicted post intervention prosocial behavior. No significant differences were found based on gender, grade level, or prior participation on what participants learned from the program. Significant differences were found based on gender and between grades three and five on what aspects of the program participants found important. Continued research is needed to determine whether sports based social emotional interventions have a significant impact on at-risk students' behavior and academics and to inform the development of future interventions.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Center for Evidence-Based Practice (2004) disturbingly reported, “Early appearing behavioral problems during a child’s preschool years are the single best predictors of school dropout, delinquency, gang membership, and adult incarceration” (p.1). Deficits in social emotional competency are associated with poor outcomes as children and adolescents develop. Social emotional incompetence predicts later deficits in social emotional development, such as insecure attachment, angry emotion, inability to regulate affect, inability to cope, and a stunted ability to understand and recognize emotions (Denham, Blair, Schmidt & DeMulder, 2002). Kindergarten teachers report being more concerned with children’s social emotional and behavioral deficits than they are with children’s cognitive delays (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000). Furthermore, a delay in social emotional learning is a risk factor for the emergence of behavior problems and psychopathology (Carter, Briggs-Gowan & Davis, 2004; Cicchetti & Cohen, 1995; Denham & Holt, 1993). Denham (2001) refers to children’s emotional competence as being the fundamental support for developing social competence and posits that a lack of social competence can endorse spiraling difficulties.

Social emotional development is characterized by the ability to encode, interpret, and reason about social and emotional information (McKown, Gumbiner, Russo, & Lipton, 2009). An abundance of research shows that social emotional competencies are related to positive outcomes. For example, Raver (2003) explored longitudinal research that indicates young children’s emotional competency is linked to a significantly greater chance of early school

success. Another study posits that social emotional skills are necessary to support school readiness (Denham, 2006). Further, several other researchers have argued that it is possible to improve academic achievement by improving children's levels of social-emotional competence (Payton et al., 2000; Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). Even more, several studies (e.g., McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002; Osterman, 2000) show that social emotional learning enhances students' connectedness to school.

In addition to supporting academic success, social emotional learning (SEL) also has implications in other areas of a child's development. Nissen and Hawkins (2010) cite early emotional competence, including emotional regulation, expression, and knowledge, as being strongly linked to children's mental health and social interactions. Successful peer interactions have been shown to be a predictor of ongoing mental health (Denham, 2001). Social emotional competence is also related to prosocial behavior, fewer anger reactions, and the ability to explain emotions (Denham, 2001). In fact, teaching empathy was shown to be helpful in remedial programs designed to treat aggression and antisocial attitudes in youth (Robinson, Roberts, Strayer & Koopman, 2007).

The proposed study will explore the effectiveness of a sports based social emotional learning intervention on the social emotional development of an at-risk population of elementary school students attending school in an urban school district. Unlike many previous studies investigating the impact of social emotional interventions on school age populations, this proposed investigation focuses on how sports based programming, rather than academic based programming, provides a supportive environment for developing social emotional competency. There is a significant need for research on this topic to contribute to the development of appropriately targeted interventions for children living in low-income areas who are at risk for

stunted social emotional development. Understanding the impact of an existing sports program on a child's developing social emotional competency will further our ability to use sports based programming to develop future interventions for at-risk populations.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Defining Social Emotional Development

According to CASEL, social-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” (CASEL, 2014). These skills are critical for becoming a good citizen and student, and can decrease risky behaviors and promote positive outcomes (CASEL, 2013). CASEL has identified five competency areas that are the focus of SEL curriculum (see Table 1).

Table 1: CASEL Social Emotional Learning Competencies

CASEL SEL COMPETENCY AREA	Description
Self Awareness	The ability to accurately recognize one’s emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one’s strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.
Self-Management	The ability to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.
Social Awareness	The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand

	social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.
Relationship Skills	The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.
Responsible Decision Making	The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.

Development of these competency clusters in children improves student positive behavior and reduces negative behavior, prepares adolescents for success in adulthood, and improves student achievement and attitudes toward school (CASEL, 2014). For the purposes of this study, the CASEL definition of social emotional learning will be used, and the terms “social emotional learning” and “social emotional development” will be used interchangeably. Social emotional competencies will refer to the social emotional skills that are acquired during social emotional learning/development

Self-Awareness

CASEL defines self-awareness as the ability to accurately recognize one’s emotions and thoughts and understand how those emotions and thoughts influence behavior. Self-awareness includes an accurate assessment of one’s strengths and limitations and the possession of a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism. According to CASEL, self-awareness is an essential

component of social emotional learning and provides the foundation for building additional social emotional competencies.

Self-awareness includes awareness of feelings, management of feelings, constructive sense of self and perspective taking. An individual who is self-aware is able to correctly name and distinguish among a variety of emotions, such as understanding how anger is different from sadness. The self-aware individual also understands the range of emotions and can differentiate between situations that would cause rise to different emotions. Furthermore, a self-aware person is able to identify the thoughts associated with certain feelings. They can then connect those feelings to their physical state.

Self-Management

Self-management is the ability to monitor and regulate emotions and is often referred to as self-regulation. It includes the capacity to moderate negative feelings, to inhibit negative actions, control impulsive behaviors, and comfort oneself (Payton et al., 2000). CASEL defines self-management as the ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. Self-management includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.

Hofmann, Schmeichel, and Baddeley (2012) posit that self-regulation is comprised of three main components: standards of thought, feeling, or behavior that individuals endorse, mentally represent, and monitor; sufficient motivation to invest effort into reducing discrepancies between standards and actual states; and sufficient capacity to achieve this (i.e. reduce the discrepancy) in light of obstacles and temptations along the way. Self-regulation is also defined as the ability to sustain attention, control impulses, and delay gratification (McKown et al.,

2009). Payton and colleagues (2000) summarize the important of self-awareness and self-management:

Being able to identify and regulate one's feelings in adaptive ways also contributes to the promotion of a constructive sense of self...Knowledge of personal feelings, strengths, and areas in which one might want or need to improve, along with self-regulation of impulses and actions, are critical to developing a sense of confidence and optimism that one will be able to meet the challenges of everyday life now and in the future (p. 182).

Social Awareness

Social situations require that young people extend their awareness and understanding of feelings to others (Payton et al., 2000). Social awareness is defined as the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior (i.e., social competence) and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports (CASEL, 2014). Recognizing the feelings and taking the perspectives of others help predict how one might act in a given situation and guide one's own behavior in response to situations (Payton et al., 2000). Social competence is an essential component of social awareness. Socially competent behavior strongly influences social acceptance (McKown et al., 2009). Socially competent behavior is defined as cooperative, assertive, socially appropriate behavior, and skillfully participating in group activities (Newcomb, Bukowski, & Pattee, 1993).

Relationship Skills

Relationship skills are the ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly,

listening actively, cooperating with others, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed (CASEL, 2014). In Payton and colleagues' article (2000), they use the term “social interaction skills” to refer to this skill set. They identified six sub skills, including active listening (i.e., the capacity to attend to others both verbally and non-verbally to demonstrate to them that they have been understood), expressive communication (i.e., the capacity to initiate and maintain conversations and to clearly express one's thoughts and feelings both verbally and non-verbally), cooperation (i.e., the capacity to take turns and share in both pairs and group situations), negotiation (i.e., the capacity to consider all perspectives involved in a conflict in order to resolve the conflict peacefully and to the satisfaction of all involved), refusal (i.e., the capacity to make and follow through with clear “NO” statements, to avoid situations in which one might be pressures, and to delay acting in pressure situations until adequately prepared), and help seeking (i.e., the capacity to identify the need for support and assistance and to access available and appropriate resources).

Risk Factors

Low Socioeconomic Status

There are certain risk factors associated with poor social emotional development in children and adolescents. Adolescents living in low socioeconomic neighborhoods face a multitude of risk factors that could impact their ability to develop social emotional competencies. Disadvantaged populations are most readily impacted by the microsystem –immediate settings such as their neighborhood, school, and homes, and the mesosystem – the relationships between the different settings in the microsystem such as the home-school connection (Hamilton & Luster, 2005). Children from disadvantaged neighborhoods face exposure to violence (Pastore, Fisher & Friedman, 1996), teen pregnancy (Gallup-Black & Weitzman, 2004), and health

disparities (DeBose, 1999). According to the National Center for Children in Poverty, families who are considered “poor” are those who live below the poverty threshold. In 2013, the federal poverty level for a family of four with two children was \$23,624. In 2013, approximately 19% of children lived in poor families in the United States. Families are considered “low-income” if the family income is less than twice the poverty threshold. In 2013, approximately 41% of children lived in low-income families in the United States (Jiang, Ekono, & Skinner, 2015). These children engage in more risky behaviors during adolescence; they are more likely to have sex before age 16, become a member of a gang, attack someone or get in a fight, and run away. Approximately 29% of youth from low-income families do not graduate from high school and only one in ten graduate from a four-year university. Even more, one in five adolescents from low-income families are charged with an adult crime by the age of 24 (Kent, 2009).

According to Murry and colleagues, a poverty-stricken neighborhood is a challenging environment for adolescents to develop positive social and developmental outcomes because of high crime rates, and physical and social disorder including drug trafficking, gang violence, and prostitution (2001). Poverty has direct and indirect effects on many areas of an adolescent’s life. According to Murry and colleagues (2011), poverty affects academic achievement, identity development, internalizing behaviors, externalizing behaviors, sexual risk, and physical health. There is also research that suggests that poverty has a direct effect on adolescent mental health. Adolescents living in low-income families are at greater risk for teen suicide, depression and substance abuse (Fergusson, Woodward & Horwood, 2000), and decreased availability of mental health care (Dashiff, DiMicco, Myers & Shephard, 2009). Furthermore, youth living in these settings typically lack positive role models and are likely to be socialized by older peers (Bingenheimer, Brennan, & Earls, 2005).

Students who live in impoverished areas also face specific problems within the context of their educational settings. Many families who live in low-income areas are less likely to have financial resources to support their children academically, and might not be able to afford resources such as books, computers, or tutors to help support academic achievement (Orr, 2003). In one nationwide study of kindergarten children, only 36% of children in the low-income group were read to on a daily-basis (Coley, 2002). Aikens and Barbarin (2008) found that children from low socio-economic families are at risk for reading difficulties. They acquire language skills at a slower rate and demonstrate delayed progress in the areas of letter recognition and phonological awareness (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). In one study, the students with low socio-economic status entered high school 3.3 grade levels behind students from higher socioeconomic status schools (Palardy, 2008). A lack of resources in urban schools perpetuates low student achievement, increased school failures and subsequent dropouts (Browning, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn, 2005). Lack of resources stifle the home-school connection and disrupts parental involvement in the schooling process more than it does for affluent peers (Cooper & Cresnoe, 2007).

The school environment in urban areas also contributes to poor outcomes for children. Schools in lower SES communities have high levels of unemployment and low levels of educational achievement (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). Highly qualified teachers are hard to recruit and retain in schools in urban areas, and children's academic achievement is correlated with a teacher's quality of training (Gimbert, Bol & Wallace, 2007). However, urban schools are less likely to have highly qualified teachers (Ingersoll, 1999). School districts with high poverty, located in central cities are also more likely to have low graduation rates (Orfield et al., 2004). By their mid-30s, 70% of black male dropouts spend time in prison (Western & Pettit, 2010).

Students attending urban schools enter with varied backgrounds and ability levels, but often share community-specific stressors that stifle high academic achievement (Ahram, Stembridge, Fergus, & Noguera, n.d).

