

Positive Classroom Design through Social-Emotional Learning: Building a Community of Learners

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ABSTRACT

There is a direct relationship between meeting the needs of our students through providing a positive learning environment that is rich in social and emotional learning and building a community of learners who want to be engaged in their learning. Students who participate in social and emotional learning in the classroom are able to practice self-control, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness (Casel, 2020). Social and emotional learning activities and lessons help teachers to meet the basic needs of their students in order for them to thrive in their learning environment. When basic needs are met and social-emotional learning competencies are achieved, students feel a sense of community in their classroom. When students feel a part of a positive environment, behavior decreases, and engagement increases. The article is based on a review of the literature and the personal experiences of one of the authors.

Keywords: Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, Student behavior, Positive classroom management, Social-emotional learning, Positive classroom design.

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Highlights of this paper

- SEL is crucial to students, teachers, and schools in creating a safe environment as they work to build social skills, connect with peers through academic content, and make connections with staff throughout the building.
- Through infusing social and emotional learning competencies in daily classroom lessons, students feel a sense of community in their classroom.
- When students feel a part of a positive environment, classroom misbehavior decreases, and student engagement increases.

1. INTRODUCTION

In schools today, teachers are required to meet the academic and the social-emotional needs of students. There is extensive research on this topic and how it affects the overall school climate. Schools play a central role in meeting students' social-emotional needs, as well as in their educational outcomes (Jayman, 2017). Our roles as teachers have changed. The classroom is focused on instructing students in standards-based educational content, in addition to teaching them group etiquette and social interaction skills. This helps prepare them to enter the world outside of the classroom setting. While focusing on academics is certainly of importance, addressing social-emotional needs will empower students to be more successful in the job market and in their everyday lives.

Gregory and Fergus (2017) found that implementing social-emotional learning lessons into the daily schedule created a healthier school environment and they reported a decrease in disciplinary issues. Poulou (2017) found that the teacher-student relationship in the classroom is essential in academic success. When teachers engage in daily social-emotional lessons, they are encouraging positive social interactions between peers and adults. When respectful behavior is set as an expectation in the classroom, instead of only being integrated periodically throughout the year, students can focus on academics rather than social interactions. If students are required and encouraged to participate in daily social-emotional lessons, they form healthier relationships with both their teachers and peers.

Social-emotional lessons encourage students to become more aware of their emotions, give students strategies to handle conflict, and instruct them in how to work cooperatively with peers.

According to Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger (2011) educators that embrace and promote social-emotional learning teach students to exhibit more positive attitudes, better overall behavior, and higher academic performance. SEL also develops school connectedness and overall engagement, both of which are important concepts for building relationships within a school (Usakli & Ekici, 2018).

Anderson (2015) explains that educators should view a social curriculum as an integral part of their daily teaching instead of something else they need to fit into the day. Teaching students how to share, develop empathy for partners, excel in challenging situations, accomplish goals, and control impulsive behavior are just as important as academic skills. Other educators claim that they do not know how to teach social or emotional skills. Social skills can be taught with the same structure as academic skills are taught. These skills should be modeled by the teacher and by peers, coached in small groups or individually, practiced, and then potentially retaught before students acquire an understanding of the skill (Anderson, 2015).

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Social-emotional lessons encourage students to become more aware of their emotions, give students strategies to handle conflict, and instruct them in how to work cooperatively with peers. While research has suggested the significant need for social-emotional learning in the classroom, teachers have been encouraged to spend more time on core subject areas instead of focusing on social-emotional learning (SEL). "Current knowledge suggests that programs

and approaches to enhance social and emotional growth hold promise for improving classroom social processes, peer interactions, and academic learning” (Rimm-Kaufman & Chiu, 2007).

