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The Impact of a Classroom Calm Down Corner in a Primary Classroom

Clairissa Thompson

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Clairissa Thompson

Northwestern College

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Abstract

Teachers use social-emotional learning (SEL) practices to help teach students strategies to self-regulate

inside the classroom. The practice of mindfulness is an SEL strategy that can be implemented through

the use of a classroom calm-down corner to help classroom behaviors. This action research studied the

impact of a calm down corner in the primary classroom. Participants included the researcher's class of

23 second-grade students. Students participated in daily mini-lessons for strategies to use in the calm

down corner. Data was collected on student behavior and usage of the calm down corner through

observations. Negative student behaviors decreased as a result of the implementation of the classroom

calm down corner.

Keywords: Social-Emotional Learning, Calm-Down Corner, Trauma, Mindfulness, behavior

The Impact of a Classroom Calm Down Corner

Many students enter the classroom facing challenges, such as adverse childhood experiences (ACES) or trauma, which affect their ability to self-regulate and thus learn in the classroom. Self-regulation is the important skill young students need in order to make learning happen (Bodrova, 2005). Research has demonstrated that children who are able to better manage their thoughts, feelings, and actions are better able to succeed in social and learning environments (Blair & Diamond, 2008). Students who are able to self-regulate effectively have also shown a foundation for positive classroom behavior and achievement (McClelland & Cameron, 2011). Schools can strengthen self-regulation by implementing interventions.

The emergence of social-emotional learning (SEL) and trauma-informed practices have helped educate students on how to self-regulate (Norris, 2003). Social-emotional learning is not just one curriculum, but multiple strategies put together to teach the whole student. Social-emotional learning aims to equip every student with the skills needed to create a positive classroom environment in which to learn (Norris, 2003). One way that has been suggested to help support the development of self-regulation and SEL is to implement the practice of mindfulness (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015).

Mindfulness is a practice that has been used in education for over 30 years, but is recently starting to become a part of social-emotional learning and Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) interventions (Harpin et al., 2016). "Mindfulness, as defined by Kabat-Zinn (1994), is the act of deliberately paying attention to the present experience with an attitude of curiosity, acceptance, and openness." (Bannirchelvam et al., 2017, p. 305). Schonert-Reichl's research revealed that teaching students mindfulness strategies resulted in increased social emotional competence (2015).

The calm down corner is a physical location that can be used to help incorporate mindfulness practices and self-regulation in the classroom. The concept of the calm down corner is to help students develop their inner resilience at school by incorporating mindfulness strategies. Calm down corners are recommended as a trauma-informed practice, but they may also benefit the entire classroom culture by encouraging any student who feels overwhelmed, stressed, angry, or otherwise to regain their inner balance (Lantieri, 2008). Calm down corners can include many different tools to help students calm down and get back to the classroom mindset. This concept allows the student a choice in how they calm down best. Allowing students the choice about what they do in the classroom may increase their motivation and participation (Kosky & Curtis, 2008).

This research seeks to answer the following question: How can the use of a classroom calm down corner impact a student that is struggling with behavior in a primary education classroom? Students at the research site have struggled with the trauma of the pandemic and being out of school for over six months. Students need to be provided with strategies and tools to help self-regulate in the structured classroom setting. This research could help prepare teachers with a strategy that may influence students' ability to self-regulate in the classroom, particularly those who might be struggling with behavior.

Literature Review

Students endure many different kinds of trauma, and because of this trauma-informed practices are becoming more prevalent in schools. According to a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 35% of children have experienced two or more adverse childhood experiences (ACES) in their life (Berger, 2018). Students who endure trauma are more likely to show behavioral and social-emotional issues at school (Meyer, 2015). Schools play a very important part in the life of a child who has dealt with trauma. Because students may have experienced trauma in their early years, many schools have taken on the role of teaching social-emotional learning techniques and trauma-informed practices to their students (Crosby, 2015). Implementing these practices can help students who have endured trauma experience more success in school.