Community Violence Exposure

Students in urban settings have a history of being chronically exposed to violence in their neighborhoods (Osofsky, Wewers, Hann & Fick, 1993). A 1989 survey of mothers living in Chicago's public housing reported that their children had witnessed a shooting by the age of five (Dubrow & Garbarion, 1989). A 1992 study in Baltimore, Maryland found that 42% of the surveyed youth reported witnessing a shooting, 25% reported witnessing a stabbing, and 33% reported witnessing an assault with a weapon (Gladstein, Rusonis & Heald, 1992). A survey by Bell and Jenkins (1993) found that a group of 10-19 year olds living in an impoverished neighborhood reported similar shocking results – 39% reported that they had witnessed a shooting, 11% reported that they had been shot at, and 3% reported that they had actually been shot. Even more, Taylor and colleagues (1994) found that, of the surveyed parents with 1-5 year olds attending Boston City Hospital, 47% reported that their children had heard gunshots and 10% reported that their children had already witnessed a shooting or stabbing. One study indicates that 74% of sampled students reported feeling unsafe in their urban environments (Schwab-Stone et al., 1995). In a 2003 study, Youngstrom and colleagues found that of the 320 youth in their study, only 11 reported that they had not been exposed to violence. The median student reported six past exposures to violence and almost half of the youth reported past personal violent victimization (Youngstrom, Weist & Albus, 2003).

Community exposure to violence has tremendous impacts on the emotional, behavioral, and academic development of adolescents. A 2001 study by Cooley-Quille and colleagues,

found adolescents who are chronically exposed to community violence are often anxious about unknown or impending violent acts. Their results also demonstrate that youth who are exposed to community violence exhibit more internalizing than externalizing disorders, and that community violence exposure in youth are linked to anxiety symptoms and disorders. In the study, male adolescents reported more exposure to violence than female adolescents, but results showed that highly exposed female adolescents might be the most at-risk for internalizing behaviors.

Mazza & Reynolds (1999) found that post-traumatic stress disorder symptomatology showed a significant and direct relationship with exposure to violence. They also found that depression and suicidal ideation likely have an indirect association with exposure to violence. In another study, exposure to violence was significantly associated with twice the likelihood of suicidal ideation, four times the likelihood of suicide attempts, and twice the likelihood of alcohol abuse (Pastore, Fisher & Friedman, 1996). In the same study, researchers found that the students who were at an increased risk for mental health problems were those who reported having known someone who was murdered or witnessed a stabbing or shooting.

Family Dynamics

Family dynamics can also present risks for adolescents. Employed parents from low-income urban areas are likely to work in a service occupation, (Addy, Engelhart, & Skinner, 2013), have lower earnings, have fewer opportunities for full-time employment, a lowered likelihood of receiving benefits such as health insurance (Nelson, 1994), and have residential instability because of a lack of safe, affordable housing (Addy, Engelhardt, & Skinner, 2013). Family stress theory suggests that these types of negative economic conditions negatively impact parent-child relationships and cause maladjustment within the family environment (McLoyd,

1998). Wang and colleagues (2010) found that gender, perceived father's risk behavior, perceived mother's risk behavior, and interaction of health self-efficacy and perceived peers' risk behavior were all statistically significant explanatory variables of adolescent risk behaviors.

Parent mental health also serves as risk factors for a child's development. Individuals who experience depression often have deficits in emotion regulation and may not have all of the needed skills to model, teach, and reinforce adaptive ways of modulating distress (Gross & Muñoz, 1995; Morris et al., 2007). Other studies have demonstrated that depressed mothers display atypical affective interaction patterns with their children (Gotlib & Goodman, 1999) and have been shown to be less responsive to their children's emotional states, less likely to match their children's affect, and to display more anger and sadness and less positive affect than non-depressed mothers (e.g. Field, Healy, Goldstein, & Guthertz, 1990; Hops et al., 1987; Weinberg & Tronick, 1998). Eisenberg and colleagues' (2001) work supported maternal expressivity as a predictor of children's behavior. Their findings were consistent with previous data demonstrating that maternal expressivity affects children's regulation and social functioning.

In summary, there are many risk factors that impede an individual's ability to develop social emotional competencies. The literature cites an abundance of potential risk factors for poor or delayed social emotional development, many of them associated with living in an urban area. Children living in low-income areas may face risk factors including poverty, community violence exposure, lack of resources in schools and the community, familial stressors, decreased availability of mental health care, and an increased likelihood of developing mental illness.

Protective Factors

There are certain factors that promote development and learning even against the backdrop of seemingly detrimental risks. These factors, termed protective factors, are conditions

that function as a buffer to mitigate risk and increase adolescent well-being (“Protective Factors,” 2013). In their study, Luthar and colleagues (2000) described the way in which a protective factor might interact with a risk factor, terming that interaction “the protective-stabilizing interaction,” which they define as a pattern in which the risk factor’s relationship to symptoms is less when high levels of the protective factor are present (Luthar et al., 2000).

Resilience is the complex phenomenon that focuses on protective factors, contributing to positive outcomes despite the presence of risk (Short & Russell-Mayhew, 2009). Richardson defines resiliency as “the process of coping with adversity, change, or opportunity in a manner that results in the identification, fortification, and enrichment of resilient qualities or protective factors” (Richardson, 2002, p. 308).

Internal Protective Factors

A study examining risk and protective factors for African American youth, found that individual confidence served as a protective factor when poverty was examined as a risk factor (Li, Nussbaum & Richards, 2007). This is consistent with a study by Youngstrom and colleagues (2003) that found self-concept moderated the effects of risk on externalizing and internalizing behaviors. LeBlanc and colleagues (2011) found that problem-solving skills served as a moderator of the psychological distress associated with violence exposure in adolescents. When levels of violence exposure in the school or neighborhood were high, better communication and problem solving were associated with lower levels of psychological distress. The researchers asserted that possessing well-developed communication and problem-solving skills might allow adolescents to access social support and other resources, thereby reducing distress in the school setting (LeBlanc, Self-Brown, Shepard, & Kelley, 2011). Another study found health self-efficacy, and interaction of emotional regulation and perceived peers’ risk

behavior to be statistically significant predictors of adolescent risk behaviors. Furthermore, they discovered health self-efficacy and emotional regulation moderated the negative effects of peers' perceived risk behavior on risk behaviors (Wang, Hsu, Lin, Cheng, & Lee, 2010).

Jessor and colleagues (1995) studied the relation of psychosocial protective factors and involvement in problem behavior. They explored seven protective variables, including positive orientation to school, positive orientation to health, intolerant attitudes toward deviance, positive relations with adults, perception of strong social controls or sanctions for transgression, awareness of friends who model conventional behavior, and involvement in prosocial behaviors. The results suggested that these factors appear to play an important role in both the etiology and developmental trajectory of adolescent problem behavior (Jessor, Van Den Bos, Vanderryn, Costa & Turbin, 1995).

External Protective Factors

Li and colleagues' (2007) work demonstrated that family support and helpfulness of a family were protective factors. Two protective factors related to connectedness were also found in Cleveland and colleagues' (2003) study – having a positive relationship with one's mother and feeling a sense of attachment to your school. Furthermore, Baker's study (2013) found that fathers' home literacy involvement was predictive of two domains of social emotional development (i.e., increased attention and fewer negative behaviors) and mothers' home literacy involvement was predictive of three domains of social emotional development (i.e., increased engagement, attention, and fewer negative behaviors). Social emotional competencies also help students with disabilities navigate the challenges of the schooling years (Darrow, 2014).

There are both internal and protective factors that provide a buffer for potential risks children may face. Protective factors are present at the individual, family, and community level.

They promote self-confidence, problem-solving, and relationship skills and help mitigate the potential detrimental outcomes associated with risk factors.

Youth Development Programs

Youth development programs, including sports, are by their nature embedded with protective factors. Youth development programs promote physical and psychological safety, appropriate structure, supportive relationships, opportunities to belong, positive social norms, support for efficacy and mattering, opportunities for skill building, and integration of family, school, and community efforts (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). These features provide opportunity for adolescents to develop physically, intellectually, psychologically, and socially (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

A study by Catalano and colleagues (2004) summarized the findings of 25 effective youth development programs and described the characteristics of those programs. All of the programs addressed a minimum of five of fifteen protective factors and social emotional competencies—bonding; resilience; social, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and moral competence; self-determination; spirituality; self-efficacy; clear and positive identity; belief in the future; recognition for positive behavior; opportunities for prosocial involvement; and prosocial norms or health standards for behavior. Most of the programs addressed at least eight constructs, with three constructs (i.e., competence, self-efficacy, and prosocial norms) being addressed in all twenty-five programs. Prosocial involvement was addressed in 88% of the programs; recognition for positive behavior was addressed in 88%; bonding was addressed in 76% of the programs; positive self-identity, self-determination, belief in the future, resiliency, and spirituality were addressed in 50% of the programs. The programs also used positive outcome measures to examine either reduction in negative behavior or an increase in positive

behavior (Catalano, 2004).

A longitudinal study found that the more involvement an adolescent has in such a program, the greater the likelihood of achieving a healthy adulthood as measured by high school graduation, college attendance, employment, and lack of involvement with the criminal justice system. The study explored the correlation between the degree of involvement in a youth development program and six surveyed areas. Three of the surveyed areas (i.e., education, employment, and criminal justice) showed statistical significance and two of the areas (i.e., pregnancy/parenthood, illicit drug use) demonstrated a positive trend (Meltzer, Fitzgibbon, Leahy, & Petsko, 2006).

A meta-analysis by Durlak and colleagues (2011) explored the findings of 213 school-based, universal social emotional learning (SEL) programs. They found that these programs had significant positive effects on social-emotional competencies, increased prosocial behavior, reduced conduct and internalizing problems, and improved academic performance on grades and achievement tests. In fact, they found that these programs boosted academic achievement by 11 percentile points. Other promising results of the meta-analysis demonstrate that teachers and other school staff effectively implemented the SEL programs; in fact, SEL interventions were successfully incorporated into teachers' routine educational practices. Moreover, the SEL programs examined in the meta-analysis were successful at the elementary, middle, and high school levels and in urban, rural, and suburban schools.

A qualitative study explored parental perspectives of the impact of low-income youth participation in a summer sport-based positive youth development program on individual, parent, family, and community level factors. The parents reported that the program addressed risk factors and enhanced protective factors at multiple levels. Specifically, parents discussed the

role of the program in their child's biopsychosocial development; in broadening their children's horizons through opportunity; and in enhancing their children's affect, behaviors, and cognitions (Riley & Anderson-Butcher, 2012).

CHAPTER 3: RATIONALE FOR STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

With the expansive list of risk factors to which children are exposed in urban settings, it seems obvious that researchers would devote time to explore the protective factors that can mitigate those risks. The risk factors contribute to inequity in adult outcomes between children living in poverty and their more affluent peers. Protective factors are linked to positive outcomes and serve as a buffer to lessen the impact of risks. There is a substantial body of research that demonstrates the effectiveness of SEL interventions for a wide range of children. According to Durlak and colleagues' meta-analysis, SEL interventions are routinely incorporated into educational practice and often delivered within classroom curricula (Durlak et al, 2011).

