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Improving Sense Of Belonging in Elementary Schools

Jordan Bandong

California State University, Monterey Bay
Abstract
This Capstone Project helps identify the issues that students can have when feeling isolated in the classroom. The participants for the Capstone Project included 32 third-grade students in a public elementary school located on California’s Southern Coast. This project identified the effects on students in the classroom when they feel isolated or not included. The project gave the students the opportunity to choose where they wanted to spend lunch and recess time in order to prevent them from feeling isolated in certain settings outside the classroom. The project also helped students share personal experiences with their peers in order to identify feelings and behaviors that occur when feeling isolated. The project showed nearly all participants had understood what it means to feel left out as well the behaviors that follow. This project helps future teachers understand the importance of having full inclusion in their classrooms.

Keywords: Belonging, Interaction, Social Relationships
Students often do poorly in school for a number of reasons. One specific reason underlines the issue that some students do not perform well due to the lack of belonging they feel in the classroom. It is important as educators to properly learn how to facilitate learning equally in their classrooms so no child gets left behind. According to J. Frenk of the Chronicle of Higher Education (2016), “Through a "scholarship of belonging", universities and Teacher Educators can create inclusive spaces, lift barriers, challenge negative stereotypes, model deep listening, and engage in respectful dialogue so pre-service teachers feel valued by others and have the chance to add their own value; so they belong (pg.3). Including all students in every aspect of teaching can be a difficult challenge, although the outcomes of success can severely benefit these students’ lives. Creating an environment of belonging heavily includes the relationships between the children and the instructor. If there is not a solid connection bringing the teacher and students closer together, the goal of making each student feel like they belong will become more unattainable. Ann Gillies of the International Journal of Whole Schooling (2017) claims that, “When Teacher Educators concentrate their efforts on developing meaningful relationships with their university students, feelings of belonging are facilitated as the higher education learning environment becomes a caring community of valued members” (pg. 17).

What is Sense of Belonging?

“Belonging is a fundamental human need; whether we are conscious of it or not, we are always monitoring how well we feel we fit in during all of our social interactions (Education Northwest, 2016). We constantly monitor our social interactions even at such a young age. When a child feels like they are not thriving in their social interactions, sense of belonging can be diminished which can create learning barriers and a lack of motivation. According to the No
Isolation global research page, “students who are socially isolated are at an increased risk of health problems in adulthood” (No Isolation, 2018). If education is supposed to make their adult lives easier, it is important as educators to focus on the well-being of their students rather than strictly academic performance in order to avoid long-term issues. It is clear by now that teachers have identified many different types of learners in their class which can be hard to adjust to certain styles of teaching considering each student learns differently. Although there are many different types of programs to help these kids learn, being involved in a special program can also highlight the isolation these kids are experiencing as well. According to George Theoharis (2009), who is the principal at Falk Elementary in Wisconsin, he claimed that “All kids, and I mean all kids -- kids with significant disabilities, kids with autism, kids with serious behavior issues, kids with learning disabilities, kids in wheelchairs, kids who were high flyers, kids who were learning English--each and every child needed to be an essential member of the classroom and school community” (pg. 85). Incorporating every student in all activities can really help create a healthy classroom environment where children are free to learn without distractions.

**What are the Effects of Neglecting a Sense of Belonging?**

Feeling included not just in school but in every social aspect can leave long term beneficial effects on developing children. Li Chunkai, of the Children and Youth Services Review (2018) claimed that, “The sense of school belonging fully mediated the effect of social exclusion on migrant children’s mental health” (pg.8). Although this article talks about life of students in another country, every child has to develop socially through a sense of belonging. The urge to belong starts to come as a child before we even recognize it. “There is considerable evidence that, from early development, children take pleasure in social interactions and engage in behaviours that serve to prolong positive engagement” (Over, 2016). Even by week eight of a
newborn life, infants tend to smile in response to their social partners. As stated by Harriet Over (2016), “Interaction as a child is key for development” (pg. 755), therefore it is important educators take this into consideration when forming their classroom relationships. The importance of belonging should be considered a need rather than a want taking to mind the positive effects belonging can leave on a developing child. Studies from Social Psychological research show that, “From infancy, children find even a relatively brief removal of social contact to be distressing in ways such as reduced smiling and increased gaze aversion” (Over, 2016). With this being said, an educator must understand the importance of social contact in order to prevent social disorders in their students. If a student struggles with finding a friendly environment, educators may have a hard time expecting a student to perform at their best abilities. Specifically in children with learning disabilities, educators should make these children feel as comfortable as possible considering the struggles they face before hand. According to Dr. Margalit on GreatSchools.org, “Children with a learning disability have personal characteristics that not only increase the likelihood that they will be lonely, but may also make it more difficult for them to cope with the feelings that accompany loneliness” (Great Schools, 2016). Making learning easier for students is a responsibility of the educator, therefore it is important to identify each student’s needs when attempting to create an inviting classroom environment. Neglecting the idea of belonging can create many individual learning issues that can leave detrimental effects on student’s ability in the classroom.