A key strategy for developing a trauma-informed school is creating a positive climate and culture in classrooms (Meyers, 2015). One step in creating a positive climate and culture is identifying a place in the classroom where a student can feel safe and take a break. This spot needs to be available to all students throughout the school day, so that they can catch a breath and slow down (Pelayo, 2020). Lantieri (2008) suggests teachers make this place a "peace corner" that students can go to when they are feeling overwhelmed, stressed, or angry. Being able to identify these feelings is an important life skill for elementary students (McLachlan et al., 2009). The focus of this literature review is to review the research surrounding trauma-informed strategies and how the implementation of a peace corner can impact behaviors in the elementary classroom.

Definition of Social-Emotional Learning

Social-emotional learning is a concept that has been around for many centuries, dating back to ancient Greece (Druginske, 2017). "The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines SEL as: "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" (Social emotional learning, nd). CASEL has helped to define the five essential competencies for students: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills (Duginske, 2017). These competencies are suggested skills for students to be successful in school and life.

Early educators are now not only responsible for teaching academics, but also social-emotional skills (Chin Ng & Bull, 2018). Schools are able to choose to implement a social-emotional learning curriculum or use teacher-created activities (Mindess et al., 2008). Some of the popular SEL programs include Responsive Classroom, Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum, Zones of Regulation, Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS), Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS), and Interplay Solutions (Mindess et al., 2008). Many school administrators and teachers have observed that when social-emotional skills are taught, behaviors start to decrease and academic achievement increases (Duginske, 2017).

Early Childhood Social-Emotional Learning

To help foster SEL and academic growth, teachers must introduce these skills in the early childhood years (Chin Ng & Bull, 2018). A qualitative study in 2015, examined the way situational factors influence teachers to incorporate SEL and the strategies that teachers use in these situations. The data was collected from 80 different preschools, consisting of 113

kindergarten classrooms. Chin Ng and Bull (2018) reported that teaching social-emotional learning most often took place during intentional small group instruction during outdoor play. The research concluded that planned curriculum and informal teachings can be combined in early childhood classrooms to help facilitate SEL.

Denham (2014) also conducted research in the early childhood classroom to predict academic readiness. One hundred and one preschoolers participated in this study. This study used the Affect Knowledge Test, Preschool Self-Regulation Assessment, Minnesota Preschool Affect Checklist, and the Challenging Situations Task to measure social-emotional learning. The school success measures included the Preschool Learning Behaviors Scale, Teacher Rating Scale of School Adjustment, and the ECLS-K Academic Rating Scale. The study identified that early assessment of SEL skills and monitoring can be beneficial in contributing to early success in school.

Ashdown and Bernard (2011) also conducted research with early elementary students to measure social-emotional development, well-being, and academic achievement. One hundred first grade students and four teachers participated in this study. The researcher implemented the social-emotional learning curriculum: *You Can Do It! Early Childhood Education Program.* The teachers filled out two different questionnaires on each student: the ACER Well-Being Survey and the Social Skills Rating System (teacher form). Students who received the intervention were reported by teachers to have greater gains in social-emotional competence.

Kramer and Colleagues (2010) conducted research on social-emotional learning in the kindergarten classroom. The study consisted of 4 kindergarten teachers, 67 students, and 67 parents or caregivers. The teachers implemented the *Strong Start* curriculum. Data was collected through teachers using the School Social Behavior Scale, parents using the Home and

Community Social Behavior Scales, and both teachers and parents completing the Social Skills

Rating system. The results suggested that the implementation can lead to an increase in prosocial

behaviors. Teachers and parents both reported positive change in prosocial behavior among the

students.

Social-Emotional Learning and Academics

The study of social-emotional learning has continued to evolve and studies are now

showing that teaching students social-emotional learning skills can relate to an increase in their

academic achievement (Duginske, 2017). In 2011, a meta-analysis study was conducted on

research pertaining to kindergarten through twelfth grade students and the impacts of teaching

social-emotional learning (Durlak, 2011). The study examined research conducted at 213

different schools teaching social-emotional learning involving 270,034 students. This meta-

analysis revealed that students receiving SEL instruction showed academic achievement

11% higher than peers not receiving SEL instruction.

The Lucille Packard Foundation for Children's Health and the University of Chicago

funded three large reviews and reported similar findings with elementary and middle school aged

students. The reviews included 317 studies and 324,303 children (Payton et al., 2008). The study

looked at the variety of SEL programs being implemented during the day and after school and

measured the impact of the SEL interventions. The academic impact was measured by school

grades and achievement scores. The study found that students' achievement increased by 11 to 17

percentile points compared to the average student.

