WORKING TOGETHER: HOW SOCIAL NETWORKS AND SOCIO-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES INFORM POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS WITH EBD

Michael Valenti, PhD, Pressley Ridge
Elizabeth Levine Brown, PhD, George Mason University
Tracy Sweet, PhD, University of Maryland
Duhita Mahatmya, PhD, University of Iowa
Karen Celedonia, MS, Pressley Ridge
Canaan Betha, MS, George Mason University

CSMH 2019

PRESENTATION AGENDA

- Setting the stage: School networks and teachers' SECs

- Introduction to *Project Collaborate*

- Preliminary findings and implications

- Next steps

SETTING THE STAGE

SELF-CONTAINED EDUCATION SETTINGS

Approximately 350,000 K-12 U.S. students with EBD receiving instruction in self-contained special education settings for over 60% of the school day (OSEP, 2016).

Special education teachers (SETs) in these settings are charged with developing various academic, social, and behavioral competencies in students. Limited research on what effective instruction involves (Bettini et al., 2017).

Research indicates the importance of strong collegial partnerships on improving students' outcomes (Van Garderen, Stormont, & Goel, 2012).

SOCIAL NETWORKS & COLLABORATION

Social networks influence:

- Individual and organizational performance (Daly, 2010).
- Teachers' instructional practices (Frank, Penuel, & Krause, 2015).
- Advice-seeking relationships among teachers and school leaders (Spillane, Shirrell, & Sweet, 2017).

- Who is in your school-based network? Why?

- What qualities do you seek in potential collaborators or members of your network?

NETWORK INFLUENCES

- Collaborative teacher relationships are essential for students' outcomes (Ronfeldt et al., 2015; Sun et al., 2017). Exploring collaborative social networks for SPEDs serving students with EBD may be particularly important because of the myriad challenges SPEDs experience (Bettini et al., 2017).

- Research on co-teaching demonstrates that a good "match" between teachers is essential for successful collaboration (Scruggs et al., 2007).

- It is possible that teachers' SECs may contribute to their capacity to form and engage in effective collaborative relationships.

Self-awareness	▪ Label and recognize own and others' emotions
	▪ Identify what triggers own emotions
	▪ Analyze emotions and how they affect others
	▪ Accurately recognize own strengths and limitations
	▪ Identify own needs and values
	▪ Possess self-efficacy and self-esteem

Self-management	▪ Set plans and work toward goals
	▪ Overcome obstacles and create strategies for more long-term goals
	▪ Monitor progress toward personal and academic short- and long-term goals
	▪ Regulate emotions such as impulses, aggression, and self-destructive behavior
	▪ Manage personal and interpersonal stress
	▪ Attention control (maintain optimal work performance)
	▪ Use feedback constructively
	▪ Exhibit positive motivation, hope, and optimism
	▪ Seek help when needed
	▪ Display grit, determination, or perseverance
	▪ Advocate for oneself

Social awareness	■ Identify social cues (verbal, physical) to determine how others feel
	■ Predict others' feelings and reactions
	■ Evaluate others' emotional reactions
	■ Respect others (e.g., listen carefully and accurately)
	■ Understand other points of view and perspectives
	■ Appreciate diversity (recognize individual and group similarities and differences)
	■ Identify and use resources of family, school, and community

Relationship management	■ Demonstrate capacity to make friends
	■ Exhibit cooperative learning and working toward group goals
	■ Evaluate own skills to communicate with others
	■ Manage and express emotions in relationships, respecting diverse viewpoints
	■ Communicate effectively
	■ Cultivate relationships with those who can be resources when help is needed
	■ Provide help to those who need it
	■ Demonstrate leadership skills when necessary, being assertive and persuasive
	■ Prevent interpersonal conflict, but manage and resolve it when it does occur
	■ Resist inappropriate social pressures

Responsible decision making	
	■ Identify decisions one makes at school
	■ Discuss strategies used to resist peer pressure
	■ Reflect on how current choices affect future
	■ Identify problems when making decisions, and generate alternatives
	■ Implement problem-solving skills when making decisions, when appropriate
	■ Become self-reflective and self-evaluative
	■ Make decisions based on moral, personal, and ethical standards
	■ Make responsible decisions that affect the individual, school, and community
	■ Negotiate fairly

Sources: CASEL, 2003; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Elias, 2006; Kress & Elias, 2006; Zins, Payton, Weisberg, & O'Brien, 2007.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES

