Chapter 3

A Co–Teaching Insight on SEL Curriculum Development and Implementation

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ABSTRACT

Cano and Smurr became co-teachers and developed a social emotional learning (SEL) supplementary curriculum to use along their mandated English Language Arts curricula in their seventh and eighth grade classes. Through a process of research and development, their primary purpose was to identify the effectiveness of social emotional learning curriculum. This chapter will expand on the implementation and the impact of SEL curriculum created by Cano and Smurr; this curriculum was developed and implemented throughout the 2018-2019 school year and demonstrated student responsiveness towards learning and personal well-being. The SEL curriculum is strongly based off CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) standards: self-efficacy, growth mindset, self-management, social awareness, and self-awareness. The assignments impacted student learning in multiple areas such as an avenue of advocacy for learning needs, normalized stigmatized topics in the classroom, and assistance in student self-reflection and metacognition skills.

INTRODUCTION

In the academic world, educators are continually addressing what motivates students to engage in learning. Numerous educators question why students perform poorly in school. One assumption within education is that student achievement relates to a student's social and emotional awareness. Therefore, addressing such directly alongside content could positively affect student engagement.

Inclusion of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) influences educational pedagogies to benefit students' engagement and personal well-being. SEL, as cited by the Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning (CASEL), is the "process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (Yang, Bear, and May, 2018, p. 46). Social Emotional Learning competencies all center on aspects such as self-identity, self-awareness, and how behavior internally and externally affects performance such as educational stamina.

BACKGROUND

Smurr (2019) declares that "Addressing social emotional competencies within classroom curriculum and content is instrumental for students" as research increasingly shows how it improves student engagement within the classroom (Smurr, 2019). When students have an emotional tie or connection to learning, it helps students become more engaged with content (Salazar, 2013). Numerous studies demonstrate that students who participate in SEL content have a higher success rate with academics. According to Durklak, Domitrovich, Weissberg, and Gulotta (as cited by Haymovitz, Houseal-Allport, Lee, and Svistovaz, 2018), "[social emotional learning] even can boost test scores between 11 and 17 points out of 100" (p. 46). This presents the opportunity for school districts to implement SEL system-wide.

To expand on this gap of SEL literature, specifically from a qualitative perspective, this chapter provides background information of the current SEL literature. It also provides Cano and Smurr's insight on the development, implementation, response to, and observed effects of a co-written supplemental SEL curriculum. Cano and Smurr's qualitative research provides: observations, strategies, and practical experiences to further enhance understanding for other educational professionals and allows for the SEL research work to be propelled further in other educational spaces.

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