

12-2021

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Welcoming Classroom, Comfortable Learning Experience: Implementing Social Emotional Learning in the Classroom

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LS 400: Senior Capstone

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December 16, 2021

Abstract

Many students have difficulty expressing their emotions and working with others in elementary school classrooms. The focus of this capstone project is on implementing social-emotional learning in the classroom. This is important because students will learn proper ways to deal with their emotions, work with others, and have better self-awareness. An evidence-based argument is offered that students need guidance and support from their teachers to be able to create a positive space for their learning. Considerations of the issue included the perspective of two parents of elementary school students because they know the needs of their children, and a teacher at the same school because she has been working with children for a number of years. Three action options that emerged from an analysis of the data are: teacher/staff training, creating a positive learning environment, and praising students. Based on the findings, training teachers and staff on how to implement social emotional learning was undertaken to create a more positive learning environment for their students.

Implementing Social Emotional Learning in the Classroom

As a young child in elementary school I never felt comfortable at school due to the fact that I was extremely shy. I would sit in my classes and never raise my hand to answer questions, I had a hard time working with my peers, and preferred to be alone. Although I do recall my teachers being great people, I never built great strong relationships with them. I noticed that other children struggled with school as well in different areas. A few students struggled with behavior problems, others struggled with following directions, and others with making friendships. My school experience was mainly always focused on academics and content material that we were not taught to focus on areas that actually have an impact on our personal lives. As students we were struggling to reach our full potential because of the obstacles we each were facing.

When I was a student, there was no guidance on how to handle the different emotions I was facing. Many of my teachers were always so focussed on teaching us about different subjects that I was never in the situation to discuss my feelings. As a child there were so many different things going on at home or at school that really would impact my mood in positive or negative ways. Ways I would deal with my emotions is I would keep it to myself and not want to interact with others and was very shy. I would also see that in the faces of my peers as well. There were very few books we got to read or activities that we would do that related to real life experiences. So, it seemed like my emotions were pushed to the side to be dealt with at a later time. This impacted my school experience in a negative way in that I did not want to participate or interact with others. The seats in my classroom at school were always set up for me to sit individually. I was not working in many groups to have built relationships with others and be more social. Or when we were in groups, we were not allowed to talk to each other. The students

in my classes and I needed a space that allowed us to express ourselves. We needed to be children and focus on ourselves and build strong connections with others first before we could actually put in the work in the classroom.

Not having much social emotional learning in the classroom impacted my way of learning as time went on and I got older. In each classroom that I was in I was always in the same situation of being very shy and not expressing myself. It was not till I got to my last years of high school where I finally started to express myself in my classes and was able to make a lot more friends. It would have been nice if this level of comfort started in elementary school. The strong building of relationships with both the students and the teachers I had would have made me open up a lot more in class and the rest of my K-12 experience. For there to be social emotional learning, I would recommend for there to be more peer interactions within the classroom, for teachers to give praise to their students, reading specific books, and journaling. Social emotional learning would have greatly impacted me in such a positive way because I needed guidance as a child on how to build strong relationships, how to deal with different life scenarios by managing my emotions, and overall how to be comfortable with myself.

Literature Synthesis & Integration: Implementing Social Emotional Learning in the Classroom

Teaching Social and Emotional skills at a young age is crucial in our society in order for children to grow up to be more self-aware, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and learn how to manage their emotions. However, schools are so focused on academics and test scores that they completely ignore the student's well-being. School is a second home to students and is a place where they should be able to feel comfortable to express themselves and be who they truly want to be. Creating that safe space for children allows

students to open up in healthy ways that will benefit them and others surrounding them as well. It must be explored how Social Emotional Learning plays an important role in a child's learning experience in school and how exactly they are putting it to use for their futures.

What is the opportunity?

Teaching social emotional learning is not a priority in today's society. Since schools want to attract more students, there tends to be competition on which schools give the best education. Each school wants to have better test scores and do great academically. With this being said, schools neglect to teach healthy social emotional strategies that are important life skills for these children. Many teachers would find that social emotional learning would be hard to implement due to trying to squeeze in a lesson when other academic demands need to be met (Ng & Bull, 2018). This is important to consider and take into account that teachers need to find a way to incorporate social emotional learning in their everyday routines and day to day interactions with their students. A teacher's attitude and behavior also play a role in whether a child is learning social and emotional skills (Wilkinson & Kao, 2019). Teachers are the adults in the classroom and can be seen as a mom or dad figure to the students in the classroom. If teachers are not approachable in the students' lives, students will have a difficult time opening up and willing to be themselves.