**What Can Teachers Do to Improve Sense of Belonging?**

Making every child feel included in the classroom is not an easy task considering every child learns and acts in a different way. Teachers and Boards of Education have tried to implement ideas to help this issue of isolation of students. One specific reformation was the
adoption of the “No Child Left Behind Act”. According to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, “The major focus of No Child Left Behind is to close student achievement gaps by providing all children with a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education.” (OSPI, 2011). Because of the many types of students in schools today, this program helped attend to the learning abilities of all different types of students requiring them all to test based on state standards. Principal George Theoharis of Falk Elementary in Michigan also had an idea to fix the issue of belonging in schools. His idea was to forget the special programs for specific students and put everybody in the same classroom no matter what learning disabilities are present. Principal Theoharis (2009) claims that, “Special programs can be great for struggling students, although these programs have been used to identify these kids rather than help them” (pg. 87). Other ideas have involved the idea of student to student coursework and service projects in order to get students working cohesively. J.E Downing from the University of Arizona (1996) claims, “Every student, even those with significant support needs, should be involved in providing some type of assistance to others in order to develop a sense of efficacy and responsibility” (pg.32). Downing heavily promotes the use of student to student support hoping these children see each other as peers rather than other students in the classroom. As stated before, trying to get all students on the same page socially and educationally can be a severe challenge, therefore the implementing of ideas promoting cohesive interaction may benefit the struggling student.

**Recommendations to Improve Sense of Belonging**

In order to improve students’ sense of belonging in the classroom, there are three options that will be considered in the implementation process. Criteria for these options will include cost, time, and effectiveness in the school classroom setting.
Cost will be determined by the amount of money each of these specific ideas will cost. Funding for these programs will not cost the school a fortune, although some idea may require more funding than others. Each option will be evaluated on a score from 1-3 with 1 being the least expensive option and 3 being the most expensive option.

Effectiveness will be determined by the predicted outcomes of each idea. Some options require the participation of students and other staff members, therefore implementing this idea may be problematic if there is not full participation to increase the effectiveness of the option. Again, the most effective option will receive a score of 1 and the least effective option will receive a score of 3.

Time is a big factor to consider when evaluating these options because some options may require more time than others in order to be effective. Some of these options may be solutions to big issue which will obviously take time to implement considering the severity of the issue. The most time efficient option will receive a score of 1 and the least time efficient option will receive a score of 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Effectiveness</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lunch Club</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Student</td>
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Table 1. Criteria of Options Based on Cost, Time, & Effectiveness

Lunch club.
One option to consider is the implementation of an alternative lunch program where kids are not required to play games or participate in sports at lunch. It is important for teachers to look for warning signs in social climates of Physical Education classes and other areas of free activity considering the highly emotional and interactive nature of physical activity (Halas, 2002). Not all students have the desire to play games and participate in sports like their classmates. Some children find reading or practice of computer skills a better use of their time considering their nature behind physical activity. Because the Lunch Club offers simply offers an alternative space for children to practice other skills, the cost of this option would score a 1 because the school is not providing any additional funding to run this program and all that this option would require is an additional supervisor. According to Halas (2002), “These areas of play and exercise are often seen as hazardous climates promoting negative expectations built on teacher pessimism, boredom, and irresponsibility” (p. 268). Because of this, effectiveness of this option would receive a score of a 1 considering how physical activity and education are seen in some students’ eyes. This program may not be seen as an alternative option to physical activity for students but rather another way to feel isolated, therefore this option may take time to implement considering children may try their best to prevent the feeling of isolation. Because educators need to give these children the time to realize this options’ benefits, Time would receive a score of a 2.