Teacher SECs

Healthy teacher-student relationships (Denham, Bassett, & Zinsser, 2014)

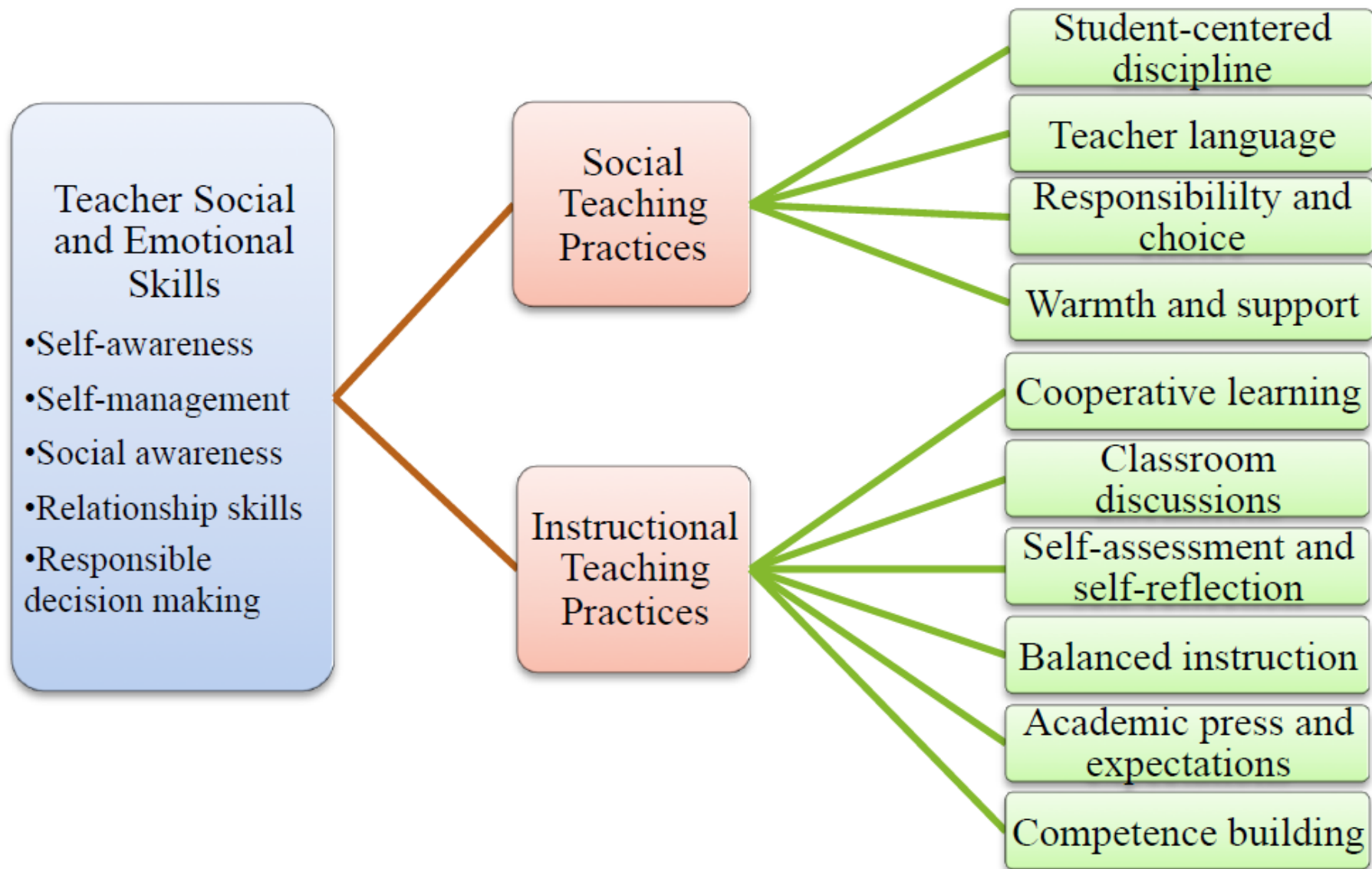Effective classroom management skills (Arens & Morin, 2016)

Effective social emotional learning instruction (Goroshit & Hen, 2014)

Student outcomes and instructional quality (Jennings & Greenburg, 2014)