2.1. Introduction to Social-Emotional Learning

Education means more than mastery of content. The true purpose and function of schools should extend far beyond a place where students come to learn core subjects such as math, reading, and writing. Successful schools balance teaching basic skills while scaffolding a social environment to effectively build 21st century communication skills. Similar to academic disciplines, social-emotional learning (SEL) is best explained as a process by which skills are acquired, developed, and applied. Furthermore, SEL includes emotional management, effective problem solving, and positive relationship maintenance--competencies that clearly are essential for all students.

Overall, SEL provides students with the ability to understand and regulate their emotions while equipping them with the necessary skills to understand the emotions of others. There are five overarching skills that are related to SEL: Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Casel, 2020; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Usakli and Ekici (2018) state that social-emotional learning is essential in regards to the success of students, teachers, and school environments.

Research has shown many benefits of SEL, such as improved student ability to recognize and manage emotions, deepened understanding of emotional perspectives of others, interpersonal situational management, as well as increased responsibility in decision-making. SEL also develops school connectedness and overall engagement, both of which are significant components when it comes to building relationships within a school (Usakli & Ekici, 2018).

2.2. The History of Social-Emotional Learning

Social-emotional learning has had a timeless and enduring history that has withstood centuries worth of educational ideologies. The true origins of SEL date back to ancient Greece and Plato’s reflections of education. Through his writings, he suggested a comprehensive curriculum that requires a balance of physical education, the arts, math, science, as well as character and moral judgement (George Lucas Educational Foundation, 2022). Plato writes, “By maintaining a sound system of education and upbringing, you produce citizens of good character” (Casel, 2020).

In more recent years, James Comer--a significant professor at the Yale Child Study Center and prominent voice in the field of education-- began a program called the Comer School Development Program. This program began in the 1960s and centered on the idea that “...the contrast between a child’s experiences at home and those in school deeply affects the child’s psychosocial development and that this in turn shapes academic achievement” (Casel, 2020). The Comer School Development Program chose two poor, low-achieving elementary schools in New Haven, Connecticut. With the help of the program, the school made changes to both academic and social policies that previously had adverse effects on the students in attendance. As a result, the academic performance of the two schools exceeded the national average and behavior problems had declined by the 1980s.

James Comer’s success drew attention to the SEL movement, encouraging a multitude of professional researchers to become involved. By the 1990’s social-emotional learning has made its way as both a meaningful and significant approach to education. There is no denying the incessant need for teaching children how to be responsible, productive, caring, and engaged citizens (Casel, 2020). SEL has continued to support this pursuit throughout its long and lasting history.

2.3. Social-emotional Learning and its Influence on Education

The influential role that social-emotional learning plays on education is undeniable. Without an emphasis on SEL, students lack a sense of unity among peers as well as the learning community, and struggle more with overall academic content. When schools lack these programs, students are often at a disadvantage and may exhibit a number of negative behaviors. These behaviors include poor academic performance, discipline issues, disaffection, lack of commitment, alienation, and an increased frequency of student dropouts. As a result, these consequences have the potential to limit success in school or even lead to a school's failure (Zins, Payton, Weissberg, & O'Brien, 2007).

2.4. Social-Emotional Learning and How it Affects Behavior

According to Schonert-Reichl (2017) a recent report from the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) found that there is relatively little attention paid to classroom management in pre-service teacher education. Today's teachers do not feel equipped to deal with the behaviors they are facing within their classrooms each day.

Teachers who lack skillful classroom management allow the behaviors of students to take over the academic learning and daily routines. Gregory and Fergus (2017) found that implementing social-emotional lessons into the daily schedule created a healthier school environment and enhanced educators' overall abilities to teach students social-emotional competencies. Equally important, the researchers also saw a decrease in negative student behaviors and discipline issues overall. With the implementation of a social-emotional curriculum, teachers will spend less time focusing on student behavior and more time on academics.

Many schools have found that implementing this multi-tiered system of support has led to a decrease in students being disciplined outside of the classroom through the use of in-school (ISS) or out-of-school (OSS) suspensions. Therefore, these students are not missing out on academic lessons (Gregory & Fergus, 2017). Instead of focusing on punishment for behavior, implementing SEL throughout schools has the potential to change the code of conduct within the building.