**Individual Student Meetings/ Check-Ins.**

Students who experience frequent rejection are more often to turn away from cooperative play and socialization with peers (D'Souza, Mildred, Jament, & Johnson, 2015). Because of this, another option would be to have weekly student meetings or check-ins in order to track student behavior. According to the American Psychological Association (2014), “Kids and teens tend to internalize their feelings. If something is troubling them, they may not speak up and ask for
support” (pg. 1). It is hard for educators to provide the right information and advice to their children when they need it, so forcing a weekly student meeting may encourage the kids to speak up about their problems. Meeting with your students for ten minutes each week will not cost the teacher or the school any additional funds so the cost of this option would receive a score of 1. Although this is encouraging children to speak up about their issues, there is no guarantee that these children will completely confide in you, therefore effectiveness of this option would receive a score of 2. Because classrooms are being filled to the brim with students, taking 10 minutes for each student out of a weekly schedule can produce a big delay in schedules throughout the day, therefore Time for this option would receive a score of 3.

**UDL (Universal Design Learning).**

Producing a classroom environment that includes all types of learners can not only help prevent the feeling of isolation, but also can be beneficial to all student’s education as well. According to Michael Peterson of the International Journal of Whole Schooling (2005), “For high levels of learning to occur for all students, developing inclusive classrooms is necessary, not optional” (pg.1). Universal Design Learning can be beneficial to the issue of belonging, although this option would require lots of work in order for it to be implemented. As far as cost, changing parts of the curriculum as well as providing the extra training teachers may need to teach all students can be costly. Because of this, cost of this option would receive a score of 3. Implementing this idea can have significant impacts on children's learning and well-being so this option would receive a score of 1 for the effectiveness category. Implementing this idea would not be a rapid change considering the steps that need to be taken to reach the end goal of this idea therefore, Time of this option would receive a score of 3.

**Which Option Will be Implemented?**
The option of providing an alternative place for children to spend their free time will be implemented in order to help encourage a sense of belonging. This program will offer children who do not like to participate in sports or physical activities a way to enjoy their free time. Considering Time, Cost and Effectiveness, this option provides the least expensive option without sacrificing too much time. There are other options that could better assure effectiveness, although this option provides the best situation without spending too much money.
Isolation can be a big roadblock to students succeeding in the classroom. When students feel like they do not belong in the classroom, they can become unmotivated to learn and unmotivated to interact with their peers. In order to address this issue, research from around the world suggests that these issues can be resolved by implementing certain strategies and programs in the school. A suggestion from Michael Peterson of the Journal of Whole Schooling, claims that “all students need to be a part of an inclusive classroom in order to prevent individual isolation” (2005). This inclusive classroom model requires different styles of teaching which may help students identify their most beneficial learning styles. Another suggestion came from the American Psychological Association where they identified that students tend to internalize their feelings rather than be outspoken about them. Because of this, weekly student meetings were suggested to encourage students to be outspoken to their teachers by giving them the time to speak individually.

The lesson implemented used the 5-step lesson which emphasized students prior knowledge on what it means to belong in a classroom. Students practiced identifying emotions and feelings that arise when belonging to a classroom as well as not belonging to a classroom. Out of the final worksheet/questionnaires received, all of the work will be used considering they are thought to have met the objective of the assignment.

Design

The school site that this lesson plan was implemented is in Orange County which sits in economically-wealthy area. Because of the fact the parents of the children tend to make a good income, the parents tend to focus more on their jobs rather than the education of their children. This leaves issues in the community with lacking parental support in these children which tends to show in the classroom. Because of the issue with support in the classroom, child attendance
rates have decreased within the last five years. In the last year, daily attendance average has dropped almost 1,000 students since the 2017-2018 school year (Orange Unified School District, 2019). While the school does not fall under the category of “low-income”, the lack of participation from the parents results in poor academic scores from these children. According to EdData, Orange Unified School District has had an increasing number of students who are considered to have “not met State Standards” from the 2016-2017 school year to 2017-2018 school year (EdData, 2019). Lack of support in these classrooms has not only produced a decrease in attendance but also a decrease in Mathematics and English Language Arts Scores.