Youth development programs, such as after school or sports programs, can implicitly or explicitly promote social competencies and increase protective factors, while also bypassing the barriers to implementation in the school setting. By incorporating SEL into youth development programs, these programs can promote social competencies and combat many of the risks that adolescents face. There is currently a wide range of youth program approaches and foci, which allow for diversity in the development and implementation of these programs. In 2006, over 38 million children were involved in different sports programs in the United States, suggesting that the development of sports-based programs may be the best way to reach the largest number of children (Peterson & Fix, 2007). Furthermore, sports programs are typically already established in communities, which would decrease the amount of time and money required to generate successful programs from the ground up. Well-supervised sports programs provide opportunities

for adolescents to develop social and interpersonal skills (Rutten et al. 2007; Donaldson and Ronan 2006; Gardner, Roth, and Brooks-Gunn 2009). After-school sports programming provides a safe and supervised environment for students who might otherwise face significant risks in the environments they return to after school (Knotek & Pollack, 2014). Fraser-Thomas and colleagues (2005) highlight the benefits of organized youth sports, including a better quality of life and the development of numerous social skills.

Few studies, however, have explored the idea of embedding SEL curriculum into sports programs. Stoiber (2011) lists certain factors that have traditionally impeded school-based SEL implementation: schools do not always implement interventions with fidelity because they can be chaotic and lack the amount or type of resources necessary to follow through with the intervention; there is limited availability and accessibility of reliable and accurate measures of effectiveness; schools are imbued with extraneous factors that can impact the intervention; and social-behavioral outcomes are hard to measure accurately and reliably. Though all of these factors certainly would affect SEL implementation within the school day, after-school programs would not face the same challenges.

The Present Study

During the 2012-2013 school year, World Sport Chicago (WSC), along with the University of Chicago and the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, partnered with eight Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL) schools to implement a pilot of a sports based social emotional intervention for at risk students in inner city Chicago. WSC is a non-profit organization created to support the city's bid for the 2016 Olympics. Though the city was not chosen as a host for the Olympics, WSC has continued to support and promote sports programs that will benefit the city. The organization's mission is to "promote the development of

sustainable sports programming that improves the quality of life for under served youth in Chicago and at-risk communities” (About World Sport Chicago, 2014). With community and funding partners, World Sport Chicago creates and implements programs that teach character development, engage families and communities, direct resources to communities, share practices and innovations, and advocate for all kids regardless of abilities (“About World Sport Chicago”, 2014).

Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL) is a Chicago nonprofit that was founded in 2001. It is a school management organization that creates schools of excellence by developing highly effective teachers and transforming educational outcomes for students in the lowest performing schools. Currently, AUSL manages 32 Chicago Public Schools serving more than 18,000 students. Hallmarks of AUSL managed schools are steady, positive improvements in academic achievement, student engagement, and parent satisfaction. AUSL turnaround elementary schools, on average, have outpaced the Chicago Public School district growth in ISAT meets/exceeds gains every year since 2008 (“About AUSL,” 2015).

The PLAYS (i.e., Play Learn Achieve Youth Succeed) pilot program was developed to support at risk students’ development of social emotional skills including grit, resiliency, and the core social emotional competencies outlined by Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). The program used a supportive coaching model to create a developmentally positive team environment in which an SEL curriculum could be implemented. The goal of the program was to improve students’ development of social emotional competency, improve their academic success, and to increase their psychosocial well-being. The program was offered at twelve schools, three times a week over a ten week span and was built around both soccer and character development. Similar to the Cognitive Behavior Therapy

psychoeducational process, this intervention was manualized, had a formal schedule (e.g., check-in, instruction, problem-solving and debrief), and included explicit instruction, supervised practice, and facilitative questioning by the coaches (Knotek & Pollack, 2014).

The Chicago Fire Foundation developed the soccer portion of the curriculum. While a variety of skills were practiced at every session, each week had a distinct skill such as passing and touch (week 1), turning the ball (week 3) and team shape and spacing (week 10). SEL components of the curriculum systematically embedded grit (i.e., perseverance and passion for long-term goals) and CASEL core competencies into the sessions (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, and Kelly 2007). The grit constructs are connectedness/teamwork; self-awareness and desire to achieve; motivation, passion and movement towards goals; perseverance; and resilience. CASEL core competencies are self-management, self-awareness, responsible decision-making, social awareness and relationship skills. Similar to the soccer components of the curriculum, each week had a social-emotional theme that was explicitly taught and integrated into each of a week's three sessions (Knotek & Pollack, 2014).

Each team had two coaches who were also teachers from their team's school (8 teams, 2 coaches). The PLAYS program combines a traditional soccer training curriculum with a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) component. The teacher/coaches were trained in the SEL and soccer curriculum during two weekend professional development sessions. Additionally, coaches received ongoing professional development from personnel at World Sport Chicago and the Chicago Fire. The coaches support the SEL concept by emphasizing the weekly SEL theme throughout the skill building activities; challenges and activities related to a session's theme were embedded in the day's activities. For example, week one had an SEL theme of Teamwork and a soccer theme of Passing & First Touch. During weeks one to five, the themes were

introduced and then they were recursively worked through again during the second half of the program (Knotek & Pollack, 2014).

The third year of program implementation began in March of 2015 at twelve AUSL elementary schools. The intended learning outcomes of the curriculum included both social emotional competencies and soccer skills. Each of the ten weeks of the program had an SEL component and a soccer component. For example, week one's SEL component was Self-Awareness and the soccer component was dribbling. All of the practices followed a specified structure, and the coaches were provided with a program binder that included a detailed explanation of both the soccer portion and the SEL portion for every practice. A detailed description of the curriculum and intervention is located in the appendix.

Research Questions

The purpose of the current study is to explore the impact of SEL sports programming on the development of social emotional competencies in at-risk elementary school students. The following research questions will guide this study:

1. Does participation in the PLAYS intervention impact participants' social emotional development?
 - a. Based on SDQPostTotal?
 - b. Based on SDQPostProsocial?
2. What elements of participants' demographics and experiences in the program predict social emotional development?
3. Are there differences in participants' experiences in the program?
 - a. Based on gender?
 - b. Based on grade level?

c. Based on prior participation in the program?

CHAPTER 4: METHOD

Design

One group pre- and post-test design was used to answer questions regarding the impact of participation in the PLAYS program and social emotional development in a sample of elementary aged children attending school in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. The pre and post total scores on the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire (i.e., SDQ; a brief measure of social emotional development) were compared to answer the following question: Does participation in the PLAYS intervention impact participants' social emotional development as evidenced by a decrease in total score (i.e., the higher the total score, the more problematic behaviors indicated) on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)? The pre and post prosocial scores on the SDQ were compared to answer the following question: Does participation in the PLAYS intervention impact participants' social emotional development as evidenced by an increase in post prosocial score (i.e., the higher the score, the more positive behaviors indicated) on the SDQ? The relationship between participant demographics, SDQ pre Total score, the results of the Student Program Survey (i.e., SPS; a survey of participants' experiences in the program), and post prosocial scores on the SDQ were examined to answer the following question: Based on the Student Program Survey results, what demographics and elements of participants' experiences in the program predict social emotional development? The relationship between the results of the SPS and age, gender, and prior participation in the program were explored to answer the following question: Are there differences in program survey results based on age, gender, or prior participation in the program?

Hypothesized outcomes were as follows:

- 1a. Participation in the PLAYS intervention will significantly impact participants' social emotional development, as evidenced by lower post-test SDQ total scores than pre-test.
- 1b. Participation in the PLAYS intervention will significantly impact participants' social emotional development, as evidenced by higher post-test SDQ prosocial scores than pre-test.
2. Ratings on the Student Program Survey (SPS), age, gender, SDQ pre total score and prior participation will predict post prosocial behaviors.
- 3a. There will be differences in SPS Learned and SPS Importance scores based on gender.
- 3b. There will be differences in participants' SPS Learned and SPS Importance scores based on grade level.
- 3c. There will be differences in participants' SPS Learned and SPS Importance scores based on prior participation in the program.

Assessment Instruments

It is important to note that available measures of social emotional development are varied in their terminology and focus on a range of social emotional constructs. Every instrument defines social and emotional constructs in its own unique way. The terms “social emotional learning (also referred to as SEL),” and “social emotional development” are often used interchangeably. Social emotional competencies are the social emotional skills that are acquired during social emotional learning/development.

Social emotional development measures also come from a variety of frameworks, including youth developmental assets and mental health, though this study focuses on youth risk and protective factors framework. The PLAYS curriculum was designed around the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) constructs and does not necessarily directly align with the terminology of the measure used in this study. The first four of the CASEL competency areas (i.e., self awareness, self management, social awareness, and relationship skills) will be measured in this study by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a brief social emotional questionnaire for children and adolescents ages 2 through 17. It was developed in the United Kingdom but has since been validated for use in the United States (Bourdon, Goodman, Rae, Simpson, Koretz (2005). The results indicated good acceptability and internal consistency, and normative scoring bands were similar, though not identical, to the original British bands. Goodman (2001) confirmed the five-factor structure and found reliability to be satisfactory, with alphas ranging from 0.72 to 0.76 for internal consistency. The SDQ has 25 questions that are divided between five scales: emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/impulsivity, peer relationship problems, and prosocial behavior. Four of the scales' (i.e., emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/impulsivity, and peer relationship problems) scores range from 0-10, with a higher score indicating a higher level of concern. The prosocial scale ranges from 0-10, but a higher score indicates fewer problems. The total score is generated by summing the scores from all of the scales except the prosocial scale. The total scores can range from 0-40, with a higher score indicating a higher level of concern. Table 2 shows the different subscales of the

SDQ with a brief description of each and Table 3 shows the alignment of the SDQ subscales with the CASEL SEL competencies.

Table 2: Description of SDQ Subscales

Subscale	Description
Emotional Symptoms	How do children perceive their emotions?
Conduct Problems	How do children conduct themselves?
Hyperactivity/Inattention	How well do children regulate their decision-making and behavior?
Peer Relationship Problems	How well can the child establish and maintain friendships?
Prosocial Behavior	How well does the child understand and adhere to social norms?

Table 3: Alignment of SDQ Subscales and CASEL SEL Competency Areas

CASEL SEL Competency Area	SDQ Subscale	Description of Subscale
Self Awareness		
	Emotional Symptoms	Does the child exhibit internalizing behaviors? Does the child understand different emotions?
Self-Management		
	Conduct Problems	Does the child have anger problems? Does the child lie, cheat, steal, or fight?
	Hyperactivity/Inattention	Does the child think before acting?
Social Awareness		
	Prosocial Behavior	Is the child considerate of other people? Does the child understand social norms?
Relationship Skills		
	Peer Relationship Problems	Is the child able to establish and maintain friendships?

Student Program Survey

The Student Program Survey (SPS) is a self-report questionnaire developed specifically for the PLAYS program. The questionnaire has two scales – SPS Learned and SPS Importance – that give the participants the opportunity to rate their experience in the program. The SPS Learned scale is composed of a sentence stem (i.e., Playing soccer in the PLAYS program taught me...) with ten accompanying statements about what the students may have learned during the duration of the program (e.g., ... to work as part of a team). The students rated each item on five point likert type scale ranging from Not At All True to Very Much True. The SPS Importance scale is composed of a sentence stem (i.e., When you played in the PLAYS soccer program, how important was...) with ten accompanying statements about what the students may have found important during the duration of the program (e.g., ...making new friends). The students rated each item on five point likert type scale ranging from Really Not Important to Really Important. A copy of the Student Program Survey is located in the appendix.