Duginske (2017) also conducted a study on social-emotional learning and academic

achievement, and found that students receiving Tier II social-emotional support showed

academic growth. This study was narrowed down to second grade through fifth grade students

who exhibited internalizing and externalizing behaviors. The sample size included 18 students who received the intervention and 18 students in the comparison group. The study measured academic achievement by looking at the students' iReady scores from fall to winter. The students in the intervention group had a higher mean math growth than the students in the comparison group. The students in the intervention group did not show as much growth on the reading iReady test, aside from the intervention group in grade 5 who outperformed the comparison group in reading. These studies indicate a connection between SEL and academic growth.

Students who are not able to self-regulate struggle to learn academically because of the time they miss in the classroom (Dugisnke, 2017). Teachers report that a student's teachability and ability to learn depend on their ability to regulate their behavior (Denham et al., 2014). The classroom will be a more valuable place to learn if students are taught social-emotional skills that will help them stay inside the classroom and not cause disruption (Duginske, 2017).

Trauma-Informed Practices

Many children come to school experiencing at least one Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) (Murphy & Sacks, 2019). ACEs have become an important public health issue that can result in negative effects on a child or an adult (Murphey & Sacks, 2019). Some of the negative outcomes include aggression, language delay, attendance issues, depression, anxiety, high risk behaviors, and delayed cognitive development (Cavanaugh, 2016). Trauma experienced in a student's early childhood years can negatively affect the capacity for self-regulation, organization, comprehension, and memorization (Wolpow et al., 2009). When this occurs, it affects students academically and socially throughout their school years (Thomas et al., 2019). Not all students will receive services outside of the school, which is why it is important for schools to intervene and teach these strategies (Cavanaugh, 2016).

As awareness of the negative effects of ACEs has risen, schools have been encouraged to partake in trauma-informed care and practices to improve the well-being of students in school (Murphey & Sacks, 2019). Trauma-informed practices require full buy-in from every staff member. When schools see buy-in from the staff, it can really impact student performance and school climate (Thomas et al., 2019). Teachers and classroom aides are in an optimal position to teach coping skills, help build resilience, model emotional processing and problem solving, and establish psychological safety by instituting consistent expectations and familiar routines (Blitz et al., 2016).

In a recent study, Rishel, Tabone, Harnett, and Szafran (2019) found that by implementing the Trauma-Informed Elementary Schools program, classrooms showed an increase in emotional support and classroom organization. The research lasted over two school years and included 51 pre-k, kindergarten, and 1st grade classrooms among eleven schools. Of the 51 classrooms, 39 participated, while 12 classrooms were used for comparison. The CLASS observation scale was used to assess the classroom activity. The scores measured the classroom as a whole, not just an individual student. The classroom activity was evaluated by looking at three areas: emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. The area of emotional support observed the areas of: positive and negative climates, teacher sensitivity, and regard for student perspectives. The results showed that classrooms not receiving the intervention declined in emotional support.

Another study conducted by Saltzman, Pynoos, Layne, and Steinberg (2001) also identified the benefits of schools implementing a trauma-informed intervention. The study included 812 students who were surveyed and 26 students who received the psychotherapy program. The researchers surveyed the students, which then narrowed down the participants who

would receive the intervention. Once the students were narrowed down, the researcher broke the students up into five trauma-focused groups based on what their primary treatment issues were. Some of the treatment issues were trauma vs. traumatic death, the severity of the trauma or loss, and the student's general development level. The intervention groups were implemented once a week for twenty weeks. The results of the study suggested that students who participated in the intervention were associated with improvements in posttraumatic stress, complicated grief symptoms, and GPA.