Due to privacy issues, the teacher will be recognized as Mrs. B. Specifically in Mrs. B’s Third grade classroom, there are seven students who are raised without either a mother or father in the classroom. These children have shown a number of issues regarding isolation in the classroom and their educational performance has shown the lack of confidence they have obtained by not being well-supported by parental figures. The seven children in the classroom each have special accommodations and belong to a specific daytime program that is supposed to help keep them up to speed with the other students. Although these programs are designed to help them keep pace with the other children in the class, they do experience feelings of isolation when going to these programs. The lesson plan is designed to show students what isolation can do to a student's emotions and well-beings in the classroom. The educator's lesson plan is designed to fully engage all students provoking the participation of all students by sharing their experiences of belonging or not belonging. The goal of this lesson is to have the children identify what emotions and feelings can come from not feeling included in the classroom. The lesson will help students “identify the benefits that can come from having positive interaction with their peers at school” (Appendix A).
Implementation

Identifying the feelings and emotions that come from experiencing isolation can help students relate to their peers and help prevent these children from feeling this way. If the class could understand the impact of this issue through the lesson plan, this may prevent actions that may provoke isolation on the playground or in the classroom at school. Students will be given their own worksheets to identify these issues by themselves in case they feel embarrassed or ashamed of feeling this way. Preventing isolation is the goal of this lesson so it is important that the educator does not single any student out when discussing their areas of non-belonging. If a student does not want to share how they feel when being isolated, it is safe to assume that they are embarrassed of feeling this way. The questionnaires will provide the information that is not given orally during the class discussion. Once the discussion is finished and the implementation of the Lunch Club is introduced, the educator will closely observe the actions of the children when deciding where they want to spend their time at lunch to compare their decisions before and after the lesson. This will show if the students who normally feel isolated during free periods have gained the confidence to come to “Lunch Club” and express themselves in other ways.

The title “instructor” is given to the educator implementing this idea. The instructor closely examined the behaviors of the children during lunch or recess and tried to identify which students have issues with isolation and which do not. Once the day or two of observation was completed, the instructor facilitated a lesson inside the classroom. The instructor passed out a worksheet asking where the children feel like they belong and where they do not. This took about 10 minutes to give the children the time they need to identify the areas they think best fit the questions on the worksheet. Once the children had completed the worksheet, they were encouraged to share with a peer to see if there are any similarities in each of the students. Peer
sharing was not required since the goal of this lesson is to avoid singling a student out. Students then brainstormed with the instructor to identify their own definitions of what it means to belong. This list should contain at least 3 definitions. Once the class had developed a definition of the word, they were asked to identify how they feel when they “do not belong”. When identifying their feelings, students were encouraged to look at a situation involving somebody who feels like they do not belong at school and think about how much more difficult this would be to learn.

This lesson involved the cooperation of both students and instructor. Once the children had identified emotions that come with isolation, the implementation of the Lunch Club was introduced and explained. Instructor will explain that the Lunch Club offers another space where students can spend their free time without needing to play sports or take part in physical activity. The instructor explained that the Lunch Club is a safe space, therefore bullying or actions provoking isolation will not be tolerated. Once the two days of Lunch Club were completed, the instructor reassembled the class back together for further instruction. The instructor then facilitated questions about the Lunch Club and allowed time for students to explain their implications of the Lunch Club if any. At the end of the lesson, students received a final questionnaire/worksheet asking if the students used the Lunch Club and why or why not?. The final question was used for assessment by asking them “What could happen if a child is left out at school?” (Appendix A). If a student emphasized any issue that can come from feeling isolated or identify a behavior that can come from isolation, the child will be considered as a “pass” and those who do not identify any of these things will be considered a “fail”.