Children having weak social emotional skills can lead to them not knowing how to express emotion, wanting to be isolated, and not showing any form of engagement in the classroom lesson (Ng & Bull, 2018). These characteristics can really have an effect on a child and their school experience because it will not allow them to reach their full potential and it will be a barrier that gets in the way of their success. Experiencing social emotional difficulties may also affect the way they develop and live their life (Funk, 2018). Students have a lot going on in

their lives and they need to have a place that welcomes them with open arms and allows them to build trusting relationships with everyone they interact with and learn healthy ways to express what they are feeling. Not incorporating social emotional learning in school can lead to children not fully expressing themselves and being scared to open up to others

Why is this an opportunity?

Due to the lack of social emotional learning being taught in schools, students are not reaching their full potential. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2012) states the five core competencies for social-emotional learning are: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social-Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision Making. These competencies are key factors for students to learn in school because it involves students themselves, their teachers, and peers. If students were to learn these skills, students would be more likely to have a positive learning experience and be more likely to focus on growing as an individual. Having social emotional learning in school benefits young children in their learning in the classroom and skills that are learned follow them through life.

The skills that go along with self-awareness and self-management should be taught in classrooms because students would greatly benefit from it. These two social-emotional competencies are crucial for a student in that students need to learn about themselves as individuals and how to properly regulate their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. If children are socio-emotionally confident in themselves, students are better prepared for life in school and in life (Wilkinson & Kao, 2019). Teaching self-awareness can help students know their identity. In terms of self-management, it would make students aware that having feelings is normal and it is okay to express one's thoughts. Since schools are not teaching enough about being more self-aware and not learning how to self-manage, students are having a hard time feeling

comfortable with themselves and adjusting in their classroom. Students need to have guidance on how they should react when they have feelings of frustration, unhappiness, excitement, and anger (Coskun, 2019). If schools were to implement more social-emotional learning and were taught about self-management and self-awareness, students would have a healthy mindset. By practicing these social emotional learning skills in the classroom, it would be a step in the right direction.

Social awareness and relationship skills are two of the other competencies that are extremely important to be taught more in schools. Being more socially aware and having great relationship skills can help students maintain conversations with others, and develop friendships with others (Denham & Hamre, 2010). A student can learn how to be more mindful of other people's thoughts and feelings and if they are mindful of that, they will be able to build great relationships with their peers and teachers. Children who master these two competencies tend to have more increased opportunities in life, develop meaningful relationships with their peers and teachers, and will have a better experience working in the classroom (Wilkinson & Kao, 2019). Social emotional learning in these two domains are crucial because if students do not have that social life in school, they will be held back from building strong relationships.

The last competency that does not seem to be taught enough in schools is responsible decision making. Many students are not aware of the decisions they make and what consequences follow making certain choices. There are two types of behavior problems that are shown by young children and they are: externalizing behavior problems and internalizing behavior problems (Pickens, 2009). Externalizing behavior problems are visible and are typically seen as "acting out" frustration while internalizing behavioral problems are not seen and are students who are withdrawn and become anxious (Pickens, 2009). It is important for schools to

teach proper ways of making responsible decisions when in a difficult situation. Students need to learn the ways in which a certain situation is a responsible decision that will be safe, smart, and ethical.

What should be done?

Teachers have a lot of pressure in the classroom because of the fact that they need to meet their academic responsibilities. Teaching social emotional learning does not have to be a separate lesson that teachers incorporate in their busy daily schedules. Social emotional learning can be developed within lessons and interactions that teachers have with students on a daily basis (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). It is crucial to remember that the little things do go a long way. Interactions that school faculty have with students can really determine the way students behave and interact within the classroom. Social emotional learning should not only be taught in the classroom but also everywhere around the school. The skills developed from social emotional learning are essential on playgrounds, in the lunchroom, in the hallways, and bathrooms (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Students especially in elementary school need a safe environment, and positive support from school staff in order to feel welcomed and comfortable in school. School staff should be trained on how to positively interact with students and react effectively when it comes to challenges students may face.