Team performance (Offerman et al., 2004; Wolff et al., 2006)
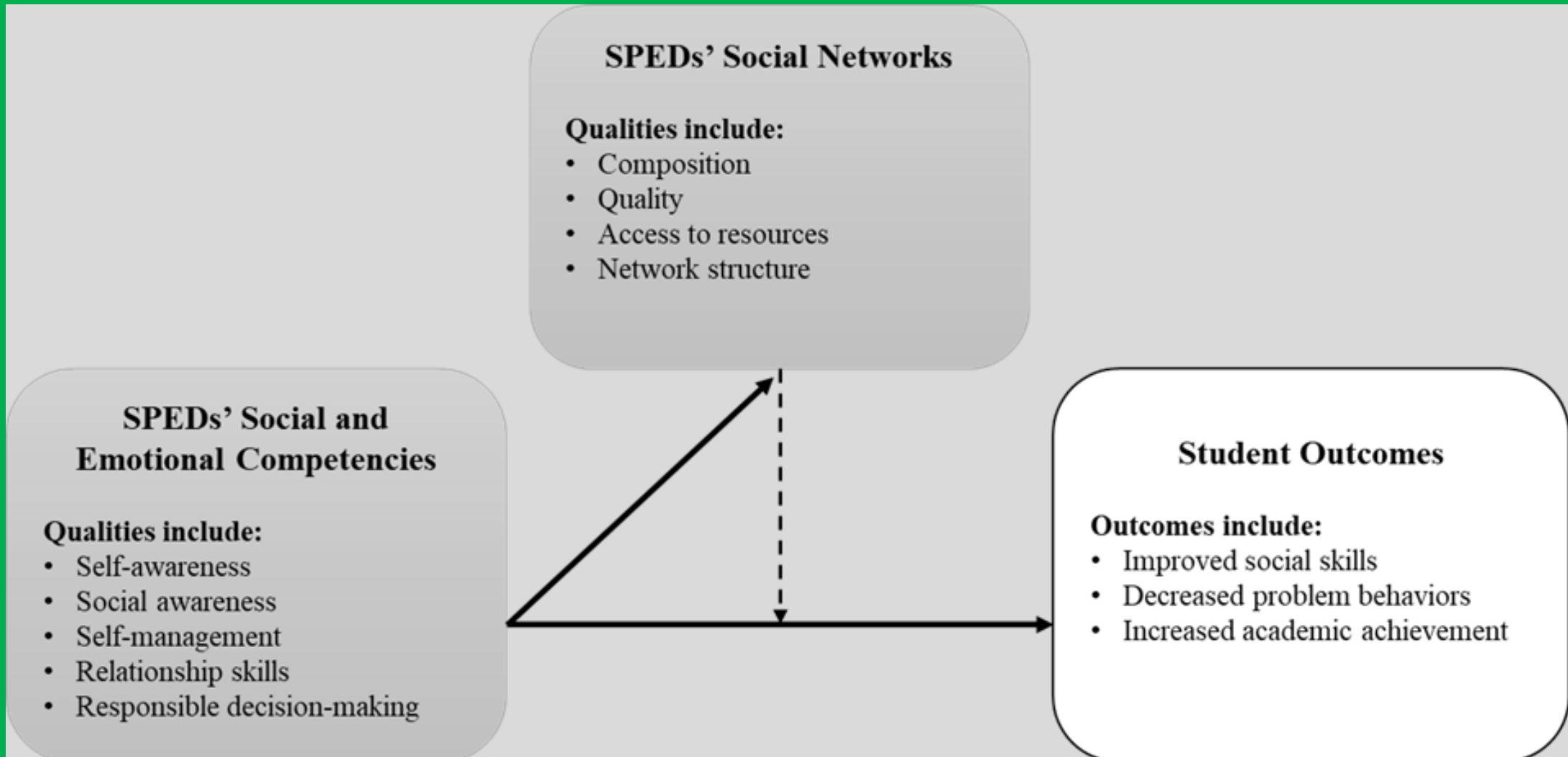
TEACHING PRACTICES THAT PROMOTE SEC

1. Student-Centered Discipline
2. Teacher Language
3. Responsibility and Choice
4. Warmth and Support
5. Cooperative Learning

6. Classroom Discussions
7. Self-Reflection and Self-Assessment
8. Balanced Instruction
9. Academic Press and Expectations
10. Competence Building—Modeling, Practicing, Feedback, Coaching

(YODER, 2014)

- What SECs would you consider your own personal strengths? Weaknesses? Why?