Participants

The data used in the current study were drawn from the 2015 implementation of the PLAYS program. An informational brochure about the program was sent home in twelve AUSL schools that were interested in hosting the program, and parents of interested students gave consent by signing a permission form. Randomization was not used because the participating schools could not deny the program to any child who turned in a permission form. All students who turned in permission forms were allowed to participate in the program. Twelve schools participated in the program, with varying numbers of participants at each school. Complete data were collected from eight schools. Participants from four schools only completed one side of the

Student Program Survey, therefore their data were not used in the analyses. The total sample includes 115 participants from 8 different schools. Participant data is displayed in Table 4.

Table 4: Frequencies of Age, Grade, Gender, and Prior Participation

		Frequency	Percent
<i>Age</i>	8.0	1	.9
	9.0	27	23.5
	10.0	47	40.9
	11.0	29	25.2
	12.0	10	8.7
	13.0	1	.9
	Total	115	100.0
<i>Grade</i>	3.0	32	27.8
	4.0	57	49.6
	5.0	26	22.6
	Total	115	100.0
<i>Gender</i>	Male	70	60.9
	Female	45	39.1
	Total	115	100.0
<i>Prior Part</i>	No	73	63.5
	Yes	42	36.5
	Total	115	100.0

Ethical Considerations

The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Chicago Public Schools and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and meets all the guidelines and criteria for conducting research with human subjects. All electronic files and paper materials were de-identified and appropriately stored.

Data Analysis

The Odum Institute and committee members provided statistical consultation for data analysis. Data analyses were conducted using SPSS software package.

Preliminary Analysis

Preliminary analysis included an examination of descriptive information on all variables to assess their distributions. For categorical data (age, gender, grade, and prior participation), frequency data were calculated. Each of the dependent variables (SDQ scores and program survey results) contained continuous data. Preliminary analysis for continuous data included measurements of central tendency, variability, skewness, and kurtosis.

Primary Analysis

Primary analyses were conducted to examine the effect of the PLAYS intervention on participants' social emotional development. A paired t test for dependent samples was used to test the impact of the participation in the PLAYS intervention on the SDQ pre Total score and SDQ post Total score. A Wilcoxon-Signed-rank test was used to test the impact of participation in the PLAYS intervention on SDQ pre Prosocial Scale and SDQ post Prosocial Scale. A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed to investigate the relationship between post intervention SDQ Prosocial scores and the independent variables (pre SDQ Total scores, prior participation, age, gender, SPS Learned and SPS Importance). Separate Mann-Whitney U analyses were used to test differences in SPS Learned and SPS Importance scores based gender, prior participation and grade.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

Statistical analyses were conducted using the SPSS version 22 statistical software package to determine the effects of the PLAYS program on the participants' social emotional competency, determine any differences in participants' experiences in the program, and determine what elements predict social emotional development. Data entry was double-checked by committee members and was then screened for missing items. The data were also screened for errors in scoring and coding, normality, multicollinearity, and outliers. Summary statistics for analyzed variables are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Summary statistics of analyzed variables

	N	Lowest	Highest	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	115	8.0	13.0	10.200	.9570
Grade	115	3.0	5.0	3.948	.7114
SDQPreTotal	115	0.0	24.0	10.878	5.8746
SDQPostTotal	115	0.0	28.0	10.809	5.6287
SDQPreProsocial	115	3.0	10.0	7.904	1.8063
SDQPostProsocial	115	2.0	10.0	7.530	2.0319
SPSLearned	115	24.0	40.0	36.452	4.4628
SPSImportance	115	17.0	40.0	33.496	4.9282
Valid N (listwise)	115				

Hypothesis 1a: *Participation in the PLAYS intervention program will result in a significant decrease in Total score on the SDQ, a measure of participants' social emotional development.*

All variables (SDQ pre and post Total scores) were checked for violations of the assumptions of the paired t-test. Eight outliers were detected (i.e., among difference scores between SDQ pre and SDQ post total scores) that were more than 1.5 box-lengths from the edge of the box in a boxplot. The paired t test for dependent samples was conducted comparing pre and post scores both with and without the outliers, and the results were not affected. As such, the outliers were kept in the analysis. The difference scores for the SDQ pre total scores and SDQ post total scores were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test ($p = .058$). A paired t test for dependent samples was conducted to compare pre intervention SDQ total scores and post intervention SDQ total scores. No significant difference was found between the scores for pre intervention SDQ total scores ($M=10.88$, $SD=5.87$) and post intervention SDQ total scores ($M=10.81$, $SD=5.63$); $t(114)=.145$, $p=.885$. These results, found in Table 6, suggest that the PLAYS intervention did not have a statistically significant decrease on total SDQ scores at the conclusion of the intervention.

Table 6: Paired Samples T-Test

	Paired Differences						Sig. (2-tailed)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t		df
				Lower	Upper			
Pre SDQTotal	-0.0697	5.1397	.4793	-1.019	.8799	-.145	114	.885
Post SDQTotal								

Hypothesis 1b: *Participation in the PLAYS intervention program will result in a significant increase in Prosocial score on the SDQ, a measure of participants' social emotional development.*

All variables (SDQ pre and post Prosocial scores) were checked for violations of the assumptions of the paired t-test. Two outliers were detected (i.e., among difference scores between SDQ pre and SDQ post Prosocial scores) that were more than 1.5 box-lengths from the edge of the box in a boxplot. Inspection of their values did not reveal them to be extreme and they were kept in the analysis. The difference score between SDQ pre prosocial and SDQ post prosocial were not normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test ($p < .05$).

Due to a violation of the assumption of normality, the Wilcoxon Signed-rank test was deemed an appropriate non-parametric statistic to compare pre intervention SDQ Prosocial scores and post intervention SDQ Prosocial scores. The PLAYS intervention did not result in a statistically significant increase in prosocial behaviors at the conclusion of the intervention, $z = -1.85$, $p = .065$. The results of the Wilcoxon Signed-rank test can be found in Table 7.

Table 7: Wilcoxon Signed-rank Test Statistics

	SDQPreProsocial - SDQPostProsocial
Z	-1.848 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.065
a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	
b. Based on positive ranks.	

Hypothesis 2: *Ratings on the Student Program Survey (SPS), age, gender, prior participation, and SDQ Pre Total scores will significantly predict post prosocial behaviors.*

All variables (post Prosocial score, SPS Learned score, SPS Importance score, age, gender, prior participation, and SDQ Pre Total) were checked for violations of the assumptions for hierarchical regression analysis. There was independence of residuals, as assessed by a Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.046. A correlation greater than 0.7 was found between age and grade, thus grade was removed from the model. An analysis of studentized deleted residuals, leverage values, and Cook's Distance values revealed only one noteworthy case. The case had a leverage value of .51 but was left in the analysis, as it was not considered a highly influential case as determined by Cook's Distance. The visual analysis of the normal P-P plot and histogram revealed an approximately normal distribution, thus parametric statistics were deemed appropriate for the data.

A hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to determine the best predictors of post intervention prosocial behavior. Correlations between predictor variables and the outcome measure are listed in Table 4. Three models were tested with SDQ Pre Total scores as Model 1. The addition of prior participation, age, and gender (Model 2) led to a statistically significant

increase in R^2 of .174, $F(3, 110) = 9.563$, $p < .001$. The addition of scores on SPS Learned and SPS Importance (Model 3) also led to a statistically significant increase in R^2 of .059, $F(2, 108) = 5.251$, $p < .05$. The full model (Model 3) of SDQ pre total scores, prior participation, age, gender, grade, SPS Learned score, and SPS Importance score was statistically significant, $R^2 = .393$, $F(6, 108) = 11.671$, $p < .001$; adjusted $R^2 = .360$. Results for these analyses are found in Tables 8 and 9.

Table 8: Correlation coefficient values between predictor variables and criterion variable

	SDQ Post Prosocial	SDQ Pre Total	PriorPart	Age	Gender	SPS Learned	SPS Importance
SDQ Post Prosocial	1.000						
SDQ Pre Total	-0.401**	1.000					
PriorPart	-0.208*	0.188	1.000				
Age	-0.299**	-0.041	0.258*	1.000			
Gender	0.195*	0.178*	0.058	-0.056	1.000		
SPS Learned	0.171*	-0.077	0.085	-0.167*	-0.194*	1.000	
SPS Importance	0.202*	0.016	0.023	-0.148	-0.194*	0.416**	1.000

*p < .05, **p < .001

Table 9: Summary of hierarchical regression models predicting SDQ Post Prosocial

SDQ Post Prosocial						
Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		
Variable	B	β	B	β	B	β
Constant	9.04**		13.83**		7.99*	
SDQ Pre Total	-0.139**	-0.401**	-0.155**	-0.448**	-0.155**	-0.449**
Prior Part			-0.139	-0.099	-0.181	-0.129
Age			-0.587*	-0.277**	-0.467*	-0.220*
Gender			1.098**	0.265**	1.356**	0.327**
SPS Learned					0.040	0.088
SPS Importance					0.085*	0.206*
R^2	0.161		0.334		0.393	
F	21.64**		13.81**		11.67**	
ΔR^2	0.161		0.174		0.059	
ΔF	21.64**		9.56**		5.25*	

Note. N=115. *p <.05, **p <.001

Hypothesis 3a: *There will be significant differences in SPS Learned and SPS*

Importance scores based on gender.

The variables (SPS Learned and SPS Importance score and gender) were checked for violations of the assumptions of the independent samples t test. There were no outliers in the SPS Learned or SPS Importance data for females, as assessed by visual inspection of a box plot. There were six outliers in the SPS Learned data and one in the SPS Importance data for males, as assessed by visual inspection of a box plot. Two of the outliers in the SPS Learned data were 3 box-lengths away from the edge of their box and were considered extreme. Inspection of the outliers revealed no data entry or measurement errors. The outliers were considered genuinely unusual values and were left in the analysis. The visual analysis of the Normal Q-Q plots and histograms revealed a deviation from the normal distribution of SPS Learned and SPS Importance scores for both males and females, thus nonparametric statistics were used. Due to a violation of the assumption of normality, the Mann-Whitney U test was deemed an appropriate non-parametric statistic to compare male and female scores on the SPS Learned scale.

Mann-Whitney U tests were run to determine if there were differences in SPS Learned or SPS Importance scores between males and females. Distributions of the scores of SPS Learned and SPS Importance scores for males and females were similar, as assessed by visual inspection. Median SPS Learned score was not statistically significantly different between males and females, $U = 1296, z = -1.613, p = .107$.

Median SPS Importance score was statistically significantly higher in males than females, $U = 1221, z = -2.036, p < .05$. Results can be found in Table 10.

Table 10: Differences in SPSEarned and SPSEImportance based on gender

	SPSEarned	SPSEImportance
Males	N = 70	N = 70
Females	N = 45	N = 45
Mann-Whitney U	1296.000	1221.000
Wilcoxon W	2331.000	2256.000
Z	-1.613	-2.036
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.107	.042

a. Grouping Variable: Gender

Hypothesis 3b: *There will be significant differences in participants' SPS Learned and SPS Importance scores based on grade level.*

The variables (SPS Learned and SPS Importance score and grade level) were checked for violations of the assumptions of the independent samples t test. The SPS Learned data had two outliers for third grade and four outliers for fourth grade, as assessed by visual inspection of box-plots. One of the outliers for fourth grade was considered extreme. There were no outliers in the SPS Learned data for fifth grade. The SPS Importance data had no outliers for third or fourth grade, and three outliers for fifth grade, as assessed by visual inspection of box-plots. The outliers were considered genuinely unusual values and were left in the analysis. The visual analysis of the Normal Q-Q plots and histograms revealed a deviation from the normal distribution of SPS Learned and SPS Importance scores for all grade levels, thus nonparametric statistics were used. Due to a violation of the assumption of normality, the Mann-Whitney U test was deemed an appropriate non-parametric statistic to compare third, fourth, and fifth grader scores on the SPS Learned scale.