The instructor received the proper participation needed for accurate results. When asking for definitions of what it means to belong, many kids had claimed that belonging is the same word as feeling wanted to the classroom. There were not enough diverse responses to this
question so the general definition of “feeling wanted” was written on the board. Most children agreed that this is the best way to describe belonging and already started to provoke thoughts about when and where they feel “wanted” and where they did not. Students began to answer the worksheet questions before even handing it out. This created a natural transition into the discussion even though it came a bit quicker than expected. In the center of the brainstorm, the instructor wrote the words “When and Where I don’t feel like I belong” and would create new bubbles from each of the responses received from the kids who volunteered. Answers from the children highlighted exact moments in school and home where this issue is most prevalent. Answers were recorded on an ELMO projector and shown for the whole class to see. While most responses focused on the inclusion of their friends, one response claimed that isolation occurs when, “teased for not having nice clothes or house” (Figure 1). Another response claimed that isolation occurs when “I get pulled out for services” (Figure 1). These responses had encouraged students to speak about things they may be embarrassed about. These responses had provided more than enough information about what factors of social relationships these children feel most isolated in and also provided a perfect basis for the evaluation part of the assessment.
After this part of the discussion, the children were then evaluated by their participation at Lunch or Recess whether it be on the playground or Lunch Club. The instructor had nearly every student show up to the Lunch Club. The children’s decision to come was heavily influenced by their want to get familiar with the instructor, although the instructor noticed full participation of every student during these periods. When the children received their final assessment of the questionnaire, it was noted that every student had received a “pass” score for their ability to identify the issue that can come by feeling isolated. Assessment also included the visual identification of each student by the instructor and Lunch or Recess which the instructor noticed all but one child who was fully included during these times. Figure 2 shows all but one student in the class interacting with one another during the transition from lunch to classroom instruction.
Figure 2. Transition time from lunch to classroom instruction.

Although every student was able to identify what can happen when feeling isolated, this one child has received a “fail” considering his continuing lack of participation with the rest of his classmates.

Evaluation

During the project presentation there were a few issues that came about the instructor. Because of the children’s wants and needs to become familiar with new faces in the classroom, there was a bigger turn out for the Lunch Club than expected. The implementation of the Lunch Club was intended to encourage the students who struggle with making friends and interacting in and outside the classroom. The instructor had nearly every student from the classroom participate
in Lunch Club, which complicates the study by making the results harder to find. The instructor also noticed that the lesson plan was slightly too simple for a third grade setting. While the lesson was supposed to take anywhere from 30-40 minutes, the lesson actually only took about 20 minutes. The instructor was prepared for a lack of participation considering the topics that were being discussed can be sensitive to some students. Surprisingly, the instructor received nearly full participation from every student. Heavy participation could have been influenced by the children’s desire to become familiar with the new face in the classroom. Even answers relating to a certain child’s financial situation were discussed by the child themselves which shows the courage these kids will take to participate in class discussions. The instructor had the idea that third graders would not be so responsive and mature about the lesson being taught so the time spent doing the lesson was significantly shorter than expected. If the instructor had known about the maturity levels and responsiveness of the children, the instructor could have done further testing to make sure all students walked away completely understanding the impact of belonging in the classroom.
Discussion

The Capstone Project has supported the issue that too many children in school feel isolated in a classroom environment, which can be a big obstacle in their learning. Although the project was considered a success, there were some minor implications that made implementing the project a bit more difficult than expected. The goal of the project was to identify which students have issues with isolation in the classroom and to offer a solution to how this isolation can be prevented or addressed. Identification of these struggling students was required following a recruiting process for these specific children. Recruitment process for the lunch club option was a bit more appealing to the students than one might have hoped for. The lunch club idea was intended to draw the attention of students who do not enjoy playing sports or any physical game during lunch or recess. Because of the interest the students had in a new instructor coming into the classroom, nearly the entire class showed up to the lunch club making it hard to identify which students came to the club to avoid feeling isolated during lunch time. The instructor had also realized that the lesson being taught to students went a bit quicker than expected. The instructor had assumed a smaller amount of participation considering the topic that was being discussed. The instructor assumed that most children, especially at the third grade level, would not be comfortable in discussing where and when they feel isolated as well as their feelings towards this isolation. Surprisingly enough, the instructor had received nearly full participation in every student including the students who have a harder life at home than the others. With this being said, this lesson could have been replicated in a grade level below third grade considering the vast amounts of response received by the children. Another implication that the instructor faced was the issue of familiarity with the students. Because of the instructors past within the school and relationship with the main teacher, students were a bit more drawn to the new
instructor than expected. Being drawn to the new instructor was very beneficial to the participation aspect of this assignment, although motives of the children’s decision to go the lunch club could have been influenced by the urge to be familiar with someone closely related to their actual teacher.