Jaycox et al. (2009) conducted more research on the implementation of trauma-informed practices in schools. Their research indicated that implementing the Support for Students Exposed to Trauma (SSET) program resulted in a reduction in trauma-symptoms. The study was delivered by three middle school teachers at two different Los Angeles middle schools with 76 total students in the program. Principals in the district nominated the teachers and classrooms for the intervention. Participants showing high symptoms experienced with a 10-point reduction in PTSD symptoms, 5-point reduction in depressive symptoms, and 5-point reduction in behavioral problems. The study also collected satisfaction data from students and parents to show how a program like this could be easily implemented in schools by teachers and counselors. The overall parent satisfaction score was an average of 4.50 out of 6 and the student satisfaction score was 2.52 out of 3. This study showed how easily implemented and effective trauma-informed practices can be.

Students who learn strategies and skills from a young age, can close the academic gap between their peers (Duginske, 2017). Schools have been putting into place resilience and coping strategies, along with mindfulness to help students who have experienced trauma (Scannell, 2020). It is important for educators to make the link between social-emotional learning and

trauma-informed practices to increase the effectiveness of both of the interventions (Pawlo et al., 2019). One key skill to help promote social-emotional learning and trauma-informed practices is to teach the practice of mindfulness (Semple, 2016).

Mindfulness

The practice of mindfulness in schools is intended to strengthen self-regulation skills, social-emotional competencies, and the ability to manage stress (Murphy, 2019). Early childhood is an important time to teach social-emotional skills (Chin Ng & Bull, 2018). The ability to listen, focus, ignore distractions, and learn are important skills students need to help them learn in the classroom environment (Duginske, 2017). Focus is very important for academic success and is at the heart of mindfulness (Leland, 2015). Just like being taught social skills, students can be taught mindfulness (Semple, 2016). Students who are trained in mindfulness can strengthen their focus to filter out distractions in the classroom (Leland, 2015). Regular mindfulness practice can help sharpen attention and concentration skills to help students stay focused and learning (Murphy, 2019).

Wisner (2008) studied the effects of a mindfulness-based program, and found many benefits. This eight-week study was conducted with 35 high school students by practicing mindfulness meditation each day. Data was collected through concept mapping, teacher rating, journal entries, and questionnaires. The students reported increased positive feelings about themselves, improvements in mood, increase in peaceful feelings, reduction of frustration, clarity of mind, increased ability to concentrate and focus, increased self-control, and improved ability to calm down.

Another study conducted in 2016 examined the behavioral impacts of a mindfulness-based intervention. This study included 18 students in the intervention group and 12 students in

the comparison group (Harpin et al., 2016). The classroom intervention was the implementation

of a mixture between the MindUp curriculum and the Mindful Schools curriculum. The

effectiveness of the curriculum was measured by surveys completed by students and teachers.

Some students reported that mindfulness helped them control their emotions. This study

statistically didn't show much change in mindfulness, but the observations showed many

positive behavioral changes.

Bannirchelvam et al. (2017) conducted a study with 20 students in third through sixth

grade. The researcher implemented the mindfulness intervention, the Triple R Program, to

observe students' experience and utilization of mindfulness. The students were interviewed and

data was collected through their responses. The responses showed that students used mindfulness

and found it effective in regulating their emotions. The interviews also revealed that students

used mindfulness when they were feeling nervous, angry, annoyed, or sad. The students reported

that mindfulness was good and helpful for their emotional regulation.

In a similar study, Schonert-Reichl et al. (2015) conducted a study to see how an SEL

program involving mindfulness could enhance cognitive control, reduce stress, promote well-

being, and produce positive behaviors. The study observed 100 fourth and fifth grade students

where they were taught either the Mind-Up Curriculum or the Social Responsibility Program.

Students showed improvement in executive function, self-reported measures of well-being, peer-

reported prosocial behavior, and better performance in math.

Many different studies are still being conducted on mindfulness and the use with children

in school settings (Eklund et al., 2016). The results of the prior research suggests that

mindfulness training can enhance academic and prosocial outcomes in young children (Flook et

al., 2015). One way to cultivate mindfulness in the classroom is through the implementation of a

peace corner (Semple, 2016).

The Peace Corner

The peace corner has been known as many different names such as, the calm down

corner, thinking corner, and time-out corner. The concept of the "peace corner" was originally

piloted by Linda Lantieri, a well-known peace education (Lantieri, 2008). The peace corner is a

place in the classroom for students to go when they are feeling distraught or agitated (Semple,

2016). This space can have comfortable options for seating, sensory calming tools, and activities

(Murphy, 2019).