Schonert-Reichl (2017) confirms that social and emotional skills can "be taught and measured [and] can promote positive development and reduce problem behaviors within the school setting" (p.138). Incorporating SEL within a classroom setting would create a healthier social-emotional environment, in addition to strengthening educators' own social and emotional competencies. Consequently, this leads to improved teacher abilities when it comes to instructing students (Gregory & Fergus, 2017).

2.5. Social-Emotional Learning and How it Affects Relationships

Educators are encouraged to support students' social-emotional development, with the full knowledge that this support will result in non-academic outcomes, particularly in the areas of relationship building and psychological health (Konishi & Park, 2017). Most researchers agree that this human side of learning, which includes problem-solving, communication, and self-knowledge, are of equal importance to the development of academic knowledge (Hoffman, 2017). However, despite this consensus, social emotional learning often takes a backseat to core subject material--the three R's of reading, writing, and arithmetic--largely due to the pressures of standardized testing requirements (Konishi & Park, 2017).

According to Poulou (2017) multiple studies have demonstrated that the role of the relationship between teachers and students is a strong predictor of student behavior. It is empathy, trust, and acceptance in these relationships in particular that are the major contributors to students' emotional growth and development (Colley & Cooper, 2017). Engagement and self-esteem are the two most vital components of keeping students interested in their schooling.

Both of these factors are inextricably linked to teacher-student and peer relationships, which rely upon social-emotional competencies (Hoffman, 2017).

In her book *Everyday SEL in Middle School*, Philibert (2016) notes that an SEL equivalent to a standardized test exists in the form of students' everyday abilities to deal with stress and emotionally fired situations. Given that students frequently face these types of instances, it is pertinent that they are taught the necessary skills of communication and empathy. The essential nature of school-based academic learning is relational, meaning social emotional learning is required for students to both build and maintain relationships (Hoffman, 2017). Students lacking the abilities to effectively "negotiate conflict and resist pressure" will struggle to make their way in a world that largely deals in those skills (Colley & Cooper, 2017).

2.6. Social-Emotional Learning and How it Affects Learning

Twenty-first century schools teach diverse students with a variety of strengths, interests, and motivations for learning. While some students participate daily and enjoy coming to school, others are less engaged and less motivated. Preparing students for their future requires an education that not only teaches academics but prepares them to collaborate, problem-solve and cooperate with those around them (Payton et al., 2008). Social-emotional learning provides those skills and opportunities for students.

In a 2011 analysis of 213 studies that collectively included over 270,000 students, results indicated that participants who took part in SEL programming through their schools demonstrated higher academic gains than those who were not enrolled in similar programs (Payton et al., 2008). This analysis further demonstrates why social emotional learning is imperative for student success. Even considering this well-researched fact, SEL continues to be overlooked in the day-to-day school curriculum. SEL provides students with the necessary tools to interact with the world around them, including communication with themselves, their peers, teachers, and other adults. SEL also provides students with a sense of empathy while developing their sense of humanity. According to Jones and Kahn (2018), students who experience SEL in school are better able to work constructively and collaboratively with classmates, build a sense of perseverance, have a sense of overall purpose, and are much more likely to "maximize their opportunities and reach their full potential" (p. 16).

3. WHY SEL IS IMPORTANT

SEL is crucial to students, teachers, and schools in creating a safe environment as they work to build social skills, connect with peers through academic content, and to make connections with staff throughout the building. Social-emotional learning is responsible for affecting behavior, relationships, as well as overall learning. Social learning theory suggests that the introduction and practice of social interactions influence the development of new behaviors. Ideally, this school-provided programming would also translate to student home lives, as well (Domitrovich, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017).