- What are the SECs that you seek in a collaborative relationship?

PROJECT COLLABORATE: THEORY OF CHANGE

SPEDs' Social Networks

Qualities include:
- Composition
- Quality
- Access to resources
- Network structure

SPEDs' Social and Emotional Competencies

Qualities include:
- Self-awareness
- Social awareness
- Self-management
- Relationship skills
- Responsible decision-making

Student Outcomes

Outcomes include:
- Improved social skills
- Decreased problem behaviors
- Increased academic achievement

PROJECT COLLABORATE STUDY DESIGN

- Special educators (*N* = 69) from five schools in Western PA working in self-contained classrooms.

- Data collected:
  - **Semi-structured interviews;** coded using modified grounded theory (LaRossa, 2005);
  - **Collaborative team diagnostics** (*Team Diagnostic Survey;* Wageman, Hackman, & Lehman, 2005);
  - **SECs and instructional practices** (*Self-assessing Social and Emotional Instruction & Competencies;* Yoder, 2014).

EMERGENT THEMES, INTERVIEWS

Attributes of collaboration	Forced vs. natural networks	School culture
SECs that lead to collaboration	SECs important for students	Teaching practices that promote SEC

THEME 1: Social Networks	Examples
Forced networks	"Because we're (partnered) together. It wouldn't be my choice but it is who I'm with." "Well specifically in my classroom I think that we collaborate very well together, so 3 of us. We've just been through a lot [laugh] of stuff together this year, so it's been, I feel like just from the very beginning, we all collaborated very well." "You know for awhile we had teams, we had, uh team meetings that were you know there was a fundraising team, there was a, positive environments team, there were 3 or 4 different groups that we had."

THEME 1: Social Networks	Examples
Natural networks	"I think, staff here picks and chooses who they want to collaborate with. I think um, they pick and choose people who have the same, kind of worldview that they do, or the same um, view of kids, as they do." "I'm going to collaborate with people who also believe they're here because, that's where they're supposed to be like they have a, essentially a mission, to do. And so they tend to clump up and have a mutual understanding." "Tim. He's been here for a long time so we have a lot of mutual memories and experiences…we're, able to kind of read each other well if there's a crisis."

THEME 2: Attributes of Collaboration	Examples
Key qualities of collaboration	"Especially, in this environment there's, so much chaos that happens throughout a day, and I'm going on backup calls I feel like, those, kind of moments can really help, build those relationships better because you know oh this person has my back and I'm going to have that person's back, no matter , granted we always have [laugh] everyone's backs." "Um, supportive. Good communication skills, good listening skills, um. Empathy, someone who can. Who's not. Not afraid to like be able to come into the classroom whenever you really need it, um. And not someone who just barks orders from, an office [laugh]."

THEME 2: Attributes of Collaboration	Examples
Personal values and beliefs	"I just do think that we all are just, we're on a team we're all trying to work together we're all trying to get through our day, like everyone, I do believe like has that kind of mindset." "Joke about stuff, and do that kind of thing, that I think is necessary and important for the workspace." "I think for me it's important for me to work with somebody who's super committed , because it's hard for me, to be partnering with people who aren't. You know, that's tough I'm dealing with that right now, where it's very obvious (she) doesn't want to be here … it's just not a fifty-fifty partnership at all."

THEME 2: Attributes of Collaboration	Examples
Barriers	"We're so overburdened with: put this in Excel. Put this in (the computer), and put that, make sure you're documenting this make sure you're documenting that, and…That part is so exhausting. We're out of time." "This may sound weird but the distance, of the classrooms. Kind of I think impacts that a little bit because I'm a lot closer to the classrooms that are like, literally in closer proximity to my classroom [laugh], cause I feel like you just, see those people more often."

THEME 3:

Teaching Practices that Support SEC

Teaching Practices that Support SEC	Examples
Warmth and support	"We're starting from ground zero with a lot of our students. Um, and they need to feel like they're coming to this place where teachers do show them warmth and support and um, to build that, level of trust that, they can, we can start to branch out to some of these other things, but for a lot of our students we're still at that, we're still at that base level… that foundation level."

THEME 3:

Teaching Practices that Support SEC	Examples
Teacher language	"Teacher language…It, sometimes, you can just set kids off by the way that you talk to them. Um. And it's, definitely something that I think, everyone needs to work on." "You can't just be like 'we're going to get this work done, whether you want to do it or not.' It's, totally about, changing your tone. In which moment is it okay to use, a comforting tone, which moment is it not? Being agile with, your vocal abilities is really important with these kids, and that takes, a lot of empathy and certainly a lot of warmth, to get to know them, so that you know, where and when to use language."