Mann-Whitney U tests were run to determine if there were differences in SPS Learned or SPS Importance scores between grade levels. Distributions of the scores of SPS Learned and SPS Importance scores for all grade levels were similar, as assessed by visual inspection. Median SPS Learned score was not statistically significantly different between third and fourth grade, $U = 893, z = -.164, p = .870$. Median SPS Importance scores were not statistically significantly different between third and fourth grade participants, $U = 772, z = -1.203, p = .229$. Median SPS Learned scores were not statistically significantly different between third and fifth grade participants, $U = 357, z = -.931, p = .352$. Median SPS Importance scores were

statistically significantly higher for third grade participants than fifth grade participants, $U = 285$, $z = -2.057$, $p < .05$. Median SPS Learned scores were not statistically significantly different between fourth and fifth grade participants, $U = 608.50$, $z = -1.311$, $p = .190$. Median SPS Importance scores were not statistically significantly different between fourth and fifth grade participants, $U = 598.50$, $z = -1.403$, $p = .161$. Results can be found in Tables 11 – 13.

Table 11: Differences in SPSLearned and SPSImportance between grades 3 and 4

	SPSLearned	SPSImportance
Third Grade	N = 32	N = 32
Fourth Grade	N = 57	N = 57
Mann-Whitney U	893.000	772.000
Wilcoxon W	1421.000	2425.000
Z	-.164	-1.203
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.870	.229

a. Grouping Variable: Grade

Table 12: Differences in SPSLearned and SPSImportance between grades 3 and 5

	SPSLearned	SPSImportance
Third Grade	N = 32	N = 32
Fifth Grade	N = 26	N = 26
Mann-Whitney U	357.000	285.000
Wilcoxon W	708.000	636.000
Z	-.931	-2.057
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.352	.040

a. Grouping Variable: Grade

Table 13: Differences in SPSEarned and SPSEImportance between grades 4 and 5

	SPSEarned	SPSEImportance
Fourth Grade	N = 57	N = 57
Fifth Grade	N = 26	N = 26
Mann-Whitney U	608.500	598.500
Wilcoxon W	959.500	949.500
Z	-1.311	-1.403
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.190	.161

a. Grouping Variable: Grade

Hypothesis 3c: *There will be significant differences in participants' SPS Learned and SPS Importance scores based on prior participation in the program.*

The variables (SPS Learned and SPS Importance score and prior participation) were checked for violations of the assumptions of the independent samples t test. The SPS Learned data had three outliers in the group of non-prior participants and three outliers in the group of prior participants, as assessed by visual inspection of box-plots. One of the outliers in the prior participant group was considered extreme. There was one outlier in the SPS Importance data in the non-prior participant group. No outliers were found in the SPS Importance data for prior participants. The outliers were considered genuinely unusual values and were left in the analysis. The visual analysis of the Normal Q-Q plots and histograms revealed a deviation from the normal distribution of SPS Learned and SPS Importance scores for both prior and new participants, thus nonparametric statistics were used. Due to a violation of the assumption of normality, the Mann-Whitney U test was deemed an appropriate non-parametric statistic to compare prior participant and new participant scores on the SPS Learned scale.

Mann-Whitney U tests were run to determine if there were differences in SPS Learned or SPS Importance scores between prior participants and new participants. Distributions of the scores of SPS Learned and SPS Importance scores for both groups were similar, as assessed by visual inspection. Median SPS Learned scores were not statistically significantly different between prior and new participants, $U = 1468.50, z = -.378, p = .705$. Median SPS Importance scores were not statistically significantly different between prior and new participants, $U = 1518.50, z = -.085, p = .933$. Results can be found in Table 14.

Table 14: Differences in SPSLearned and SPSImportance based on prior participation

	SPSLearned	SPSImportance
Prior Participant	N = 42	N = 42
New Participant	N = 73	N = 73
Mann-Whitney U	1468.500	1518.500
Wilcoxon W	4169.500	2421.500
Z	-.378	-.085
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.705	.933

a. Grouping Variable: PriorPart

Post Hoc Analyses

To further explore the finding of significant gender differences in ratings of SPS Importance, four additional paired t-tests were performed (pre-post for SDQ Total score and pre-post for SDQ Prosocial scores) separately for males and females.

A paired t test for dependent samples was conducted to compare pre intervention SDQ total scores and post intervention SDQ total scores for male participants. No significant difference was found between the scores for pre intervention SDQ total scores ($M=10.04, SD=5.33$) and post intervention SDQ total scores ($M=10.70, SD=5.79$); $t(69)=-1.083, p=.283$.

A paired t test for dependent samples was conducted to compare pre intervention SDQ Prosocial scores and post intervention SDQ Prosocial scores for male participants. A significant difference was found between the scores for pre intervention SDQ Prosocial scores ($M=7.87$, $SD=1.75$) and post intervention SDQ Prosocial scores ($M=7.21$, $SD=1.98$); $t(69)=2.93$, $p=.005$. This significant difference was not in the predicted direction, indicating that male participants had rated themselves as having significantly fewer prosocial behaviors at the conclusion of the intervention.

A paired t test for dependent samples was conducted to compare pre intervention SDQ total scores and post intervention SDQ total scores for female participants. No significant difference was found between the scores for pre intervention SDQ total scores ($M=12.18$, $SD=6.49$) and post intervention SDQ total scores ($M=10.98$, $SD=5.43$); $t(44)=1.583$, $p=.120$.

A paired t test for dependent samples was conducted to compare pre intervention SDQ Prosocial scores and post intervention SDQ Prosocial scores for female participants. No significant difference was found between the scores for pre intervention SDQ Prosocial scores ($M=7.96$, $SD=1.91$) and post intervention SDQ Prosocial scores ($M=8.02$, $SD=2.04$); $t(44)=-0.213$, $p=.833$.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

The present study examined whether participation in an after-school SEL sports program affected the social emotional development of at-risk elementary school students. The first hypothesis of this study was that participation in the PLAYS intervention would positively impact participants' social emotional development. The second hypothesis was that participant' experiences in the program, in addition to demographic variables and pre SDQ total scores, would predict post intervention prosocial behavior. The third hypothesis was that there would be differences in participants' experiences in the program based on prior participation in the program and demographic variables.

The statistical analyses did not support the first hypothesis. The results suggest that the PLAYS intervention did not have a significant effect on students' overall performance on a post intervention measure of social emotional development. The results also suggest that the PLAYS intervention did not elicit a statistically significant median increase in prosocial behaviors at the conclusion of the intervention.

The statistical analyses supported the second hypothesis. The results indicate that participant' experiences in the program, in addition to demographic variables and pre SDQ total scores significantly predicted post intervention prosocial behavior. The full model accounted for approximately 39% of the variance in post intervention scores on a measure of prosocial behavior.

The statistical analyses for the third hypothesis indicated that there is a statistically significant difference between male and female ratings of what aspects of the program they considered important, but no significant difference between what they learned from the program. In terms of grade level differences in program experiences, there was a statistically significant difference between third and fifth graders on what aspects of the program they found important. There were no other statistically significant differences between grade levels. There were no statistically significant differences found between prior and new participants on aspects of the program they found important or on what they learned from the program.

In the section that follows, the research questions will be interpreted in relation to existing research. Then, the study's limitations will be considered. Finally, implications and directions for future research will be discussed.

Explanation of Findings

While there is little preceding literature examining the relationships between sports programs and social emotional development, it was hypothesized that participation in an after school sports program embedded within a social emotional learning curriculum would improve at-risk participants' social emotional development. This hypothesis was based on risk and protective factor and youth development research within the framework of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of child development, which indicates "layers" of environment that impact a child's development (Buchanan, 2014).

Youth development programs promote social competence through physical and psychological safety, appropriate structure, supportive relationships, opportunities to belong, positive social norms, support for efficacy and mattering, opportunities for skill building, and integration of family, school, and community efforts (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). These features

provide opportunity for adolescents to develop physically, intellectually, psychologically, and socially (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

Consistent with Catalano's 2004 study that summarized the findings of 25 effective youth development programs, this study used positive outcome measures to examine either a reduction in negative behavior or an increase in positive behavior. No significant reduction of negative behavior or increase in positive behavior was found in this study. It is important to note, however, that the mean score of total rated negative behaviors at the conclusion of the intervention was lower than the mean of those rated prior to implementation of the intervention. This indicates that there was a decrease in reported problematic behaviors at the conclusion of the intervention though it did not reach statistical significance. On the outcome measure used in this study, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), total scores between 20-40 are in the Abnormal range (i.e., many more negative behaviors than normal), scores between 16-19 are in the Borderline range, and scores between 0-15 are in the Normal range. The mean total scores for participants in this study prior to the intervention was only 10.88; thus, there may not have been a statistically significant decrease in negative behavior because the participants were not presenting with an abnormal amount of negative behaviors at the start of the intervention. However, the lack of significant findings may suggest limited impact of the social emotional learning curriculum within a sports program to reduce at-risk childrens' negative behaviors.

The literature also indicates gender differences, specifically biological differences in temperament between males and females (Else-Quest, Hyde, Goldsmith & Van Hulle, 2006), which may explain variation in participants' social and emotional development. This study's findings indicate significant differences between male and female ratings of what aspects of the

SEL intervention they considered to be important. There was not a significant difference between males and females in regards to what they learned from the program. In terms of grade level differences in program experiences, third graders indicated statistically significantly higher SPS Importance scores than fifth grade participants. These grade level differences are consistent with the relationship between cognitive-developmental stages and phases of emotional development (Lewis & Granic, 2010) and provide implications for tailoring the intervention program based on participants' overall developmental level.

Study Limitations

Certain limitations should be considered when interpreting the results of the present study. The following section will discuss concerns about the within-person design of the study, including potential threats to internal validity and clustering effects. Limitations of using self-report measures will also be discussed.

The measures used in this study (i.e., SDQ and SPS) relied on participant self-report. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) self-report used in this study was developed for ages 11 to 17, though the age range of the participants was between 8 and 12. The SDQ self-report was selected because it is a well-validated measure (Wolpert, Cheng, & Deighton, 2014) and the literature suggests that young children can be accurate reporters when provided with age appropriate training (Baeyer, 2006). The participants in this study received adult support in completing the SDQ. The literature on the validity of children's ability to report their behaviors is inconsistent. Some literature suggests that children under the age of 6 are developmentally unable to be valid reporters of their mental state (Achenbach, McConaughy & Howell, 1987; Measelle, John, Ablow, Cowan & Cowan, 2005). One study's findings suggest that young

children were able to validly report core and basic symptoms of depression and anxiety (Luby, Belden, Sullivan & Spitznagel, 2007).

Ideally, several individuals (multi-raters) would complete rating scales to corroborate observations of behavior. Unfortunately, the PLAYS teacher/coaches did not know all of their players prior to the start of the intervention and were therefore unable to complete the pre intervention ratings. Moreover, parent participation was too sporadic to have parent-rating scales completed.