In their research, Konishi and Park (2017) suggest that students who engage in social-emotional learning also exhibit good mental health in comparison to their peers who do not. Those students who do not have the same social and emotional learning experiences tend to have poorer mental health, which may include anxiety or depression, and often have destructive relationships with peers and other people in their lives. Colley and Cooper (2017) point out that "all learning is emotion-based" and high-quality academic learning can only truly take place when social emotional abilities are adequately supported and taught (p. 12).

3.1. What We Know....

In order for educators to best meet their learners' basic needs and to connect with their students, they must first immerse themselves into the diverse population of their classroom and understand their students. Educators should be familiar with their students' backgrounds and also get to know them in order to instruct them.

Through building rapport with students, educators can discover that some students may need additional support in areas such as basic needs as well as social and emotional skills. Some students come to school lacking the very basics of needs which are the foundation for achievement and higher levels of learning. Students whose basic needs are met are then able to achieve higher levels of Maslow (1943). We can revisit Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Figure 1 (adapted from *A Theory of Human Motivation* Maslow (1943)) and understand the various levels of human needs keeping in mind those needs of students in a classroom.

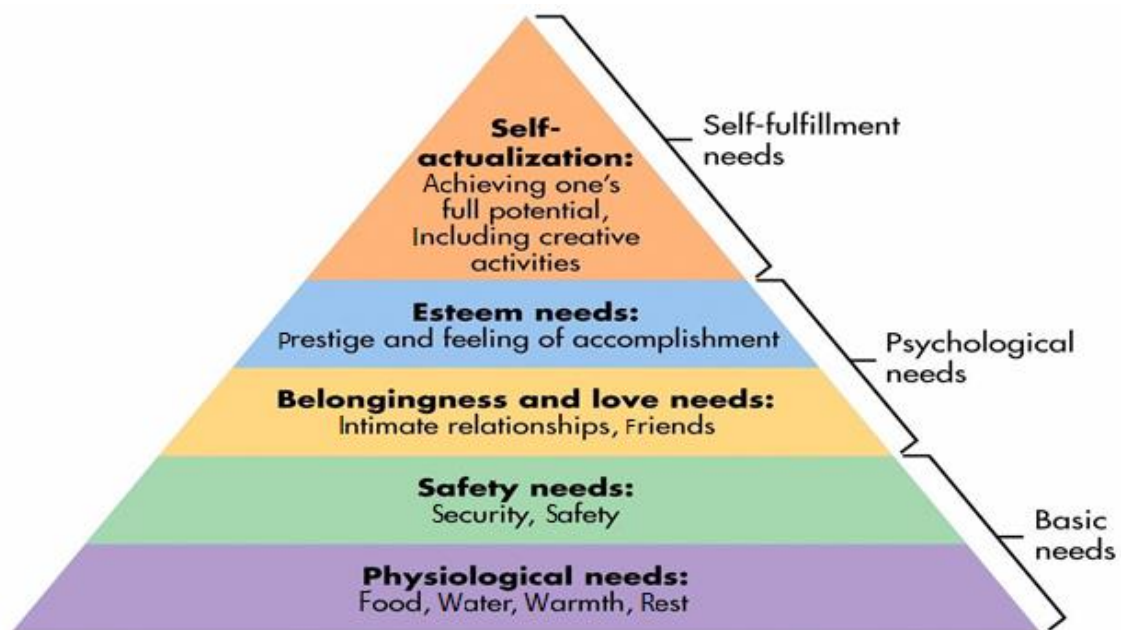


Figure 1. A Theory of human motivation (Maslow, 1943; McLeod, 2020).

The first level or the physiological needs include food, water, warmth, and rest which are the basic physical needs the body must have for survival. The second level of Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs* depicts the safety needs such as warmth and safety. If the basic needs at the lowest level of the pyramid are met, then a new set of needs emerges. The third need of Maslow is the need for love and belonging. The person who has the other two levels of needs met will emerge to this level and notice a need for a friend or companion. The fourth level of needs is the esteem needs which refers to self-respect and self-esteem as well as achievement and respect from others. This level lends itself to increased feelings of self-confidence, self-worth and strength. Not all individuals will achieve the fifth and final stage which refers to the need for self-actualization. This is the highest degree of needs in Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs* (Maslow, 1943; McLeod, 2020).