SEC DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

- Responses were fairly consistent across schools

- On average, teachers reported higher values of DISC, WARM, and LANG

Mean SEC By School
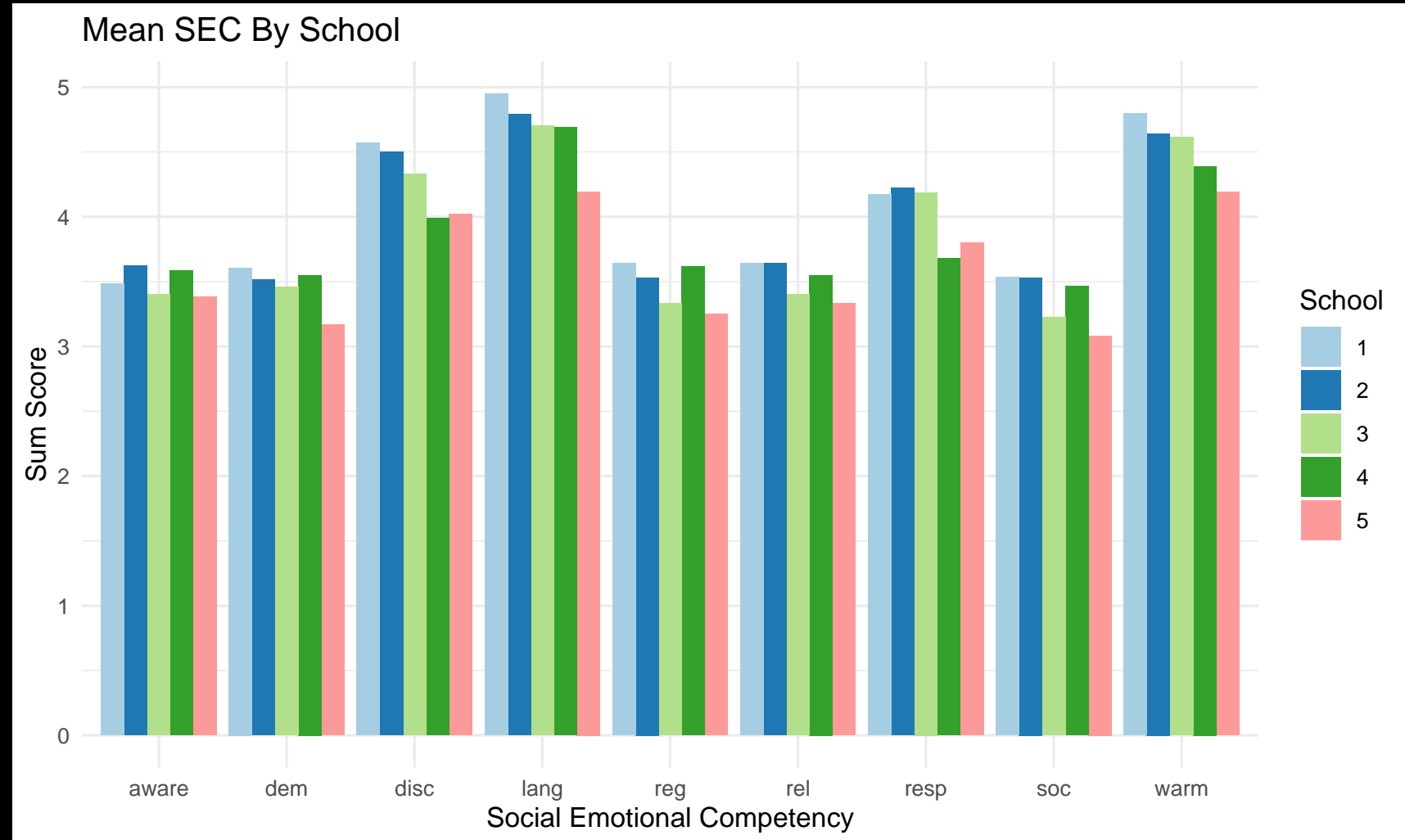
- Network structure varies across schools.

- "Outdegree" was correlated with negative team rating.