The methodological shortcomings of the present study should also be considered when interpreting the effect of the PLAYS intervention on social emotional development. First, all of the participants were assumed to be at-risk based on attending an AUSL school. This assumption was based on the fact that students attending AUSL schools, which are the lowest performing schools in the city, are likely to be from low-income, minority families. Other than school affiliation and grade level, no inclusionary criteria was used to recruit participants. Exclusionary criteria were also not used; as long as students were enrolled in a participating AUSL school in grades 3 through 5, they were allowed to participate.

Furthermore, the present study does not include a comparison group due to IRB restrictions from the participating school district. Without a control group, it is challenging to determine if the improvements that were observed were related to the intervention or to a number of other factors, such as participant maturation, differences in team climate, or special attention given to the children during participation in the intervention. Due to the absence of a control group, it is difficult to attribute positive student outcomes to the intervention.

An additional limitation of the study was the length of the intervention, which only allowed for an examination of the immediate and short-term effects of the ten-week after school

program. In order to assess any long-term and carry-over effects, the students would need to participate, at minimum, in the intervention over the course of an entire school year.

Implications

The findings from the current study did not support the hypothesis that the PLAYS intervention had a significant effect on participants' overall performance on a post intervention measure of social emotional development. Study limitations, specifically the dosage of the intervention and self-report outcome measures, may have limited finding of significant effects. Catalano and colleagues (2004) summarized the findings of 25 youth development programs and found that the effective programs were delivered over a period of 9 months or longer. Outcome data would ideally be from multiple raters, not only from the participants themselves. Durlak and colleagues (2011) completed a meta-analysis of 213 school based SEL programs. They found that outcome data from other sources (i.e., parents, teachers) yielded significantly higher effects than those from student self-reports.

The findings did support the second hypothesis that participant' experiences in the program, in addition to demographic variables and pre SDQ total scores would significantly predict post intervention prosocial behavior. This finding can help tailor future social emotional intervention efforts with at-risk populations. The third hypothesis findings of gender differences and grade level differences, can also help to tailor similar interventions in the future.

The culture of the intervention is best explained by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model and proximal processes theory; the participants were impacted by a number of systems that influenced their development, including parents, family members, teachers, and peers.

The results of this study can help to inform research on the role of social emotional development and social emotional learning interventions in sports programs. There are also

other factors that future researchers may find interesting to explore such as the home-school connection that this type of after-school intervention seeks to facilitate and how that connection may impact the child's development. The impact of individual relationships between participants and their families, teachers, and peers on social emotional development during the duration of the intervention may also be an intriguing area of future research given the significant findings about the impact of father involvement (Baker, 2013), teacher preparation (Gimbert, Bol, & Wallace, 2007), peer interactions (Denham, 2001), and quality of sibling relationships (Stormshak, Bellanti, & Bierman, 1996) on social emotional and cognitive development. Several variables that were not examined in this study may also be interesting to measure in future research on the role of social emotional development and sports programs. Such variables include the participants' mental health status, disability status, and cognitive ability. These variables may affect the impact of a sports based SEL intervention on the development of social emotional competence.

Conclusions

Though the main hypothesis of reduction of negative behavior and increase in positive behavior for the current study was not supported, the study adds to existing literature on social emotional learning and youth development. This study offered a unique perspective on how the partnership of social learning interventions through sports programming can contribute to children's positive social emotional development. The lack of significant findings about the effect of the PLAYS intervention on social emotional development provides useful information on how to design the intervention in the future. The results indicate that the PLAYS intervention may better impact participants if the intervention is created as a selected or indicated intervention rather than a universal intervention. The significant differences between genders and grades 3






and 5, as well as the relatively low mean Pre SDQ Total score, suggest that the use of inclusionary criteria (i.e., 5th grade males with SDQ Pre Total scores of 20 or higher) may be the most beneficial way to tailor the intervention for at-risk students. Moreover, the duration of the intervention should be increased, and a control group should be used to ensure that any significant findings could be attributed to the intervention. Additionally, this study provided data on participants' perspectives of the program, including what they learned from the program and elements of the program they found important. This information may lead to better designed interventions for at-risk populations of elementary school students. The Student Program Survey results also demonstrate the practical value of the study.

APPENDIX

Student Program Survey – Importance Scale






Participant ID: _____ Gender: _____ Grade: _____ Previous Participant Y _____ N _____

We want to know about your experience in the PLAYS soccer program! There are probably parts of the program that you liked and parts of the program you did not like. We want to know which parts of the program were important to you and which parts were not as important. For each statement, place a checkmark in the box that tells how important it was to you.

When you played in the PLAYS soccer program, how important was...	REALLY IMPORTANT 	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT 	UNDECIDED 	SOMEWHAT NOT IMPORTANT 	REALLY NOT IMPORTANT 
1. <u>making</u> new friends?					
2. <u>having</u> something to do after school?					
3. <u>being</u> part of a team?					
4. <u>talking</u> a teacher about soccer?					
5. <u>talking</u> to an adult in my home about soccer?					
6. a family member coming to watch my game or practice?					
7. <u>hearing</u> the social stories at the beginning of practice?					
8. <u>working</u> with a partner during practice?					
9. <u>the</u> team cheer?					
10. <u>being</u> picked as the "soccer leader?"					

Student Program Survey – Learned Scale

We want to know about your experience in the PLAYS soccer program! There are probably parts of the program that you liked and parts of the program you did not like. We also want to know what the program taught you. For each statement, place a checkmark in the box that tells how true it was for you.

Playing soccer in the PLAYS program taught me...	VERY MUCH TRUE 	SOMEWHAT TRUE 	UNDECIDED 	NOT REALLY TRUE 	NOT AT ALL TRUE 
1. <u>to</u> work as part of a team.					
2. <u>to</u> stay calm when I am upset.					
3. <u>to</u> play hard even when my team was losing.					
4. <u>to</u> keep trying even when it was hard.					
5. <u>skills</u> I can use in school.					
6. <u>how</u> to get along better with my teachers.					
7. <u>how</u> to get along better with my family.					
8. <u>how</u> to be a better student.					
9. <u>that</u> I am important.					
10. <u>that</u> I am a good friend.					

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

For each item, please mark the box for Not True, Somewhat True or Certainly True. It would help us if you answered all items as best you can even if you are not absolutely certain. Please give your answers on the basis of how things have been for you over the last six months.

Participant ID _____

Male/Female _____

Age _____

	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
I try to be nice to other people. I care about their feelings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am restless, I cannot stay still for long	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get a lot of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I usually share with others, for example CD's, games, food	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get very angry and often lose my temper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would rather be alone than with people of my age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I usually do as I am told	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I worry a lot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am constantly fidgeting or squirming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have one good friend or more	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I fight a lot. I can make other people do what I want	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am often unhappy, depressed or tearful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other people my age generally like me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am easily distracted, I find it difficult to concentrate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am nervous in new situations. I easily lose confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am kind to younger children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am often accused of lying or cheating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other children or young people pick on me or bully me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I often offer to help others (parents, teachers, children)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think before I do things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I take things that are not mine from home, school or elsewhere	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get along better with adults than with people my own age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have many fears, I am easily scared	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I finish the work I'm doing. My attention is good	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Previous Participant? Yes No

Thank you very much for your help

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Program Curriculum



Created in partnership with



**WORLD SPORT
CHICAGO**

Program Mission Statement: The Chicago Fire Foundation *P.L.A.Y.S. Program* created in partnership with World Sport Chicago is committed to enhancing the academic performance and development of key social and emotional skills of elementary school students through a sports based curriculum.

Goal: The *P.L.A.Y.S. (Participate, Learn, Achieve, Youth Soccer) Program* will engage participants by utilizing soccer and a curriculum focused on building grit as a means to grow Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) characteristics in third through fifth grade students from schools in some of Chicago's underserved communities. Through soccer and the SEL curriculum, students will achieve a greater level of self and social awareness, build a strong character and strengthen skills linked to enhanced academic performance.

Partners: The *P.L.A.Y.S. Program* was created in partnership with the Chicago Fire Foundation, World Sport Chicago, Academy of Urban School Leadership, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of Chicago.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

1. Players will develop fundamental skills for life effectiveness using the GRIT construct and CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) core competencies:
 - a. GRIT :
 - i. Teamwork
 - ii. Self Awareness & Desire to Achieve
 - iii. Motivation, Passion & Movement towards goals
 - iv. Perseverance
 - v. Resilience
 - b. CASEL Core Competencies:
 - i. Self Management
 - ii. Self Awareness
 - iii. Responsible Decision Making
 - iv. Social Awareness
 - v. Relationship Skills
2. Players will develop the following soccer skills:
 - a. Week 1: Passing & Moving
 - b. Week 2: Dribbling
 - c. Week 3: Beating a Defender
 - d. Week 4: Turning with the Ball
 - e. Week 5: Running with the Ball
 - f. Week 6: Shooting
 - g. Week 7: Cross & Finishing
 - h. Week 8: Defending
 - i. Week 9: When to Dribble, When to Pass
 - j. Week 10: Team Shape, Spacing

Week 1:
Teamwork: Passing and Moving



Welcome – 5 minutes *

Standing Circle: Each day will begin with the players standing in circle. The standing circle activity

will always be a variation of “Pass the Clap” the first week, adapted from Viola Spolin’s *Theatre Games for the Classroom: A Teacher’s Handbook*. Week 1 will focus on passing the name with eye contact. Weeks 2-10 will cycle through “Pass the Ball” activities, adapted from “Pass the Clap.”

Purpose: learn names, energize the group, and build group cohesiveness and focus.

Day 1: Pass the Clap

Day 2: Pass the Clap

Day 3: Pass the Clap

SEL Story: Read the SEL story aloud and ask a few students to respond to the final question.

Purpose: Gives the students relatable examples of the weekly theme they are to work on

during the program. Builds SEL awareness and skills.

Day 1: Sarah really wanted to score lots of goals, so she tried to get the ball as often as possible. The other team saw Sarah always had the ball, so they would run after her, stealing the ball away. Could Sarah have scored more goals if she had worked with her teammates rather than by herself?

Day 2: Juan and Tony are teammates. Tony likes that Juan cheers him on when he is trying to get the soccer ball. How do you support your teammates either in soccer or in school?

Day 3: Aasha’s favorite part of being on the soccer team is that she has made new friends. What is your favorite part of being on a team?

One Word Check-in: Directly following the Standing Circle activity, the coaches will have players

stay in circle and using one word only, respond to a prompt connected to the week’s theme. Week 1 check-ins will be around the theme of teamwork.

Purpose: allows the coaches to take the pulse of the group and encourages players to have an awareness of self and others.

Day 1: Say name and one word that describes teamwork to you.

Day 2: Say name and one word describing your contribution to a team.

Day 3: Say name and one word describing what you get from being part of a team.

Introduction – 5 minutes *

Cheer: Soccer leaders chosen by coaches for positive behavior and consistent effort beginning Day

2 lead team in a cheer the coaches created during training. Coaches will model the cheer on Day 1. The team will say the cheer twice/practice: in the beginning and end. Example of cheer: “1, 2, 3: GO TEAM!”

Purpose: To encourage consistent routine and procedure, as well as team motivation and cohesion.

Coaches’ Comments: Coaches will share comments and the focus for the day’s activities.

Purpose: to frame the day’s activities and provide opportunity for support, motivation and communication of challenges inherent in skills/games.