Students may come to the classroom lacking basic needs at home such as food, clothing, shelter, feelings of belongingness, safety, or comfort. Of all of these needs, some students may seek safety most importantly. Children in classrooms may be dealing with crisis or traumatic situations also known as adverse childhood experiences or ACE's. ACEs are traumatic events that occur during their young life before a child reaches the age of 18. ACEs include all types of abuse and neglect, such as parental abuse, substance use, incarceration, and domestic violence (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2022).

According to the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University citing a study conducted in 1995 by the Centers for Disease Control and the Kaiser Permanente health care organization in California. “ACEs” referred to three specific kinds of adversity children faced in the home environment which include various forms of physical and emotional abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction. Some examples of ACE’s include abuse, neglect, household challenges, and other traumatic events that may occur outside the home such as bullying, teen dating violence, and even witnessing community violence (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). ACEs can also include situations that may cause trauma for a child, such as having a parent with a mental illness or being part of a family going through a divorce (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2022).

Children in the classroom may come to school lacking the social and emotional skillset to regulate emotions caused by these adverse childhood experiences or ACE’s. They may be going through situations such as these and cannot manage the strong emotions that have developed within themselves due to these experiences. Students may also be experiencing these or other situations that may cause them to have difficulty in being self-aware, managing themselves, and making responsible decisions. These social-emotional skills or lack thereof may stem from the missed opportunities of other adults in their lives to teach these skills or from witnessing adults deal with similar crisis situations and not having the social and emotional abilities to regulate their own emotions as well. These ACE’s can surface as emotional outbursts or a myriad of other emotional cries for help in the classroom and can also be expressed through misbehavior. With a lack of social and emotional regulation, the students may feel strong emotions and may struggle in a typical classroom setting with the inability to know how to express themselves.

Schools play a central role in meeting students’ social-emotional needs and in their educational outcomes (Jayman, 2017). The classroom is focused on instructing students in standards-based educational content while teaching them how to socially interact with one another to work together and build a community within the classroom. Educators are tasked with the job to provide curriculum and content knowledge as well as manage a classroom of learners while moving students ahead one grade level at best throughout the school year. Students who are invested in their learning community may exhibit fewer behavioral concerns in the classroom. Students who are skilled with social and emotional regulation may also be less likely to exhibit behavioral issues if they understand how to regulate their own emotions. Through incorporating social and emotional learning within a classroom setting, the teacher can create a healthier learning environment while also strengthening social and emotional competencies. Gregory and Fergus (2017) believed that this practice leads to improving teachers’ abilities in delivering instruction to their students. As students’ basic and social and emotional needs are met, behavior in the classroom improves, and student learning may increase.

Social-emotional Learning, in conjunction with attention to Maslow (1943) are the blueprints for building a positive classroom environment that focuses on students' increasing proficiency within the five competencies of Social and Emotional Learning which, according to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning or CASEL are: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (Casel, 2020). Quality SEL objectives represent competencies that students need to learn in order to grow socially, emotionally, and academically. Getting to know our students, being a positive role-model, providing clear expectations and procedures, speaking to our students with respect and always reminding them of the procedures are key pieces in increasing social and emotional learning in our classrooms.

4. HOW TO INCORPORATE SEL IN TODAY’S CLASSROOM

Through Social-emotional learning and increased attention to individual and diverse students' needs, educators can move to a more positive classroom design that focuses on those skills necessary to encourage all students to

become a part of their own learning community. We are our students' role models of social and emotional learning. It is our job as educators to model appropriate use of social and emotional skills in our classroom so that our students can learn from our examples.

