

Chapter 3

Integrating Social–Emotional Learning Strategies Into the Curriculum Through a Trauma–Informed and Culturally–Responsive Lens

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ABSTRACT

This chapter, “Integrating Social-Emotional Learning Strategies Into the Curriculum Through a Trauma-Informed and Culturally-Responsive Lens,” focuses on an overview of social-emotional learning. The introduction begins with the history of social-emotional learning, and the importance of integrating strategies into the classroom. Subsequent sections then discuss training for educators on how to incorporate social-emotional strategies, and then declare specific methods to implement materials based on student grade levels. In order to most effectively employ these strategies, a trauma-informed lens should be intentionally utilized. By merging these two practices, educators are also able to foster a more culturally responsive classroom. In order to portray realistic expectations, this chapter bounces back and

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forth between educators' lived experiences and research-based practices.

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Social-emotional learning (SEL) has seemingly become one of the most utilized “buzzwords” in education as of late. Due to the prominent role of social-emotional learning in education, teachers are often asked to be knowledgeable about the subject, implement strategies, and embed competencies into the curricula. As such, there are many questions surrounding this facet of education: What is SEL and what are the benefits? Are educators given materials to implement social-emotional learning strategies in their classrooms? What are the expectations surrounding social-emotional learning? How are teachers being trained? How is it culturally responsive? How is it trauma-informed? Is social-emotional learning always methodically delivered or approached on a case-by-case basis?

This chapter aims to review the importance of social emotional learning, applicable usage within the classroom, and how it is related to both culturally responsive and trauma informed teaching. In this chapter, we will detail the empirical evidence and personal anecdotes to reflect on our own experiences with SEL and provide useful ideas for implementation. As teachers, we are committed to providing students with the support needed to feel a sense of belonging, and to prioritize their emotional well-being. This chapter will provide tips and ideas for educators to use in implementing SEL tenets in their daily classroom practice.

During the pandemic the need for social-emotional learning was at the forefront of academia. Throughout those unprecedented times, students, educators, and administrators alike discovered the need to prioritize mental health and to focus on mindfulness and social-emotional learning (“COVID 19 and remote learning”, 2024). Since the pandemic the number of training courses has risen in the field, jobs have been created, and educators have been responsible for upholding social-emotional learning standards within their classrooms (Hess, 2022).

The question remains whether educators feel prepared to deliver the content and how much of that training is applicable when addressing students’ social-emotional learning needs. It is imperative that educators are suited with a litany of tools that can be organically implemented within their classrooms, but also an awareness that students may have needs that must be addressed by the teacher in real-time. Having awareness of social-emotional learning, including the origin of the theory, the five CASEL competencies, and strategies to implement within the classroom, are imperative to ensure the “whole student” is being served (“Our history”, 2023). In addition to that knowledge and training, educators must also have awareness and

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