Day 1: Cheer (introduction from coaches)

Day 2: Coaches’ comments
Review of routines and procedures
Cheer (led by soccer leaders)

Day 3: Coaches’ comments
Review of routines and procedures
Cheer (led by soccer leaders)



Skills/Games – 40 minutes **

Day 1: Passing Square
Pass & Move Triangle
Scrimmage (if time allows)

Day 2: Pass & Move Triangle
Pass & Move Triangle
Scrimmage (if time allows)

Day 3: Pass & Move Triangle
Three Touch Max
Scrimmage (if time allows)



Reflection – 10 minutes

Thought Partner Debrief: In pairs, “thought partners” will identify one positive aspect of

the

skills/games, one challenging aspect, and a reflection of what they learned from that challenge. The coaches will begin the activity by breaking the questions into segments. They will get 1 minute to identify a positive aspect, 1 minute to identify a challenging aspect, and 2 minutes to reflect on what they each learned. In the last minute, each will give his/her compliment about their participation. These can become a “growth narrative” and more reflective of players meeting challenges throughout the curriculum. For example, a student might reflect he/she had trouble keeping the ball in the air in the beginning of the program and by week 3, he/she has improved. The partner can validate that observation with a compliment or acknowledgment of witnessing the improvement.

Example: What was positive; one challenge; what did you learn from it? Recipient gives compliment with objective of players creating a “growth narrative” – an ongoing account of their progress – together throughout weeks.

Purpose: to foster effective interpersonal communication, opportunities for self-reflection, and acceptance of self and others.

Team Debrief: Coaches share insight re: their team goals

Day 1: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief

Day 2: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief

Day 3: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief



Cool Down -10 minutes

Meditation Minute: As the beginning to the cool down, players will enter a restorative yoga pose for

one minute. Meditation Minute will be a variation a yoga pose or relaxation activity adapted from Carla Tantillo's *Cooling Down Your Classroom*.

Purpose: for players to begin a deliberate practice of settling their minds and bodies after intense mental and physical stimulation.

Stretching: Coaches will lead players through a short stretching routine.

Purpose: To calm muscles used during practice and prevent injury.

Soccer Leader: Each day during Cool Down, the coaches will choose two soccer leaders to be in

charge of distributing materials and leading the group cheer for the following day. Leaders will be chosen during the Cool Down, and their leadership responsibilities will extend until the end of the following practice. The leaders will be chosen based on positive behaviors and consistent effort. Coaches will receive training in Doug Lemov's *Teach like a Champion* strategies; *Ratio, 100 Percent, Do It Again, Positive*

Framing, Precise Praise, Warm/Strict and The J-Factor to help recognize and reward positive player behavior and effort. Choosing two leaders/day and during game days will ensure each student has the opportunity to be a leader by the program's end.

Purpose: to encourage leadership skills and empower players to work towards a leadership position.

Day 1: Meditation Minute/restorative yoga pose
 Stretching
 Soccer Leaders
 Cheer

Day 2: Meditation Minute/restorative yoga pose
 Stretching
 Soccer Leaders
 Cheer

Day 3: Meditation Minute/restorative yoga pose
 Stretching
 Soccer Leaders
 End of Week Assessment
 Cheer

****Establishing procedures and routines in Welcome and Introduction might take longer during first week***

***** See attached soccer curriculum for description of soccer Skills/Games***

Week 2:
Self Awareness & Desire to Achieve: Dribbling



Welcome – 5 minutes

Standing Circle

Day 1: Pass the Clap

Day 2: Pass the Ball using hands – turn w/eye contact and give it to the next player

Day 3: Pass the Ball using feet - ball is on ground, short instep pass to next player

SEL Story

Day 1: Sometimes in school, Sam gets frustrated because he doesn't always understand the assignments. Instead of not doing his homework or goofing off in class, he realizes that he is upset and asks his teacher for extra help. What do you do when you feel frustrated?

Day 2: When Aaron came home from soccer practice, his mom would ask how it went. Aaron knew when he was happy, sad or mad at practice, but he had a hard time talking to his mom about his other feelings. Sometimes he felt nervous, frustrated, motivated, or excited, but he didn't know how to tell his mom. Other than happy, sad or mad, what are other feelings you might have during soccer practice?

Day 3: Matt wasn't doing very well in his science class. He really wanted to improve his grade from a D to a B, so asked his family and teacher for extra help, studied more every day and completed all his homework. At the end of the semester, Matt found out that his hard work had paid off. How do you think he felt after raising his grade?

One Word Check-in

Day 1: Say one word describing how you feel right now.

Day 2: Say one word after "I am..."

Day 3: Say one word describing how achieving a goal makes you feel.

Introduction – 5 minutes

Day 1: Coaches' comments
Cheer

Day 2: Coaches' comments
Cheer

Day 3: Coaches' comments
Cheer



Skills/Games – 40 minutes

- Day 1: Dribbling Square
 Steal-Shield
 Scrimmage (if time allows)
- Day 2: Steal-Shield
 End-Zone Game
 Scrimmage (if time allows)
- Day 3: End-Zone Game
 Channels Game
 Scrimmage (if time allows)



Reflection – 10 minutes

- Day 1: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief
Day 2: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief
Day 3: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief



Cool Down – 10 minutes

- Day 1: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
 Stretching
 Soccer Leaders
 Cheer
- Day 2: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
 Stretching
 Soccer Leaders
 Cheer
- Day 3: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
 Stretching
 Soccer Leaders
 End of Week Assessment
 Cheer

Week 3:

Motivation, Passion & Movement towards Goals: Beating a Defender



Welcome – 5 minutes

Standing Circle

Day 1: Pass The Ball Over and Under – players stand front to back in circle, alternate passing through the legs and over the head

Day 2: Pass The Ball w/Soccer Sound – pass the ball with hands or feet, shout a soccer word when passing

Day 3: Pass The Ball High and Low – players pass the ball, alternate between high (stretch up) and low (crouch down)

SEL Story

Day 1: Kelly is passionate about animals and takes her dog for a walk every day to show him how much she cares about him. Charles is passionate about the environment and joined the recycling club at school so he could reduce trash at his school. What are you passionate about?

Day 2: Derrick Rose is one of the best basketball players in the NBA. He has said that he would not have been such a successful basketball player if it wasn't for the support of his mom, who raised him, sacrificed for him and helped him become the person he is today. Besides his mom, who else do you think motivates him?

Day 3: At the beginning of the year, Tasha set a goal for herself to be a better teammate. She wanted to pass the ball to her teammates at least 5 times during a soccer game. Tasha practiced stopping the ball, controlling the ball and then passing it to her teammates at each practice so when the time came, she would be able to pass the ball during the game. Why do you think it's likely that Tasha will reach her goal during the next soccer game?

One Word Check-in

Day 1: Say one word describing what passion or drive feels like.

Day 2: Name one person who motivates you.

Day 3: Say one thing that has helped you achieve a goal.

Introduction – 5 minutes

Day 1: Coaches' comments
Cheer

Day 2: Coaches' comments
Cheer

Day 3: Coaches' comments
Cheer



Skills/Games – 40 minutes

Day 1: Fakes
Through the Gates
Scrimmage (if time allows)

Day 2: Through the Gates
1 v 1 Moves
Scrimmage (if time allows)

Day 3: 1 v 1 Moves
Gate Goals
Scrimmage (if time allows)



Reflection – 10 minutes

Day 1: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief
Day 2: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief
Day 3: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief



Cool Down -10 minutes

Day 1: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
Stretching
Soccer Leaders
Cheer

Day 2: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
Stretching
Soccer Leaders
Cheer

Day 3: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
Stretching
Soccer Leaders
End of Week Assessment
Cheer

Week 4:
Perseverance: Turning with the Ball



Welcome – 5 minutes

Standing Circle

Day 1: Pass the Clap

Day 2: Pass the Ball using hands – turn w/eye contact and give it to the next player

Day 3: Pass the Ball using feet - ball is on ground, short instep pass to next player

SEL Story

Day 1: Michael is on his school's track team and always gives 100% during practice and meets. During one of his meets, he fell about 50 feet from the finish line. All of the other runners past him, so he had no chance of winning. Even so, Michael got back up and crossed the finish line dead last. Why do you think it was important for Michael to finish the race?

Day 2: Nobody is perfect, so you won't win every soccer game or get an A on every test. Even though Jackson knew this, he got really frustrated when he did not score a goal in soccer or he got a bad grade in school. What could Jackson do to make himself feel better and to do better next time?

Day 3: Whenever Sean ran into a problem at school or at home, he would give up because he thought it was too hard and no one cared if he succeeded. When he joined the soccer team and things got hard, he wanted to give up again, even though he really liked playing. This time though, he had his teammates and coaches pushing him to keep trying and stay on the team. Why do you think Sean kept trying at soccer?

One Word Check-in

Day 1: Say one thing that keeps you from giving up when something is hard.

Day 2: Say one thing you do to make yourself feel better when you don't succeed.

Day 3: Say one word after "I won't give up on..."

Introduction – 5 minutes

Day 1: Coaches' comments
Cheer

Day 2: Coaches' comments
Cheer

Day 3: Coaches' comments
Cheer



Skills/Games – 40 minutes

Day 1: Receive & Turn
 Receive, Turn, Pass
 Scrimmage (if time allows)

Day 2: Receive, Turn, Pass
 Turning a Defender
 Scrimmage (if time allows)

Day 3: Turning a Defender
 Target Players
 Scrimmage (if time allows)



Reflection – 10 minutes

Day 1: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief

Day 2: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief

Day 3: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief



Cool Down -10 minutes

Day 1: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
 Stretching
 Soccer Leaders
 Cheer

Day 2: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
 Stretching
 Soccer Leaders
 Cheer

Day 3: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
 Stretching
 Soccer Leaders
 End of Week Assessment
 Cheer

Week 5:

Resilience: Running with the Ball



Welcome – 5 minutes

Standing Circle

Day 1: Pass The Ball Over and Under – players stand front to back in circle, alternate passing through the legs and over the head

Day 2: Pass The Ball w/Soccer Sound – pass the ball with hands or feet, shout a soccer word when passing

Day 3: Pass The Ball High and Low – players pass the ball, alternate between high (stretch up) and low (crouch down)

SEL Story

Day 1: Abby didn't really care about school, so she would talk to her friends, not do her homework and get in trouble a lot. She wanted to play on the soccer team, but her coaches wouldn't let her because her grades weren't good enough. Abby started to work really hard to improve her grades and behave in class so she could join the team. When was a time you changed your behavior to get something that you wanted?

Day 2: Soccer was not easy for Daniel, but he really liked to play. He would miss goals, fall when he was running or let the other team steal the ball. What are things his teammates could say to him to keep him from giving up?

Day 3: Max knew that when he missed a goal or did badly on a quiz that it was important not to beat himself up about it and to work harder next time. Instead of yelling at himself, he would tell himself good things like "I will do better next time" or "I worked really hard even though I didn't do so well." What are things you could say to yourself when you do badly in soccer or in school?

One Word Check-in

Day 1: Name one way you've bounced back from a tough time.

Day 2: Name one person in your life who keeps you from giving up.

Day 3: Think of one negative word or feeling and say the opposite.

