Chapter 4
Teaching Creativity Skills to Foster Social-Emotional Learning

ABSTRACT

Creativity is needed now to solve problems, develop products, and become better thinkers. The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 caused people to think differently in every aspect of our society. We now need to help students learn how to think more creatively, how to collaborate with others, and how to implement innovations. However, many students face challenges that affect their social and emotional learning, thus negatively impacting their creativity. Teachers can employ different strategies and skills that can break through these barriers and develop a systems approach that can produce student creative success. There are many technical and non-technical skills and strategies for creative thinking, collaboration, and innovation implementation that teachers can use. If used jointly, these skills and strategies will generate a management systems approach to creativity.

INTRODUCTION

Creativity is essential for social-emotional learning according to Perach & Wisman (2016). Their research indicates that creative thinking connects two parts of the brain: cognition and emotion. Connecting these two regions of the brain allows people to cultivate divergent thinking, which in turn, allows

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one to create solutions to problems, develop one's artistic expressions, and network with other people and other new experiences. These are all ways to support social-emotional learning. It should be noted that young children quickly learn to express themselves creatively through many different art forms. Typically, young children begin their creative development through music and different visual outlets. As children enter a more formal educational setting such as preschools and schools, children learn that their thinking and other creative outlets can be employed through many new different forms. Writing, reading, dramatic play now joins art and music. Have you ever watched children at a park or in other situations that allow children to use their imagination? Children freely release their imaginations through play and interactions. In addition, it seems like there is no limit to their creativity. Young children engage their creative thinking, collaboration, and implementation easily and freely.

Nevertheless, as some children enter school, they find their creative skills curtailed, either by outside forces or through their own self-metacognition while some students start to feel that their creative ability becomes even more limited as they grow older. In a longitudinal study, Land and Jarman's (1968) research found that beginning with five-year-olds and following the students until their mid-twenties, creativity significantly decreased over five-year intervals or more. In their study, over 1,600 students were given creative tests every five years. Students at five years old tested at a 98% of high creative status; students at ten years old tested at 30%; students at 15 years old tested at 12%; and students at 25 years old tested at a 2% creative status. The researchers concluded that the deceleration of creativity is a learned behavior. Some researchers even stated that the creativity for young children is clear and pure, and that over time young children view the world through unpolluted eyes (Higgins, 1996; Naiman, 2000). The younger the child is the more the child can approach experiences with higher levels of possibilities. Vint (2005), like Higgins and Naiman, stated that creativity is not learned, but children can unlearn creativity. This process of unlearning, or curtailing a young child's creativity, is a progression that is, unfortunately, supported through school and education. Children with and sometimes without the support of adults, unlearn or restrict their own creativity. Even Pablo Picasso noticed this development and said that "Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once you grow up" (1976).