There are many ways in which we as educators can take action to incorporate SEL in our own classroom. If educators take ownership in meeting students' basic needs through the adjustment of the learning environment in their classroom to a more positive space of social and emotional growth, students may begin to thrive. Through creating a *Positive Classroom Designed* (Sorbet, 2021) learning environment that builds a community of learners by teaching and modeling social and emotional learning, students can thrive.

Meeting students' social and emotional learning paired with basic human needs can lead to a more positive learning environment. As previously stated, our basic needs are the foundation for achievement and higher levels of learning. Students whose basic needs are met are then able to achieve higher levels of Maslow (1943).

The following conceptual framework Figure 2 shows a possible connection between meeting students' basic needs through various social and emotional experiences and techniques such as using the use of Morning Meetings, Positive Teacher Language, and establishing rules and procedures (Denton, 2007; Kriete, 2002).

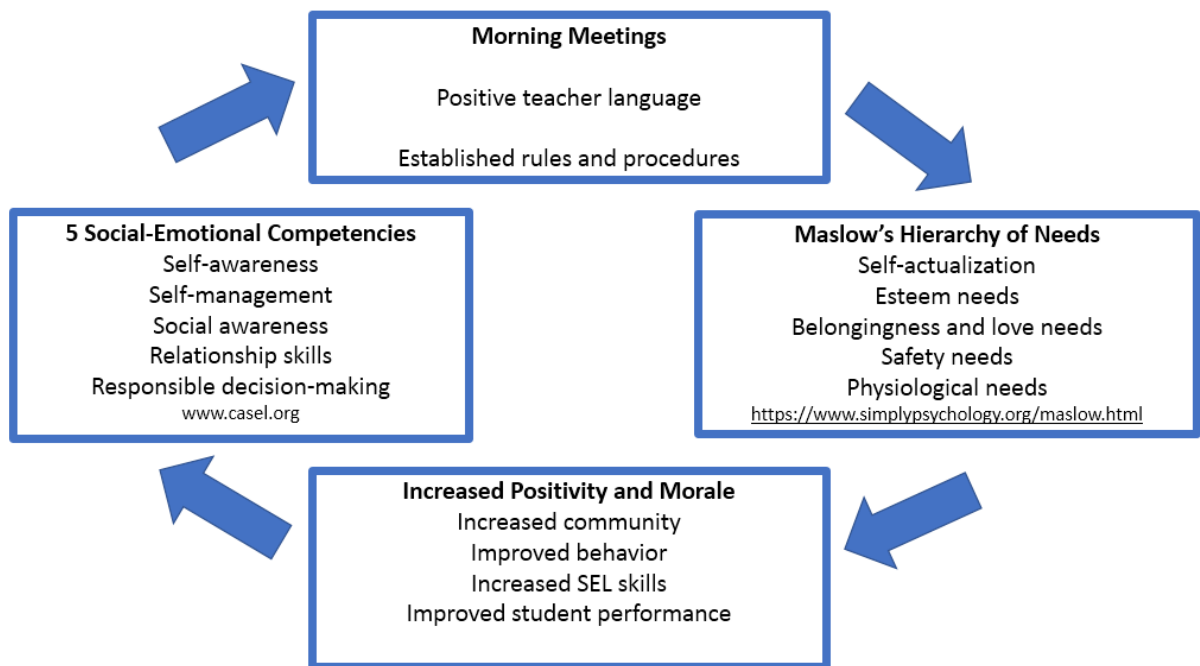


Figure 2. Positive classroom design through social-emotional learning, building a community of learners (Sorbet, 2021).