- Seeking or being sought for advice did not appear correlated with the same SECs across schools
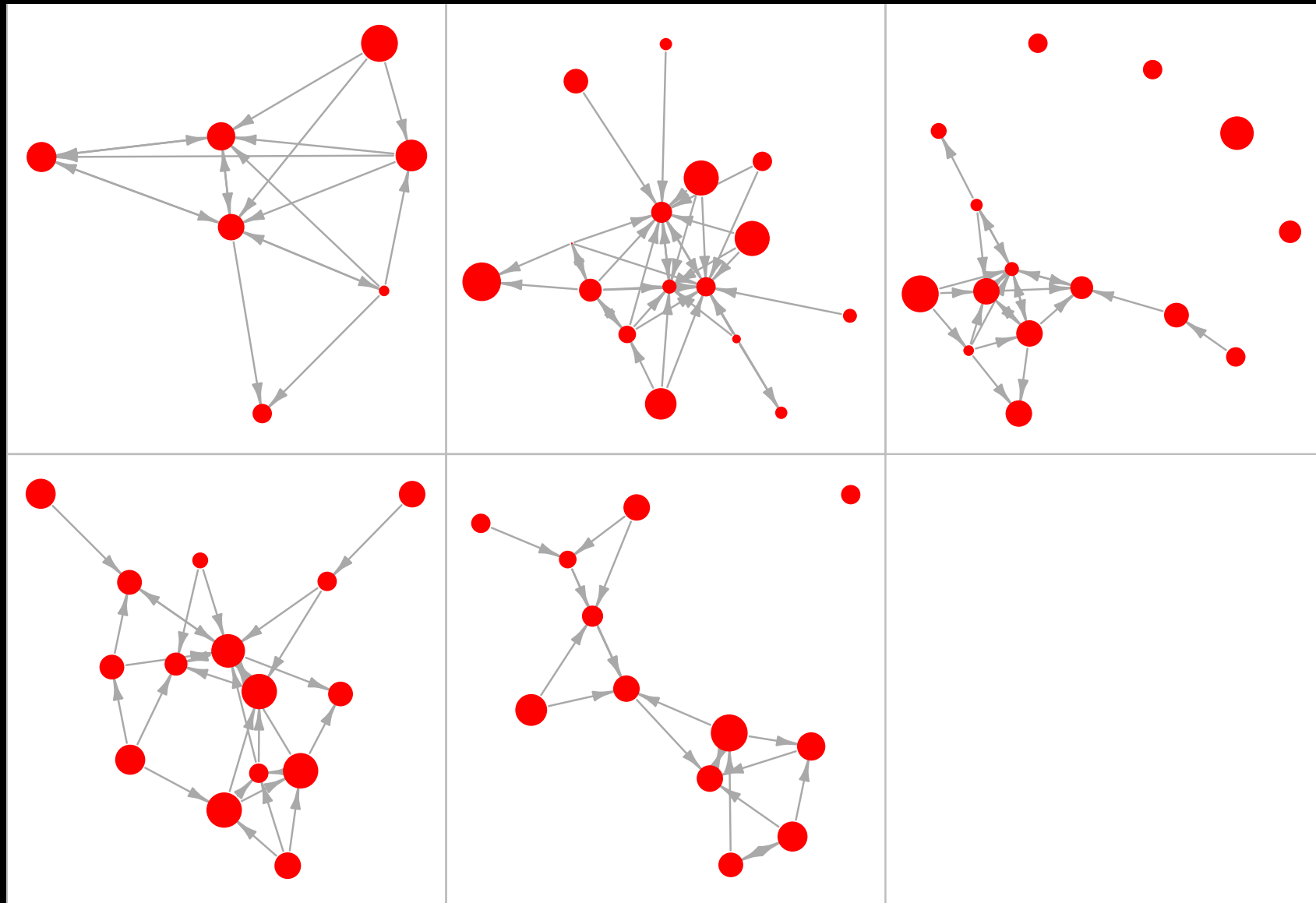
NETWORKS AND SEC PRACTICES

- Seeking or being sought for advice did not appear correlated with the SEC Warmth & Support.