The school day can be exhausting for children in elementary schools, which can cause

their nervous systems to go into overdrive. When this happens, students' thinking and learning

are often thrown off (Murphy, 2019). When students' emotions are not in check, it causes the

students to become dysregulated or overstimulated (Murphy, 2019). The peace corner or calm

corner is then their place to go in the classroom to help them self-regulate (Murphy, 2019). The

idea of the peace corner is to have students start to be self-aware of when they are becoming

dysregulated, and then make the choice to go self-regulate in the peace corner (Murphy, 2019).

Inside the peace corner are many strategies for students to find peace and calm

themselves (Murphy, 2019). Posters, pictures, inspirational quotes, and calming music are small

ways for students to focus on the present (Kane, 2018). Mindfulness strategies are also

incorporated in the peace corner (Murphy, 2019). Teachers can decide what needs to be place in

the peace corner for strategies based on student need (Murphy, 2019).

Lantieri, Murphy, and Kane suggest the use of a peace corner, and tools to use within the

peace corner to help children self-regulate. Although there are a number of researchers who have

suggested the use of a peace corner, there is almost no published research with data on the actual

effect of the peace corner on students' behavior in the classroom.

Conclusion

Prior research has shown the effect on mindfulness and social-emotional learning. There

are a variety of resources to assist teachers with implementing the broad factor of peace corners.

"Children model their teacher's attitudes and will see themselves as kind and caring individuals

in a class community that supports conflict resolution and peacemaking" (Best wishes, nd).

Through this research we can understand the positive impact social-emotional learning and

mindfulness can have in creating a safe, learning classroom atmosphere. Although there has been

significant research conducted on these topics, there appears to be a lack of quantitative and even

qualitative research on the impact of peace corners. Scholars recommend them as a strategy to

increase mindfulness, and teachers have provided many testimonials on the impact of using a

peace corner on educational blogs and websites, but very few research studies have been

conducted on the impact of a peace corner. While the testimonies of peace corners demonstrate

their effectiveness anecdotally, their effect on the classroom as a whole is less evident. This

research will focus on the impact of a classroom peace corner, called a calm down corner at the

research site, in a primary classroom.

Methods

Research Site

This action research was implemented in a second-grade general education classroom in

the suburbs of Des Moines with a population of approximately 8,500 people (National Center for

Education Statistics, 2021). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the school

district serves about 2,400 students. In the 2020-21 academic year, the school district's

population was 95% White, 4% Hispanic/Latino, 1% Asian, and 1% of two or more races

(NCES, 2021). This study was conducted in a PK-2 school building consisting of 720 students.

Participants

The second-grade class where this study was conducted consisted of 13 boys and 10 girls.

Three students were on Individualized Education Plans (IEP). The three students all had speech,

hearing, or academic IEPs; there were no behavior IEPs. One student had a full-time

paraprofessional. Eight of the students came from split families or single-parent households.

Procedures

The researcher was also the classroom teacher in this study, so the school counselor

assisted in the process of data collection. Data was collected one-time pre-implementation of the

peace corner – called a calm down corner at the research site – with the assistance of the

counselor. First, the researcher identified two students who showed behavioral problems in the

classroom. These students were selected by the behavioral referrals they had throughout the first

half of the school year. After identifying the two focus students, the counselor helped collect

baseline data on the on-task and off-task behaviors those students exhibited within a 15-minute

time period. This data was collected on pencil and paper, then input into a Google document.

The researcher visited another classroom in the school that was piloting a calm down corner. The researcher took notes on the location of the corner, the presentation of the calm down corner, and the tools in the calm down corner. The researcher then collaborated with the school counselor to develop a plan and design the calm down corner. The counselor was involved because of the tools she had to offer to the teacher. The researcher then built the calm down corner. The researcher implemented the calm down corner and lessons on the use of the calm down corner once pre-implementation data was collected.