One such method of building classroom community is through *The Responsive Classroom Approach* of using Morning Meetings (Kriete, 2002). Morning Meetings allow for a set time each day of about twenty to thirty minutes when students can speak openly, share feelings, and express emotions which aids in having their basic needs met (Responsive Classroom, 2011). Morning Meetings merges social, emotional, and intellectual learning in the classroom. Morning Meetings can also be referred to as morning huddles, weekly check-ins, or any other catchy and age-appropriate title that the teacher chooses. By establishing Morning Meetings, the teacher sets a positive tone for learning and establishes a climate of trust within the classroom. Morning Meetings motivates students by addressing their social and emotional needs. If teachers do not take the time to meet these needs in the classroom by allowing students the chance to share, engage with one another, and express their emotions, these needs will get met through displays of misbehavior throughout the school day. The morning meeting allows for a repetition of a daily routine

that students get comfortable with and could lend itself to quality sharing and community-building among your students.

The format for a Morning Meeting contains four sequential pieces. These four pieces in order are as follows: greeting, sharing, activity, and news and announcements (Kriete, 2002). The Morning Meeting begins as everyone is gathered in a circle on a carpet or area of the classroom that is a familiar spot for meetings. The Greeting is a simple handshake, hello, or other greeting accompanied by a handshake, fist bump, or other gesture. The sharing is the second part of the Morning Meeting and it is a time for students to share some news about themselves or ideas in a positive way. Some sharing prompts or ideas may include the teacher prompting the students to share with partners or in a whole group on topics such as:

- What do you like daydreaming about?
- What makes you happy?
- What would be your dream job?
- If you were a superhero, what would your name be?
- What makes you feel loved?
- How do you show people you care? (Learn Grow Blossom, 2022).

The third part of the Morning Meeting is the Group Activity. This activity encourages group participation and is usually short but includes everyone in the classroom. Some activities that promote teamwork include:

- Twister-Divide the class into small groups of 5-6. In groups, each classmate takes turns calling out the colors while a teammate representative moves on the game space.
- Jenga-each classmate takes turns trying to move a block. The class cheers on each other to see how high it can go. When it topples over, the class supports one another and keeps the experience positive.
- Team cheer-Divide the class into small groups of 5-6 and have them create their own group name and cheer. Give them 5 minutes or so then have them share the cheers with the class.

The last part of the Morning Meeting is the Morning Message or the news and announcements. This is the time the teacher uses to announce events of the day through a Morning Message that is read and shared. One additional component that is useful for students is a debrief during this time to refocus on the social and emotional learning experience that took place during the Morning Meeting and to further support any SEL skill that was being developed during that time.

Morning Meetings are a great way to establish a time when students are able to share and open up to each other. This type of activity builds community and increases social and emotional learning through modeling and team building on a daily basis in the classroom. These experiences paired with other opportunities in which teachers' role-model appropriate and respectful language and behaviors for their students increases a positive classroom environment. Using appropriate teacher language that focuses on the way we speak to our students can help to create a respectful and positive classroom experiences that build students' self-confidence and prepare them for the real world (Denton, 2007).

In *The Power of Our Words*, Denton (2007) describes ways to speak to our students. She suggests educators listen and use silence skillfully when working with students. Denton also suggests that teachers say what they mean and mean what they say with brief, concrete and specific instructions and feedback. During instruction teachers should also stretch student thinking through the use of open-ended questions and use language to help students envision success.

Educators should first and foremost establish procedures in the classroom. Procedures in the classroom have been a long-standing staple in K-12 education. It was Harry Wong who emphasized the importance of establishing

procedures during the first two weeks of school and he encouraged practicing those procedures until they become routines (1991, 2018). Procedures should be well-thought out and designed with grade level and age appropriateness in mind. Students should be taught and reminded of procedures that are established in the classroom often until they are learned and become routines. The first two weeks of school is the best time to set and establish procedures (Wong & Wong, 1991). Procedures focus on students' self-control, self-management, responsible decision-making which are three of the five social and emotional competencies according to CASEL (www.casel.org).