Giving students praise and complimenting the hard work they put into their work is greatly appreciated. Praise helps promote positive relationships between students and teachers. Praise leads to students and teachers' relationships to be strong and long lasting because students are demonstrating appropriate behaviors that teachers want more of in the classroom (Carroll et al., 2020). Teachers need to let students know when they have done something positive in the classroom in order for the student to continue doing that behavior and promoting a good healthy

environment.

A classroom that is welcoming and is a positive learning environment is another great way that social emotional learning can be implemented within schools. Effective reminders within the classroom such as posters with encouraging words can help students be comfortable in their school. Having the classroom environment decorated with fun and positive reminders really shows students examples and tips in which they should be able to make decisions and control their emotions (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). These posters can include what is expected within the classroom like raising hands, forming lines, how to interact with their peers, and how to express feelings. If students are being reminded of what is expected and are looking at positive posters in their classroom it will make students ready to learn while acknowledging they matter, and are acknowledged.

Books are a great way in which students and teachers can discuss characters' emotions and students can be able to relate to experiences of their own (Funk, 2018). Teachers can be able to bring in books that specifically relate to a situation that occurred within the classroom or books about how students are feeling. Then teachers will be able to ask meaningful questions that will help students not only improve reading comprehension but relate themselves to characters and share experiences when they have gone through something similar. Planning activities such as games, hands-on crafts, or singing songs relating to socio-emotional learning can be great to do as well. Incorporating both Social Emotional Learning books and activities can help promote positive growth, behavior, and development of students (Taylor et al., 2017). This type of learning will benefit students and help them succeed in the long run as they continue through their school experience.

Conclusion

Social Emotional learning is a great way for students in elementary school to have a positive learning environment. Students should be taught at a young age important life skills that help them grow and develop into successful individuals. School is a place that students spend a lot of time in and is a place that students learn about themselves and others. If there is a safe space where students can learn to express their emotions, build stronger connections, and learn to make responsible decisions, students will cherish that learning and carry it on as they get older. Teaching social emotional learning is the key to having a welcoming and comfortable second home for students.

Method

Social-Emotional learning is important and should be taught in elementary school classrooms in order for students to have more self-awareness, make responsible decisions, know how to interact with others, and overall be able to express themselves. For this Capstone Project the researcher investigated how teachers and parents view implementing socio-emotional learning in the classroom, and what suggestions they have on how to teach it to elementary school students. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature, the researcher used what she has learned to formulate an action that responds to teaching socio-emotional learning in a way that inspires, informs, or involves a particular audience.

Context

Mountain View Elementary School is a K-6 school located in Salinas, California. Mountain View is situated on the East Side of Salinas and is surrounded by homes. Salinas is known to be the "Salad Bowl of the World" and has a huge agricultural community. Many students in Mountain View elementary have parents who are farmworkers. Relevant demographics include: a total enrollment of 831 students, 94% Hispanic or Latino, 2% White,

1% Black, and 1% Asian. A total of 91% of students are socially disadvantaged, 66% of students are English learners, and 9% are students with disabilities. Mountain View mainly focuses on behavior and academics rewarding those who have demonstrated good behavior and showed great academic achievement. Teachers at Mountain View undergo extensive training in both English and Math curriculum. Teachers receive professional development in different academic areas; however, not in Social Emotional Learning.

Participants and Participant Selection

Stakeholders who participated in this study included one teacher and two parents. This group of participants were invited to participate because the teacher has expertise in teaching children for a number of years. Also, this teacher has pursued higher education to be knowledgeable in socio-emotional learning. The two parents have relevant knowledge of their children and were able to make great suggestions to better meet their children's needs. Initial contact with the participants was via email and in person.

Jen Alvarez. A Latina female first grade teacher at Mountain View Elementary School in Salinas. Jen has been a teacher for 12 years and has taught first grade and second grade. Jen was chosen because she has been a teacher for a lot of years and gives a teacher perspective on social emotional learning being implemented in the classroom.

Liz Garcia: A Latina female mother of a third grader at Mountain View Elementary School in Salinas. Liz is involved at the school having volunteered for several school events like festivals, Career day, and has been involved as a chaperone for school field trips. Liz was chosen because she gives a parent's perspective of having a child who is in a lower grade level at this school and can give information on social emotional learning benefitting her child.