There were 12 different tools on the choice board for strategies to calm down within the corner. The first tool was deep breathing. Students all had breathing strips that they made where they could push the beads on the strip to practice deep breathing. Students also had the option of blowing on pinwheels and watch them spin. The second tool was the breathing boards which were posted on the corner walls for the students to practice figure eight breathing or mountain breathing. The third tool was yoga. This was introduced to the entire class and they were taught a few poses that they could use in the corner. The fourth tool was the option to color. Inside the corner, there were coloring books and crayons. The fifth tool was a bean bag for students to choose to sit in while they were in the corner. The seventh choice in the corner was to read. The researcher hand-picked some books about emotions to keep back in the corner. The eighth choice in the calm down corner was to watch the green sand timer. This was a 5-minute timer to help make students aware of the time that they spent in the calm down corner. The ninth choice was a stress ball. Each student possessed one because the guidance counselor made each student one from pool noodles. The tenth choice was for students to think happy thoughts. The eleventh strategy was for students to count to 10. The last strategy was for students to write. The researcher left mini notebooks and pencils for students to write or sketch inside.

        The first day of implementation, the teacher gave a tour of the calm down corner to the

entire class. The teacher explained what the corner was and what it was used for. The teacher

showed the students the different tools the corner had to offer to help them de-escalate from a

state of dysregulation. Then, the class went over rules for the calm down corner together. The

class established expectations for the corner. The teacher then went through the check-in sheet

for the students to fill out when they used the calm down corner. This check-in had students

identify the time of the day they were visiting the corner and the zone of regulation they were

experiencing. The Zone of Regulation is a school-wide initiative to help students identify and

regulate their emotions, so the teacher incorporated it into the calm down corner to keep the

language consistent. The next item on the check-in paper was the calm down choices, and the

students had to circle which one/one(s) they chose to use. Last, the students were required to

circle which zone they were in after using the calm down corner. The calm down corner was then

ready for students to use.

        The teacher presented five-minute mini lessons over the calm down corner for three

weeks. The mini lessons featured ways to use the tools in the calm down corner and examples of

when to use the calm down corner. The teacher collected the calm down corner check-in sheets

and entered the data daily in the Google document. The teacher reflected daily on who was using

the calm down corner and the connection between the identified students showing dysregulation

in the classroom.

After the full three-week implementation of the calm down corner, the researcher had the counselor observe the two previously identified focus students again during the same 15-minute time period as during pre-implementation. The counselor collected the same data as in the pre-implementation to compare the students' behaviors and the frequency of the behaviors after the three-week span of implementation. The researcher then was able to compare the pre and post implementation data.

For the researcher to compare this data, the researcher printed off the Google document and calculated the frequency of the behaviors during the two different observations. The researcher reviewed the frequency of the usage of the calm down corner by the two students. The corner was allowed for all students, so the researcher also looked at the amount of usage from the rest of the class. The quantitative data allowed the researcher to see the frequency and time of the usage of the corner. The researcher also collected quantitative data on the most common tools used in the corner and the number of students that returned to the green zone following their use of the calm down corner. The qualitative data helped show the researcher what behaviors were shown in the classroom and by which specific learners.

The focus of this action research was to examine the impacts of implementing a calm down corner in the primary classroom. The independent variable was the implementation of the calm down corner and the dependent variable was student behavior. The data was collected using observations of specific behaviors and observations of the usage of the classroom calm down corner. The observation of specific behaviors was qualitative and quantitative. This data was collected by the school counselor while the researcher was teaching, and through analysis of students' check-in sheets. Problem behaviors were identified and then tracked by anecdotal notes. The behaviors were tracked using tallies to compare students on-task behavior versus off-task behavior. Observation of usage of the calm down corner was quantitative because the researcher collected the number of times students visited the calm down corner throughout the day.

Data Analysis

How can the use of a classroom calm down corner impact a student that is struggling with behavior in a primary education classroom? The qualitative data collected included observations of specific behaviors before implementation of a calm down corner. The quantitative data collected was the frequency of specific behaviors and frequency of the use of the calm down corner. Data was also collected through check-in sheets located in the calm down corner. The check-in sheets showed the zone the student was feeling when entering the calm down corner, the tools the students used, the time of day, and the zone that the student was in when they left the calm down corner. This was collected using a data collection form created by the researcher.