A smooth-running classroom has procedures put into place so that the students are aware of expectations. A teacher who has established and practiced procedures within their classroom minimizes distractions and maximizes instructional time (Sorbet & Notar, 2020). Some procedures that encourage social and emotional learning competencies such as self-control, responsible decision-making, and self-management as well as encourages responsibility include:

- Entering the classroom.
- Dismissing at the end of class.
- Returning to class after an absence.
- Arriving to class tardy.
- Whole class attention.
- Moving around the room.
- Turning in papers.
- Asking questions.
- Working cooperatively.
- Bathroom breaks.

Once procedures are established there are three types of positive teacher language that teachers should use. These three types of languages are also referred to as the "three R's" (Denton, 2007).

The first "R" is *reinforce* the rules and procedures. Teachers should establish routines and procedures and reinforce these through practice and stating expectations regarding these to students. These procedures may be posted for students to refer to as needed.

The second "R" is to *remind* students of the procedures through restating them one on one as needed. When a student needs to be reminded of a procedure, the teacher simply refers to the procedure posted or gives a one on one reminder to the student. The teacher is very careful with their words in that they do not want to embarrass or call attention to the student who is in need of the reminder. Reminding language is simply a way to remind the student to refocus on the procedure or expectation of the classroom. Reminding language communicates the teacher's belief that the student is capable of following the procedure.

The third "R" is *redirection*. Students may need to adjust their behavior in the classroom and teachers may need to redirect them to do so. When a teacher sees off-task behavior they may have to redirect them to the procedure or expectation. This is a restatement of the procedure in close proximity but also while maintaining the child's dignity and not calling attention to the situation. This is usually a clear and non-negotiable statement when a student is completely off-track of expectations.

All three of these "R's" or positive teacher language focus on using a calm tone and positive body language towards the student. Reinforcing, reminding, and redirecting language communicates to the student that the environment is safe, trusting and that the teacher can be trusted as well. This language promotes the psychological and physical safety of the students and teacher in the classroom.

There are many educators who still hold on to the idea of consequences or punishments for students when a rule is broken, or a procedure is not followed. Consequences should not be punishments, but should be an opportunity for the student to learn from their mistakes after you have used positive teacher language and reinforced your procedure, reminded the child of the procedure and then redirected the student to again follow the procedure. If after these three “R’s” have been used, then the student should have a consequence.

Consequences should be learning experiences where a student has a time away from an activity to be able to reflect on behavioral choices which encourages practice in the social and emotional competencies of self-control and responsible decision-making (Casel, 2020). Other consequences might include a conference with the teacher to discuss any social and emotional competency that the student may exhibit needing assistance with based on behavior. A behavior reflection journal works well with older students who need time to reflect on self-awareness or self-management. Journals allow students to have a time away to reflect and write about how they could have handled themselves better in the situation.

Consequences should be life-lessons that encourage the student to learn from the mistake and learn better and more socially responsible ways to handle themselves in the future. All too often teachers are quick to issue punishments that make their life easier in the moment by removing the child from the situation but do not truly teach the SEL lesson that the child is needing to self-regulate.

5. CONCLUSION

Social-emotional learning lessons help in building community through relationships, communication skills, and goal setting. In the K-12 classroom educators need to understand that there is a direct relationship between meeting the needs of our students through providing a positive learning environment that is rich in social and emotional learning and building a community of learners who want to be engaged in their learning. Students who participate in social and emotional learning in the classroom can practice self-control, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness (Casel, 2020).

These five SEL competencies are equally as important to teach and model for students as any content knowledge in a curriculum. Speaking to students in a positive manner, using reinforcement of procedures, reminding languages and redirecting to keep students engaged and on-task all help the classroom to remain a supportive learning environment for all learners. Social and emotional learning through these techniques help teachers to meet the basic needs of their students for them to thrive in their learning environment.

When basic needs are met and social emotional learning competencies are achieved, students feel a sense of community in their classroom. When students feel a part of a positive environment, behavior decreases, and engagement increases.

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