Brian Morales: A Latino male parent of a fifth grader at Mountain View Elementary School in Salinas. Brian has participated in school events like attending back to school nights and parent teacher conferences. Brian was chosen because he gives a parent's perspective of having a child that is at an upper grade level at this school and can give information on social emotional learning benefiting his child.

Researcher

This topic is meaningful to me because my experience in school was never focused on socio-emotional learning. My teachers always focused on academics and just focused on the content material they had to teach and not on social/emotional learning. So, I do feel it had an impact on my elementary school experience in that I did not want to talk in the classroom, I never had a space to talk about my emotions whether they were school related or not, and also there were not many creative experiences that I had that I was able to express myself. It is also meaningful to me because I personally want to do research on this particular topic to learn how I as a future teacher can implement socio-emotional learning in my classroom. What carried me to work on this project is my past experiences as a child and not being able to reach my fullest potential because there were not many opportunities for social emotional learning. Having a lack of social emotional learning experiences in the classroom made me more of a shy individual and never willing to open up in my classes as I got older. What makes me different from others working on this project is the fact that I am studying to become an educator and I am learning more everyday about how to become a better individual and learning ways in which to help students' reach their full potential.

Semi-Structured Interview and Survey Questions

For this project, one teacher and two parents served as participants and unique interview

questions were developed for each group. The questions are shared below.

Teacher Interview Questions

1. What do you know about Social Emotional Learning? What do you see as the benefits of Social Emotional Learning; or What are you most excited about when it comes to Socio-emotional Learning? What are specific skills and/or behaviors that are a result of teaching socio-emotional learning?
2. Why does socio-emotional learning matter? Do you think students should be taught socio-emotional learning in the classroom? Why or why not. What are specific skills and/or behaviors that are a result of teaching socio-emotional learning?
3. What is currently being done to teach Socio-emotional Learning by teachers and what are the strengths and weaknesses of these efforts? What are specific activities you do in your classroom that teach socio-emotional learning? Are there any books you recommend that teaches socio-emotional learning?
4. What do you think should be done to improve how we teach Socio-Emotional Learning ?
What Types of Strategies do Teachers Use to Facilitate SEL in the Classroom?
5. What do you think are the challenges to teaching socio-emotional learning in the classroom? Is it difficult to teach socio-emotional learning as a class? Is it better teaching SEL in small groups or individually?
6. Is there anything else that you would like to say about Socio-Emotional Learning and the teaching of Socio-Emotional Learning?

Parent's Interview Questions

1. What do you know about Social Emotional Learning? What do you see as the benefits of Social Emotional Learning; or What are you most excited about when it comes to Socio-emotional Learning?
2. What is currently being done to Teach Socio-emotional Learning by you as a parent and what are the strengths and weaknesses of these efforts?
3. What do you think should be done to Teach Socio-Emotional Learning to your child ?
4. What do you think are the challenges to teach socio-emotional learning at home?
5. Is there anything else that you would like to say about Socio-Emotional Learning and the teaching of Socio-Emotional Learning in your household?
6. What activities do you do with your child to teach social-emotional learning?
7. Are there specific books you read to your child relating to socio-emotional learning?

Procedure

Participants were interviewed and all interviews were done individually. When it was not possible to interview participants in person, they were invited to complete an email interview of the same questions. Face-to-Face interviews took less than one hour, were audio-recorded with participant consent, and took place in the parents' homes and teachers' classrooms. A semi-structured interview format was used for face-to-face interviews, to allow for follow-up questions if they were unclear, interesting or unexpected responses. All interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the interviewee and took approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Data Analysis

Transcribed interviews were coded and analyzed for emergent themes.

Results

For this Capstone Project, one 1st grade teacher, a parent of a student in 3rd grade, and a parent of a student in 5th grade were interviewed to see what they think could be done to improve teaching social emotional learning in schools. This is important because teaching social emotional learning in the classroom can improve social skills, decision making, and self awareness, as well as improve the way students learn. Students being exposed to this comfortable environment to interact and learn more about their identities can impact their learning abilities in a positive way. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature three themes emerged (see Table 1). Evidence-based decision making required evaluating each potential Action Option by the following criteria: Availability, Time, and Effectiveness. Availability is important to consider since there are resources that participating parties may need to teach SEL. Time is also important because teachers may not have the time to teach SEL if they are being expected to teach within the curriculum. Effectiveness can determine how well teaching SEL is working in the classroom once it is implemented. Based on the evaluation of each Action Option an action will be recommended and justified.