- There is not much variability in Warmth & Support.
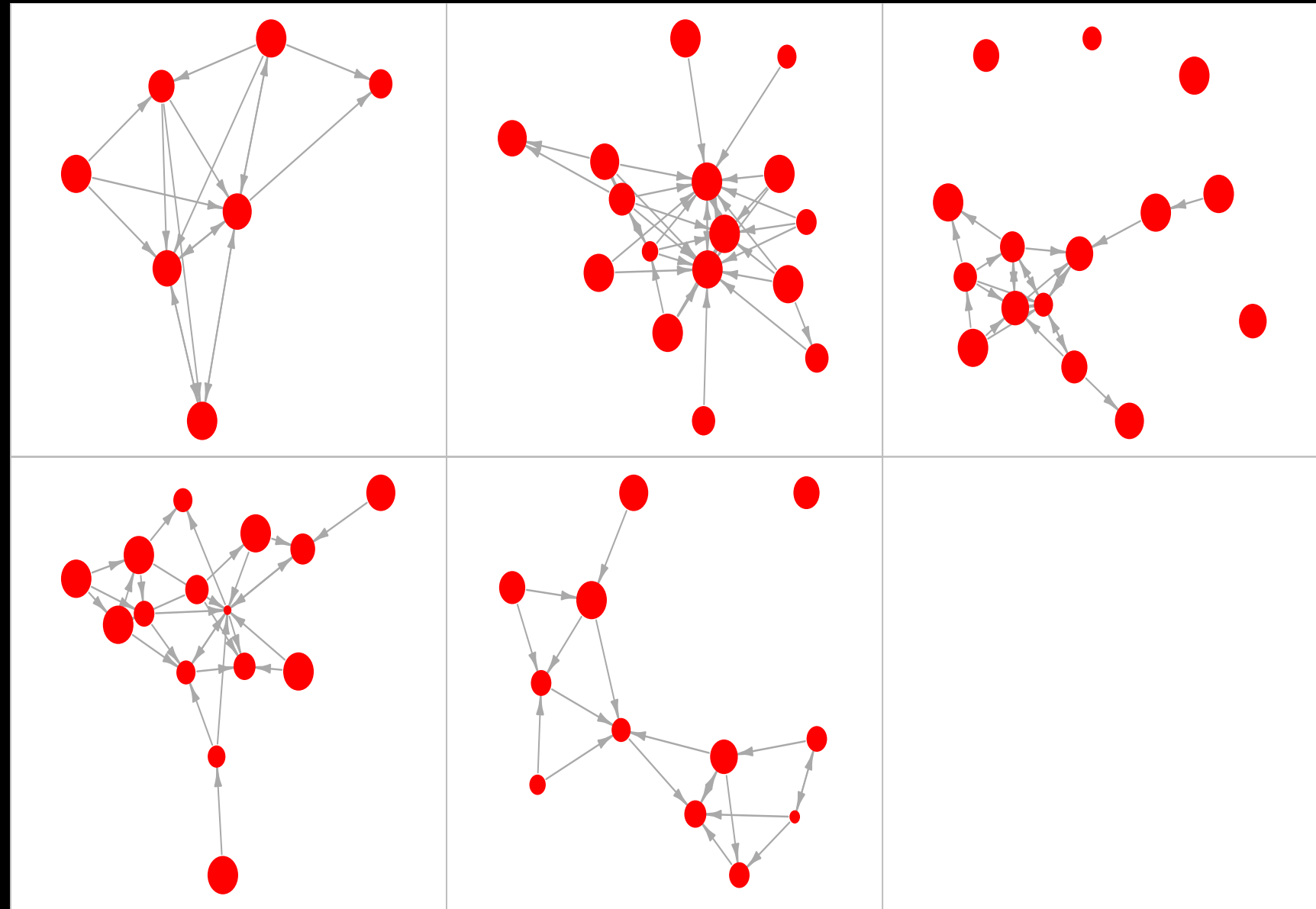
- How could a "fractured" network affect student outcomes?

- How can schools foster collaboration?

FUTURE RESEARCH

- Continue to explore networks and various SECs.

- Test moderation model on student outcomes.

- Partner with school leadership to inform professional development or activities.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

- Inform how school leaders make decisions around instructional team assignments.

- Create intervention work designed to improve SPED's services for students with EBD in self-contained settings.

- Develop SEC trainings to inform professional collaborations.

QUESTIONS???

- **Michael Valenti:** mvalenti@pressleyridge.org

- **Betsy Levine-Brown:** ebrown11@gmu.edu

- **Tracy Sweet:** tsweet@umd.edu

- **Duhita Mahatmya:** duhita-mahatmya@uiowa.edu

- Karen Celendonia: kceledonia@pressleyridge.org

- Canaan Bethea: cbethea4@gmu.edu