Introduction – 5 minutes

Day 1: Coaches' comments
Cheer

Day 2: Coaches' comments
Cheer

Day 3: Coaches' comments
Cheer



Skills/Games – 40 minutes

Day 1: Run & Pass
Covering Distance
Scrimmage (if time allows)

Day 2: Covering Distance
Running Under Pressure
Scrimmage (if time allows)

Day 3: Running Under Pressure
Thirds
Scrimmage (if time allows)



Reflection – 10 minutes

Day 1: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief

Day 2: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief

Day 3: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief



Cool Down – 10 minutes

Day 1: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
Stretching
Soccer Leaders
Cheer

Day 2: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
Stretching
Soccer Leaders
Cheer

Day 3: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
Stretching
Soccer Leaders
End of Week Assessment
Cheer

Week 6:

Teamwork: Shooting



Welcome – 5 minutes

Standing Circle

Day 1: Pass the Ball using hands – turn w/eye contact and give it to the next player

Day 2: Pass the Ball using hands – same as Day 1 w/variable speeds

Day 3: Pass the Ball using feet - ball is on ground, short instep pass to next player

SEL Story

Day 1: In soccer, Ben knows that teamwork means working with his teammates to score goals. In class, his teacher said they were going to work as a team to improve their reading scores. What do you think his teacher meant when she said they were going to work as a team? How can you work as a team in school?

Day 2: Mia helps her team by working on her own soccer skills and by supporting her teammates. Name ways that Mia can work on her own skills (soccer and attitude) to help support her team and things she can do for her teammates to help support her team.

Day 3: Anna likes being part of her soccer team because she likes playing with her friends. Nathan joined band so that he could share his passion of music with other kids. Why did you join this team?

One Word Check-in

Day 1: Say one word that describes this team to you.

Day 2: Say one word describing your contribution to this team.

Day 3: Say one word describing what you get from being part of this team.

Introduction – 5 minutes

Day 1: Weekly goal setting: soccer goal, SEL goal
Coaches' comments
Cheer

Day 2: Coaches' comments
Cheer

Day 3: Coaches' comments
Cheer



Skills/Games – 40 minutes

Day 1: Shooting Zones
Alamo

Scrimmage (if time allows)

Day 2: Alamo
3 Lines to Goal
Scrimmage (if time allows)

Day 3: 3 Lines to Goal
4-Goal Game
Scrimmage (if time allows)



Reflection – 10 minutes

Day 1: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief

Day 2: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief

Day 3: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief



Cool Down – 10 minutes

Day 1: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
Stretching
Soccer Leaders
Cheer

Day 2: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
Stretching
Soccer Leaders
Cheer

Day 3: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
Stretching
Soccer Leaders
End of Week Assessment
Cheer

Week 7:
Self Awareness & Desire to Achieve: Cross & Finishing



Welcome – 5 minutes

Standing Circle

Day 1: Pass The Ball Over and Under – players stand front to back in circle, alternate passing through the legs and over the head

Day 2: Pass The Ball w/Soccer Sound – pass the ball with hands or feet, shout a soccer word when passing

Day 3: Pass The Ball High and Low – players pass the ball, alternate between high (stretch up) and low (crouch down)

SEL Story

Day 1: When Andrew missed a goal or stumbled when he ran, he would get very angry at himself. He would get so angry that he couldn't focus on the next play and would mess up the next play and the one after that all because of that first mistake. What could Andrew have done to play better even though he was angry?

Day 2: When Tyler was asked to describe himself, he would say that he had brown hair, brown eyes and was a little short. Tyler was much more than that, though. He was funny, strong, loyal to his family and friends, never gave up and was a hard worker. Aside from physical characteristics, how would you describe yourself?

Day 3: Kevin wanted to score a goal during the game. Gabriella wanted to end the semester without any detentions. Jasmine wanted to get an A in social studies for the quarter. Why do you think they wanted to reach these goals?

One Word Check-in

Day 1: Say one word describing how you feel right now.

Day 2: Say one word after "I am..."

Day 3: Think of a goal you've set and achieved during this program. Say one word describing how it has made you feel.

Introduction – 5 minutes

Day 1: Coaches' comments
Cheer

Day 2: Coaches' comments
Cheer

Day 3: Coaches' comments
Cheer



Skills/Games – 40 minutes

Day 1: Dribble & Cross
Cross & Finish
Scrimmage (if time allows)

Day 2: Cross & Finish
Wonder Wingers
Scrimmage (if time allows)

Day 3: Wonder Wingers
5 v 5 to Goal
Scrimmage (if time allows)



Reflection – 10 minutes

Day 1: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief

Day 2: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief

Day 3: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief



Cool Down – 10 minutes

Day 1: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
Stretching
Soccer Leaders
Cheer

Day 2: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
Stretching
Soccer Leaders
Cheer

Day 3: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
Stretching
Soccer Leaders
End of Week Assessment
Cheer

Week 8:

Motivation, Passion & Movement towards Goals: Defending



Welcome – 5 minutes

Standing Circle

Day 1: Pass the Ball using hands – turn w/eye contact and give it to the next player

Day 2: Pass the Ball using hands - same as Day 1 w/variable speeds

Day 3: Pass the Ball using feet - ball is on ground, short instep pass to next player

SEL Story

Day 1: Isaac feels motivated to study because he wants to do well on his spelling test. He doesn't always feel motivated though. Sometimes he wants to watch tv or play with his friends instead. The important thing though is that his motivation to do well on his spelling test is stronger than his desire to watch tv or hang out with his friends. Why is motivation important in reaching your goals?

Day 2: Destiny feels strongly about her team, which is what keeps her coming to practice every day. She likes her coaches and teammates and she likes to play soccer. What can she do to show a commitment to her team?

Day 3: Different people have different support systems and motivators to do well. Some students rely on their families for support. Others rely on their friends and teachers. Who helps motivate you?

One Word Check-in

Day 1: Name one thing that motivates you to play with this team.

Day 2: Say one thing that you feel strongly about related to this team.

Day 3: Say one thing that has helped you achieve a goal you set while on this team.

Introduction – 5 minutes

Day 1: Coaches' comments
Cheer

Day 2: Coaches' comments
Cheer

Day 3: Coaches' comments
Cheer



Skills/Games – 40 minutes

Day 1: Defend the Cone
1 v 1 to Line
Scrimmage (if time allows)

Day 2: 1 v 1 to Line
 3 v 3 to Small Goals
 Scrimmage (if time allows)

Day 3: 3 v 3 to Small Goals
 6 v 6 Defense
 Scrimmage (if time allows)



Reflection – 10 minutes

Day 1: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief

Day 2: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief

Day 3: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief



Cool Down – 10 minutes

Day 1: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
 Stretching
 Soccer Leaders
 Cheer

Day 2: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
 Stretching
 Soccer Leaders
 Cheer

Day 3: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
 Stretching
 Soccer Leaders
 End of Week Assessment
 Cheer

Week 9:
Perseverance: Dribbling and Passing



Welcome – 5 minutes

Standing Circle

Day 1: Pass The Ball Over and Under – players stand front to back in circle, alternate passing through the legs and over the head

Day 2: Pass The Ball w/Soccer Sound – pass the ball with hands or feet, shout a soccer word when passing

Day 3: Pass The Ball High and Low – players pass the ball, alternate between high (stretch up) and low (crouch down)

SEL Story

Day 1: Diego just wasn't very good at math. He did his math homework every night and studied for the tests, but he never got very good grades. Even though he wasn't getting A's on his assignments, he still kept trying. What motivated him to keep trying even though it was so hard for him?

Day 2: Derrick Rose will not be able to play again this season because of his injury, which is sure to be very disappointing for him. What do you think he does to make himself feel better and to keep working hard at basketball?

Day 3: Mariah found it was much easier to give up than it was to work hard. Sometimes she didn't feel like doing all the drills her coach told her to do or to work on her homework when she didn't understand it. Why is it important for her to continue to work hard in school and in soccer?

One Word Check-in

Day 1: Say one thing that has kept you from giving up when something was hard in this program.

Day 2: Say one thing you've learned to do to make yourself feel better when you don't succeed.

Day 3: Say one word after "I won't give up on..."

Introduction – 5 minutes

Day 1: Coaches' comments
Cheer

Day 2: Coaches' comments
Cheer

Day 3: Coaches' comments
Cheer



Skills/Games – 40 minutes

Day 1: 3-Touch Max
 3 v 3 Neutral
 Scrimmage (if time allows)

Day 2: 3 v 3 with Neutral
 5 v 5 to Goal
 Scrimmage (if time allows)

Day 3: 5 v 5 to Goal
 Scrimmage



Reflection – 10 minutes

Day 1: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief

Day 2: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief

Day 3: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief



Cool Down – 10 minutes

Day 1: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
 Stretching
 Soccer Leaders
 Cheer

Day 2: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
 Stretching
 Soccer Leaders
 Cheer

Day 3: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
 Stretching
 Soccer Leaders
 End of Week Assessment
 Cheer

Week 10:
Resilience: Team Shape, Spacing



Welcome – 5 minutes

Standing Circle

Day 1: Pass the Ball using hands – turn w/eye contact and give it to the next player

Day 2: Pass the Ball using hands - same as Day 1 w/variable speeds

Day 3: Pass the Ball using feet - ball is on ground, short instep pass to next player

SEL Story

Day 1: When Mary started playing soccer, she had trouble controlling the ball. When she tried to kick the ball to her teammate, the other team would steal the ball or she would kick it so far away her teammate couldn't reach it. At the end of the program, Mary could kick the ball to her teammate and her teammate could easily stop the ball and push it down the field. What do you think Mary did to improve her soccer skills?

Day 2: Miguel was a pretty good soccer player, but sometimes he had off-days where it felt like he couldn't do anything right. His teammate Amelia knew just what to say to him, though, to make him feel better. She would cheer him on and say "you'll get it next time!" or "that was a good hustle!" What are things your teammates or coaches have told you to push you through a rough practice?

Day 3: Whenever Cooper messed up at soccer practice, he would call himself dumb. Then he would be sad for the rest of the soccer practice because he messed up and he thought he was dumb! One day he started saying nice things to himself instead of mean things. Instead of saying "I'm dumb" he would say "that wasn't great, but I'm going to keep trying." How do you think that helped him?

One Word Check-in

Day 1: Name one soccer skill that was tough but you eventually learned in this program.

Day 2: Name one person on this team who has kept you from giving up.

Day 3: Think of one negative word or feeling and say the opposite.

Introduction – 5 minutes

Day 1: Coaches' comments
Cheer

Day 2: Coaches' comments
Cheer

Day 3: Coaches' comments
Final Self Assessment

Cheer



Skills/Games – 40 minutes

Day 1: Inter Passing
4 v 0 + 4 v 0
Scrimmage (if time allows)

Day 2: 4 v 0 + 4 v 0
4 v 4 to End Zone
Scrimmage (if time allows)

Day 3: 4 v 4 to End Zone
Scrimmage



Reflection – 10 minutes

Day 1: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief
Day 2: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief
Day 3: Thought Partner Debrief and Team Debrief



Cool Down – 10 minutes

Day 1: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
Stretching
Soccer Leaders
Cheer

Day 2: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
Stretching
Soccer Leaders
Cheer

Day 3: Meditation minute/restorative yoga pose
Stretching
Soccer Leaders
End of Week Assessment
Cheer

Restorative Yoga Poses/Relaxation Activities & Stretches

(coaches can choose poses and activities based on temperature and ground condition)

Restorative Yoga Poses/Relaxation Activities from *Cooling Down Your Classroom* by Carla Tantillo:

Child's Pose
Sunrise to Waterfall
Relax and Melt
Memory Minute

Stretches:

Calf Stretch
Hamstring Stretch
Quadricep Stretch
Groin Stretch

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