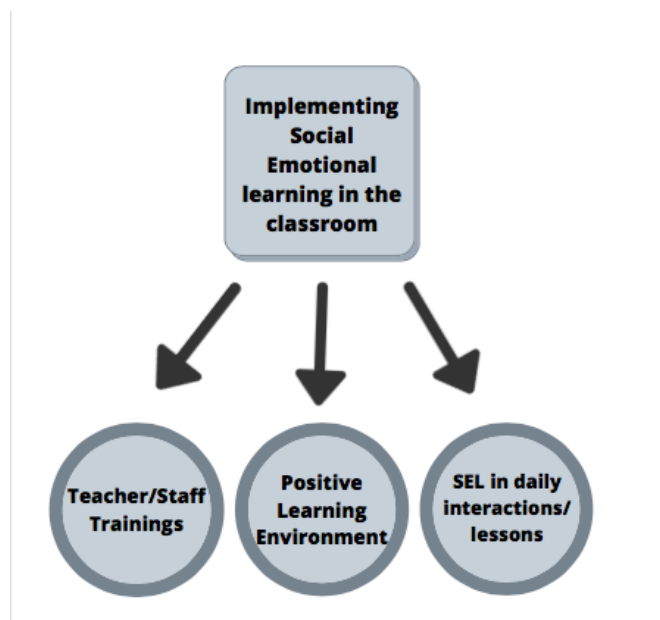


Table 1

Evaluation of Action Options

	Availability	Time	Effectiveness
Trainings for teachers and school staff	Low	Low	High
Provide a positive learning environment	Medium	Medium	High
Teachers can implement SEL in their daily lessons and interactions	Medium	Medium	High

Teacher/Staff Trainings

Depending on the school, there are a variety of training that teachers need to attend. Many of these training are on subjects that are in the curriculum like English and Math. A training of Social Emotional learning for teachers and staff can really help improve the way they interact with students and can find alternative ways to handle different situations. At Mountain View elementary school, there is no social emotional learning training that is provided for the teachers. There is a lot more focus on English Language arts, Mathematics, and technology development for the teachers. As a result, teachers are not able to learn proper ways on how to interact with students. Similarly school staff do not get training in social emotional learning even though they do interact with students on a daily basis as well. Coaches, Cafeteria Monitors, bus drivers, and other school staff see students everyday and need to learn effective SEL strategies and skills (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). The overall school climate should be positive and students should be able to feel comfortable throughout their whole school.

Social Emotional Learning is an important part of learning and human development. SEL

is the process for students to acquire and apply or practice the knowledge, skills, mindfulness, attitudes to manage emotions, be resilient, and achieve their goals, as well as learn to show empathy, make kind and caring decisions and develop relationships. If students are not taught this in school by the people who are around them and interact with them on a daily basis, they will not learn these types of important life skills. As one teacher interviewee stated, “I definitely think it should be taught in the classroom, not only by the school counselor or bullying specialist, but also in the approach the teachers take with the class to foster a positive class environment that is conducive to learning” (J. Alvarez, personal communication, October 15, 2021). If there are teachers and staff who are trained to develop positive SEL with students, it can really help students become overall well rounded students. As a result of examining both the literature and interview data, availability is at a low level due to the lack of training that schools have of teaching Social Emotional Learning. The amount of time that is focused on other curriculum areas makes it difficult to incorporate another teacher training along with all the other training teachers need to attend. As my teacher interviewee stated “Time is a difficulty, as usual academic subjects are prioritized. There is also a lot of pressure to address learning loss” (J. Alvarez, personal communication, October 15, 2021). The idea of training teachers to incorporate SEL in their classrooms is however an effective approach since there will be guidance on how to interact with students and how to teach them to express themselves. This action option ensures that students will feel like they belong in the classroom culture, and feel supported, accepted and empowered.