**Recommendations**

The instructor found this lesson to be a success and benefit to the children, although there are a number of things that could have been improved to strengthen the validity of the project. First, it is recommended that this project is to be done in a school setting in which the instructor who is implementing the lesson, is not familiar with the students in the classroom. Having an instructor who is familiar with the teacher and students can alter the students mindset about where they wanted to spend their lunch time. The instructor is intended to be a supervisor to these children at lunch club rather than another friend. Being looked at as another friend brought in students that necessarily do not have issues with feeling included at school. In order to improve this project, the instructor might personally recruit the struggling students rather than propose the option to the entire class in order to get a better representation of the struggling students. The instructor might also use a different instructor to facilitate the lunch club so that the instructor who is implementing this idea, can focus on the results and participation of the struggling students rather than interacting with the children. Another issue the appeared in this lesson was the length of time it took to complete the discussions and worksheets. The instructor had allocated nearly 40 minutes to teach this lesson, but it only took about 20-25 minutes. The instructor had assumed that there would not be as much participation considering the topics that were being discussed. For future practice of this lesson, the instructor might consider doing this lesson in a grade level where the importance of feelings and relationships with their peers is first
introduced. These grade levels could be anywhere from first to third grade. Another idea for the future would be to implement this lesson in a low socio-economic school environment where students may not be so eager to discuss their issues at home or school. Implementing this idea in a low socio-economic school setting could also leave a stronger impact on the students considering there may not be as many opportunities to receive help.

**Future Plans**

Educators have many things to focus on in the classroom, although some ideas may be more important to the children’s learning than others. Feeling isolated in a classroom can be a big roadblock in student’s learning so it is important to address these issues first-hand. In order to prevent these issues from becoming serious problems, an instructor may use certain techniques and strategies in their teaching that could help prevent isolation. First, an instructor might consider giving each student an individual job in the classroom so each student can feel like he or she is needed. Giving each student a specific job in the classroom can make a child understand that without them doing their specific job, the class may not be run as smoothly. Emphasizing the importance of each individual student job helps the class work together as a cohesive unit in order to improve the fluidity and successes of the class. For example, giving a student who struggles with making friends a job like passing out papers for the entire class can help the child practice interaction with the other students which may result in increased comfortability in the struggling child. Second, an instructor might implement an idea that includes a classroom buddy system. The implementation of a “buddy system” could allow the teacher to pair one of his or her strong and outgoing students with someone who struggles making friends in the classroom. This idea could help the struggling student see their buddy as a friend in the classroom making it easier to interact with their peers. The struggling student can possibly see their buddy as a
mentor or role model in the classroom, which may encourage them to replicate similar behaviors which can lead to making more friends. This idea could also benefit the student who is not struggling by letting them see what it is like to struggle socially in the classroom. If a student who has lots of friends is paired with a student with only one or two friends, this could help the socially strong students understand what their buddy is going through and provoke the thriving student to help the struggling student make friends. Isolation is a feeling that no student wants so it is important for future educators to make every student feel important.

**Conclusion**

For future educators, creating an environment in which all students feel like they belong can be a big challenge. Every student most likely faces some kind of issue whether it be at home or in the classroom. It is important for educators to understand these issues and prepare for them in the classroom. Some children have very difficult lives outside the classroom so making them feel included in school is necessary for their overall well-being. When a child feels isolated in the classroom, learning becomes a much harder task considering that focus is not always on the lessons being taught. This project helped students identify what it is like to feel isolated in a classroom as well as where in their life they feel this kind of isolation. Understanding the feelings that come with isolation can help students prevent isolation from occurring to their classmates. Realizing that every student feels like they don't belong in some aspect of their life, can help the suffering student feel similar to their classmates.