Before implementation of the calm down corner, the school counselor observed student behavior during a 15-minute, whole group lesson. Students were seated on the floor for this time

period participating in a Morning Meeting lesson. During this time period, the counselor watched

the two identified students and tracked their time on and off task. She also recorded anecdotal

notes on what behaviors she observed from the two students. During the 15-minute time frame,

Student 1 was off task 5% of the time and on task 95% of the time. Student 2 was off task 50%

of the time and on task 50% of the time. The behaviors she observed were inattentiveness,

overactivity, impulsiveness, and another inappropriate behavior. Of the 16 off-task behaviors,

overactivity was observed the most with seven (N=7) incidences, followed by inattentive (N=4)

and impulsive with four (N=4) incidences (see Table 1). The other inappropriate behavior

observed was pointing finger guns at another student. This behavior was observed with 1 (N=1)

incidences. Student 1 had two (N=2) off task incidences. Student 2 had 14 (N=14) off task

incidences. The purpose of this observation was for the researcher to observe the behaviors that

were occurring and frequency of them to identify the best tools to put into the calm down corner.

Table 1

Initial Observation

	Inattentive	Overactive	Impulsive	Other
Student 1		2		
Student 2	4	5	4	1
Total Behaviors:	4	7	4	1

After the initial observation the teacher researcher implemented the calm down corner.

Quantitative data was collected on the usage of the calm down corner. All students were

observed on the usage of the calm down corner for comparison data to the two identified students

with behaviors. The students filled out a check-in sheet each time they visited and put it in a

folder for the teacher researcher to review at the end of each day. During the three-week

implementation period, fifteen (N=15) different students visited the calm down corner. There

were a total of fifty (N=50) visits (see Table 2). The purpose of this observation was to identify

the engagement of the calm down corner lessons and need for a calm down corner. The

researcher also specifically examined the frequency of visits from Student 1 and Student 2 who

struggled with behavior during the school day. Student 1 did not ever visit the calm down corner

during the implementation period. Student 2 visited the calm down corner twenty-two (N=22)

times over the implementation period.

Table 2

Calm Down Corner Usage

Student	Calm Down Corner Visits
Student 1	0
Student 2	22
Student 3	2
Student 4	2
Student 5	4
Student 6	2
Student 7	2
Student 8	2
Student 9	1

Student 10	1
Student 11	1
Student 12	1
Student 13	4
Student 14	1
Student 15	1
Student 16	4
Student 17	0
Student 18	0
Student 19	0
Student 20	0
Student 21	0
Student 22	0
Student 23	0
Total Times Used:	50

After the three weeks of implementation of the calm down corner, teaching mini lessons

on the usage of the calm down corner, the school counselor returned to observe again. The

counselor came at the same time and for the same Morning Meeting lesson as the previous

observation period. During the fifteen (N=15) minute observation, Student 1 was off task 46% of

the time and on task 54% of the time. Student 2 was off task 17% of the time and on task 83% of

the time. Overactivity was the only behavior observed with fifteen (N=15) incidences. Student 1

had eleven (N=11) off task incidences. Student 2 had four (N=4) off task incidences (see Table

3).

Table 3

Final Observation

	Inattentive	Overactive	Impulsive	Other
Student 1	0	11	0	0
Student 2	0	4	0	0
Total Behaviors:	0	15	0	0

Data from the pre-implementation observation in Table 1 showed that sixteen (N=16)

total behaviors were observed. In Table 3, the post-implementation observation showed that

fifteen (N=15) total behavior were observed. The number of total behaviors decreased by one

(N=1) behavior. Evaluating individual Student 1, the behavior increased nine (N=9) incidences.

Student 2's behavior decreased 10 (N=10) incidences.

Data from the check-in sheets showed students visited the calm down corner when they

were in the Blue, Red, or Yellow Zone. Of the 50 visits, 52% were from students who reported

they were in the Blue Zone, 36% were from students in the Red Zone, and 12% were from

students in the Yellow Zone. Twenty-one uses of the corner were in the morning, and twenty-

nine uses of the corner were in the afternoon. The students left the calm down corner feeling in

the Green, Blue, or Yellow Zone, but most (80%) reported a return to the optimal Green Zone. In

only 12% of the visits, students reported they left the calm down corner feeling in the Yellow

Zone because of excitement, and 8% of the visits resulted in students feeling in the blue zone

because they were tired or sad. The most commonly used tools were breathing boards with 23

uses, the stress ball with 13 uses, and coloring with 10 uses.