Positive Learning Environment

When students walk into a classroom, they need to feel welcomed and comfortable to provide a positive environment for their learning. The way the classroom is set up is important,

but also the way the students are shown appreciation within the classroom provides a sense of positivity to the students. The way a teacher interacts with a student really determines the relationship the student will have towards the teacher. Establishing a great relationship with students shows them that the teacher is caring and can be trusted. Children who have great relationships with their teachers are more likely to ask questions, solve problems, try new tasks, and express their thinking (Funk, 2018). Providing that respect and care for students can contribute greatly to a child's well being. As stated by a parent interviewee, “ I want my daughter's teacher to treat her with fairness, enthusiasm and with no judgment. Also I would like for her to acknowledge her improvements and make the effort to make my daughter know she brings value to being in the classroom” (B. Morales, personal communication, October 18, 2021). Teachers need to respect and care for every child that comes into their classroom and build those strong relationships that will allow students to open up to them.

Another way to bring about a more positive environment for the students is teaching them about how to respect others. Learning proper social skills can help students make friends and want to interact with the other children around them. By teaching students social skills, students can be more mindful of others' opinions and aware of other students' viewpoints (Wilkinson & Kao, 2019). As stated by another parent interviewee, “School is a second home for my child and I would like for her to be comfortable in her classroom. Being social allows her to want to go to school and looks forward to interacting with the other students (L. Garcia, personal communication, October 22, 2021). Reminders and steps on how to do something are also great ways for students to imitate and show respect towards their peers. From examining both the interviews and the literature, availability is intermediate due to the fact that it is not difficult to provide a positive environment for students but it may be costly due to resources that may be

needed in the classroom; such as posters and other materials. Time is intermediate due to the fact that it can be difficult to pay attention to so many students at once and may be difficult for students to interact with other children if they do tend to be shy. As far as effectiveness, it is effective to create that positive environment for children to learn and grow and develop into respectful students in and out of the classroom. While this option ensures effectiveness and availability, time may be a barrier due to having so many students in a classroom.

SEL in Daily Interaction/Lessons

Another way SEL can be implemented within a classroom is by teaching it within the daily lessons and daily interactions they have with students. Teachers have a pretty hectic schedule to incorporate SEL in an already busy day. There is a lot of pressure and accountability that teachers face as it is. For the most part, even the little things make a huge difference in a student's learning experience (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Giving students the praise they need showing improvement really goes a long way. Meaningful and genuine feedback show students that their work is acknowledged and is appreciated. As stated by my interviewee, Liz Garcia mentions, “ I want my daughter to be given praise for her hard work and even when she has not done what is asked, I still would want my child's teacher to be attentive and respectful and physically show her what to do and how to do it” (L. Garcia, personal communication, October 22, 2021). Effective praise can always be shown to students and is not something that can interfere with a lesson.

A way to teach SEL in daily lessons include reading specific SEL books and doing SEL activities. There are many books that have to do with SEL and can allow students to express their emotions, relate to certain characters in the stories, and overall discuss with their peers on similar experiences (Funk, 2018). During daily read-alouds teachers can implement specific books

within their lessons to both teach reading comprehension and social emotional learning. Activities are also a great way to incorporate in the classroom because they allow students to interact with one another and express their feelings and creativity. As my teacher interviewee stated, “ I teach mindfulness every morning before class begins by students practicing breathing or relaxation exercises as a whole class with me. I think this is a positive activity because the students learn to watch their emotions, not cling to emotions, to accept that emotions are neither good to have or bad to have, that they just come and go. They learn to release tension in their body if they feel tense or upset” (J. Alvarez, personal communication, October 15, 2021). For activities, teachers can implement specific SEL games and songs throughout the day that have to do with both SEL and their daily lessons. Availability is at an intermediate level because it is easily accessible for a teacher to implement because it is not difficult to find books and activities that relate to SEL. However, it may require the teacher to spend their own money on materials and books that relate to SEL. Time is at an intermediate level because since SEL would be implemented within lessons and interactions, it would not take time away from the curriculum. However, it would require time outside of the classroom to plan out how to implement within lessons. Finally, Effectiveness would be at a high level as well since these activities would teach students proper ways to interact and be great self-reflecting activities for their emotions.

Recommendation

Given the three action options, I recommend that Social Emotional Learning should be implemented in daily lessons and interactions. This option is the one I recommend the most because it does not take time away from learning content material included in the curriculum and can still be a very effective way to make students learning positive. The literature research and interview data help to support this solution and I am confident that it is the best option to provide

students with a successful learning experience in their classrooms. The following section will discuss the concessions, limitations, and possible negative outcomes associated with this action option.