This project was a success in achieving class cohesiveness in a lunch club setting as well as identifying what isolation is as a class. Mostly everybody in the class showed up to the lunch club option supporting the idea that this can be a useful alternative to lunch or recess. Understanding the impact that feeling included can leave on an individual should encourage
future teachers to make this a key part of their teaching philosophies. Individuals are meant to interact with the people around them so providing this idea in early developmental settings like the classroom puts these children on the right path to developing positive social relationships and achieving success in school.
References


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

LESSON PLAN
5-step lesson plan

1.) Lesson Overview

Subject: Health

Topic / Unit of Study - Mental, Emotional, and Social Health

Grade Level- 3rd

Measurable Learning Objective “ Students will identify the benefits that can come from having positive interaction with their peers at school”

Summary: Students occasionally do poorly at school when they do not feel like they belong with their friends and peers. It is important to understand that bullying and other forms of isolation can leave detrimental effects to students who struggle with inclusion at school. Students will start by brainstorming what it means to “belong”. Students will then be asked when and where they feel like they belong and give reasons why this is the case. Students will receive a worksheet that has two blank sentences on it. The worksheet will say “ A place where I belong is ______ because ______”. The worksheet will also ask “ A place where I do not feel like I belong is ______ because ______”. Students will then be asked to discuss as a class their answers to the worksheet.

2.) Implementation

Learning context- This lesson helps to identify where certain students feel included and where they do not. My goal is for students to understand that they should feel and make others feel included in every place at school in order to feel comfortable while learning. Discussing where students do not feel comfortable can help identify where issues within school are happening. Whether it is on the playground at school or in the classroom, students will also talk about how they felt when they were isolated by a group in order to understand the effects of isolation.
Lesson before this may discuss how actions of an individual can affect the people around you. Lesson before may also include the idea of safe space and and to only use positive words to other people or do not say anything at all.

3.) Procedure

- Anticipatory set - Students will be asked to help form a class list of what it means to feel included in school. Students will be asked to give their own definition of the word and compare the definitions. Incentives to participation?

- Modeling - The instructor will create a list as well as a worksheet in order to get the kids thinking about where they feel included and why (Vice-Versa)?

- Guided Practice - Students will help develop a list of definitions for the word “belong” and form the list on the board for everyone to compare their answers

Independent Practice - Students will then write about their own experiences on the worksheet. Once the worksheet is done students will be asked to pair-share their experiences and think about how they felt in each of these events.

Closure - Students will then be asked to come back as a class and discuss their feelings during moments of isolation and be asked how they would feel if they were constantly feeling isolated and constantly experiencing these behaviors at school Do you think kids would want to come back to school if they are feeling this way frequently? Would you want to feel this way in the classroom? What could be done to prevent these things from happening at school?

- Follow-up Lesson - Now that students have identified their feelings and emotions when they feel isolated at school, It is important to understand the importance of setting. Creating boundaries for learning can help students feel safe in their learning environment. Now that students have
identified certain emotions, it is important for students to establish a safe space for these emotions.

1.4.M Discuss the importance of setting (and ways to set) personal boundaries for privacy safety, and expression of emotions.

4.) Materials and Resources

- Handouts- Created worksheet discussing when and when they do not feel included and why?

A place where I belong is ______ because ______”. The worksheet will also ask “ A place where I do not feel like I belong is ______ because ______”.

- Second Questionnaire or Worksheet

- Resources - Whiteboard, Worksheets,

5.) Standards and Assessment

-Content Standards-

1.1.M Describe examples of healthy social behaviors (e.g., helping others, being respectful of others, cooperation, consideration).

1.2.M Describe the importance of assuming responsibility within the family and community.

1.3.M Explain the benefits of having positive relationships with family and friends

-Assessment Plan- Students will be given a short final worksheet/ questionnaire that will ask them to identify what could happen to students who feel isolated. Based upon their responses from the handout worksheet, students should be able to identify the impacts of belonging in the classroom. Questionnaire will ask

“ What could happen to a student who feels left out at school?”.
“For students who chose to use the “Lunch Club, did you feel like you belonged in an environment like this one?”

“For students who did not chose to go to “Lunch Club”, why did you chose not to go?

-Personal evaluation- based upon the observations made during lunch and recess while not implementing the lesson, did I notice certain changes in specific students’ behaviors or did they remain the same?
APPENDIX B

STUDENTS WORKING