Concessions. My recommendation of implementing SEL in daily lessons and interactions as the necessary action option moving forward should not discredit the significant strengths of the other two alternatives. For example, the action option that provides training for teachers and staff would be ideal because it would provide school staff with effective and appropriate training. Unlike the other options, this option would guarantee that schools would properly show school employees how to interact with students and how to deal with certain situations. Having SEL training would provide support for both teachers and school staff on how to interact positively with students, react effectively to challenges students are facing, communicate clear expectations, and set up conditions for supportive school cultures (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Training like these would definitely make a school's climate be more positive and allow others to be respectful towards others. As far as providing a positive learning environment action option, there is no doubt that this option is needed and would be greatly beneficial. Students and teachers both want a positive experience in the classroom and want the classroom to be a safe space to express themselves comfortably. By teachers setting a positive tone in the classroom, it provides opportunity, assistance, and encouragement for the student (Ng & Bull, 2018). Additionally, this action option allows students to be mindful and respectful of others. It is clear that both of these action options provide students and teachers with a healthy and comfortable environment to make learning successful and effective for both student and teacher.

Limitations. While choosing to implement SEL in daily lessons and interactions seems to be the best option, there are still limitations that should be considered. For example, although

there are books and activities that teach social emotional learning, it may require teachers to spend their own money to provide these resources and materials in their classrooms. This action option is assuming that teachers will so easily be able to gather these resources and have them for students to use. It may not be appropriate for teachers who just can not afford to provide these materials to their students. Another limitation that arises is that you might not get the response you expect from students once these SEL skills are taught to them. It is important to remember that although you are implementing and teaching about ways to interact with others, and expressing emotions that students just may not want to talk to others or may find it difficult to express their feelings. The final limitation is the amount of effort needed for this action option to be successful. Teachers have pressures to teach what is in the curriculum that they may not want to dedicate time, energy and resources to plan how they will implement SEL within their daily lessons. Without these strategies, this action option would not work.

Potential negative outcomes. For this action option, there are potential negative outcomes to consider. For example, students may not be willing to open up with others in the classroom. Teachers need to consider that although it is great to be teaching positive life skills, some students may not feel comfortable doing so. It cannot be forced and has to come from the child to fully express themselves. Additionally, this action option may cause teachers to burn out and not want to implement SEL skills within their lessons. Since this implementation does require appropriate planning, teachers may not have the time or energy to implement within their lessons that already have to be about subject based content. These are important outcomes to consider about implementing SEL in daily lessons and interactions and should be taken into account.

Conclusion. Despite the limitations, concessions, and potential negative outcomes, I still

recommend that implementing social emotional learning into daily interactions and lessons as the best option to create a strong classroom environment while still teaching different subjects. This action has a high possibility of effectiveness, in addition to, intermediate levels of time and availability. The literature research and interview data help to establish the importance of SEL being implemented in the classroom to ensure an effective learning experience for both teachers and students. Additionally, the literature further establishes the significance of how little things like praise and showing appreciation make a huge difference in the classroom. This is the only action option that may guarantee success in areas of academics, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. For these substantiating reasons, this action option rises above the others as the best solution moving forward.

Action Documentation & Reflection

The issue of my capstone is there needs to be more implementation of social emotional learning in elementary school classrooms. I interviewed one 1st grade teacher and two parents from an elementary school in Salinas, CA. Action options that emerged were teacher and staff training, providing a positive learning environment, and implementing social emotional learning in daily interactions and lessons. The action option I chose was implementing social emotional learning in daily interactions and lessons. The reason why I chose this option was because teachers have a busy schedule as it is and it wont take time away from learning content material. This will ensure success within the classroom because this can allow students to build both SEL skills and improve in their school subjects at the same time.

For my Action Documentation, I created Social Emotional Learning flyers that are meant for students who are in the process to become teachers. In this flyer, I included the names of

specific books and different activities that teach social emotional learning and these students can integrate them into their future classrooms. Books are a great way in which students and teachers can discuss characters' emotions and students can be able to relate to experiences of their own. Teachers can be able to bring in books that specifically relate to a situation that occurred within the classroom or books about how students are feeling. Then teachers will be able to ask meaningful questions that will help students not only improve reading comprehension but relate themselves to characters and share experiences when they have gone through something similar. Incorporating both Social Emotional Learning books and activities can help promote positive growth, behavior, and development of students. A copy of the Social Emotional Learning Flyer can be found in the Appendix.

In order to make the flyers I was able to gather information from my interviewee who is a 1st grade teacher. This interviewee provided me with the names of specific books that contribute to the teaching of social emotional learning in the classroom. I was also able to get specific in-classroom activities that these teachers can do within their classroom. My goal is for these future teachers to incorporate these types of books and activities in their classrooms and give them ideas on how to implement social emotional learning within their school day. After I was done with the flyers, in order to reach a bigger audience of future teachers I uploaded my flyers on social media.

Something that was surprising to me was the amount of ways a teacher can incorporate SEL in the classroom. There are endless amounts of books and activities that can contribute to learning social emotional learning skills. Some modifications that I needed to make to reach a bigger audience were posting on both Twitter and Instagram and making sure that my account was public. Setting my account to public was the best option in order for more people to view

my post and use my flyer in their classrooms. The response from my social media is that I have been seeing a large amount of people who have been viewing my post and sharing it with others. Since my post is set on a public profile, my post is also being viewed from the explore page of other social media accounts. One thing that I have noticed is that since I uploaded the post with hashtags, I have been able to get more views.

What I know now that I wish I knew from the start is I wish I should have made my social emotional learning flyer from the very start of my project so I could reach an even bigger audience. I do feel that if my post was on social media from the very beginning, I would have reached a lot more future teachers. I also believe I could have gotten some responses back from other people like teachers giving me feedback on what else to include in the flyer. The important next step is to continue to put my flyers out there to spark interest among future teachers on the importance of social emotional learning.

Critical Reflection

What I learned about myself is that I was creative in coming up with ways that would help benefit young children in the classroom. I used my own experience to navigate through my project. What I learned about teaching and learning is that it is important for students in elementary school to have the opportunity to learn crucial life skills starting at a young age and it is up to teachers to make this happen by incorporating SEL in the lessons they teach. From this project I made suggestions I wish I had in the classroom growing up to work towards making changes for students and hopefully change the way future teachers go about their lessons with their students.

Synthesis and Integration

The Liberal Studies MLOs impacted my professional development in that it has helped

me with becoming a developing educator. I have gained so much experience in the classroom from my time at CSUMB. With service learning and lesson planning, I have been able to get a glimpse of being a teacher. I also have learned a lot about the state's standards that I believe has prepared me to be ready to understand how the education system is within California. I have also learned much about diversity and multiculturalism from my Liberal Studies degree because I learned from different perspectives and all different backgrounds on how education is viewed in their eyes and the inequalities students face in school in today's society. The last MLO I learned a lot from was how to use technology. I have improved on my technological skills from my time at CSUMB based on different projects I have had to do in my classes. I will leave CSUMB with knowledge of different online resources that will help benefit me and my future students.

The required coursework I have completed and this Action Research Project have impacted my professional development in that it has helped me grow as an individual. I have grown in my development as a future educator and I now know how to implement successful classroom management strategies and incorporate life skills in my lessons for my students to become successful individuals. What I see as the necessary next steps that I need to take in order to become the professional that I envision myself being is having a welcoming and comfortable learning environment for my students and having a classroom that focuses on social emotional learning.

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Appendix

DAILY GREETINGS

- Wave
- Hug
- Pinky Shake
- Fist Bump
- Hand Shake
- Smile
- High Five
- Say "Hello"



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HOW TO IMPLEMENT
SOCIAL EMOTIONAL
LEARNING IN YOUR
CLASSROOM

Appendix



SEL BOOKS

- "I AM ENOUGH"- BY GRACE BYERS
- "OUR CLASS IS A FAMILY"-BY SHANNON OLSEN
- "THE INVISIBLE BOY"-BY TRUDY LUDWIG
- "THE WAY I FEEL"- BY JANAN CAIN
- "ALEXANDER AND THE TERRIBLE, HORRIBLE, NO GOOD, VERY BAD DAY"- BY JUDITH VIORST
- WHEN SOPHIE GETS ANGRY-REALLY, REALLY ANGRY..."-BY MOLLY BANG



SEL ACTIVITIES

- Emotions Check-ins
- Mindful morning check-ins
- SEL Journal Check-ins
- Question of the day
- SEL Whiteboard Messages
- SEL Quote of the day



SEL ACTIVITIES

- Morning meetings
- Positive Affirmations
- Mindful Breathing
- Practicing Gratitude
- Read Aloud
- SEL Class Discussions