Discussion

Summary of Major Findings

This study was implemented to see the impact of a classroom calm down corner in the

primary classroom. The goal of the calm down corner was for students to be able to identify their

personal feelings and when they need to take a break or when they are feeling dysregulated. The

calm down corner is also set in place so that students could stay in the classroom even when they

were feeling angry or sad. Two students were identified to have consistent behavior problems in

the classroom from the beginning. These two students were students who had multiple office

referrals that removed them from the classroom. While behaviors were noted at both

observations, the incidences of the two students' behaviors differed from the first observation to

the final observation. During the first observation, Student 1 had a total of two (N=2) behaviors.

After the implementation period, Student 1 had eleven (N=11) behaviors. Student 1 never visited

the calm down corner during the implementation period. Student 2 had a total of fourteen (N=14)

behaviors during the first observation. During the final observation Student 2 had four (N=4)

behaviors. Student 2 visited the calm down corner twenty-two (N=22) visits during the

implementation period. Student 2 had a decrease of 33% in negative behaviors shown.

While the total number of behaviors between the two students did not show a significant

decrease, it is important to analyze the changes in behaviors following the implementation of the

calm down corner. Prior to implementation, Student 1 and 2 were observed struggling with

behaviors including overactivity, inattentiveness, impulsivity, and inappropriate physical

gestures. The focus of the mini-lessons for the calm down corner were strategies to help students

lessen the behaviors. Three of the behaviors were eliminated following the implementation of the calm down corner. While these behaviors decreased, the behavior of overactivity increased. This skill was not as much of a focus for the mini-lessons as long as students' bodies were safe. Through daily observation, the impact of the strategies taught with the mini-lessons and the option to use the calm down corner was evident.

The calm down corner showed that students mostly used the corner when they were in the Blue and Red Zones. Students in these zones shared that they were either tired, sad, or mad. The calm down corner was used at any time during the day, but students mostly used it in the afternoon. While the students visited the calm down corner, they were able to pick strategies to use. The most used strategy were the breathing boards. The second most used strategy was using the stress ball. Most students reported that they left feeling in the green zone, which meant they felt calm, ready to learn, or proud.

Through this research, the calm down corner did positively affect some behaviors in the primary classroom and was used many times by the students. Completely eliminating behaviors in the classroom may be an unrealistic goal, but the calm down corner did help lessen the amount of specific behaviors in the classroom and teach students many strategies to help calm themselves. The students voluntary use of the calm down corner to regulate their own behavior supports prior findings that children will choose a mindfulness strategy in order to self-regulate following training (Alphonso et al., 2019; Bannirchelvam et al., 2017; Harpin et al., 2016; Leland, 2015; Murphy, 2019; Wisner, 2008).

Limitations of the Study

This action research on the implementation of a calm down corner could have some possible limitations. One of the limitations could be the time period for this research. The implementation of the research occurred when the students returned to school full-time after being in hybrid learning during the pandemic. The next limitation was that the research was limited to a 2nd grade classroom. The findings could look very different for other grade levels. The third limitation that is possible is the number of absences seen because of sickness and quarantine during the baseline and implementation of the calm down corner. There were a total of 40 absences during the implementation period, among 16 different students. Similarly, protocols due to Covid 19, required the researcher to delay the timeline for this research due to personal quarantine.

Future Research

Future research could be conducted to determine the long-term impact of peace corners implemented in classrooms. The time period of this research was short in nature; the research could start at the beginning of a school year and go throughout the entire school year. An analysis of student opinions on peace corners and the strategies incorporated in the corner would also be very beneficial. Future research could also evaluate the off-task behavior of all students. The Zones of Regulation could also be studied to see if students' zones change following the use of the peace corner. Last, the peace corner showed positive impacts in the classroom, however more research on the use of a peace corner would help understand its role and usage in classrooms in primary education.

Conclusion

The peace corner provides students with a social-emotional strategy to practice mindfulness, which contributes to their ability to create a safe and positive classroom environment. This study supports prior research that suggests mindfulness strategies like a peace corner can improve behavior in the classroom most conducive to student flourishing. The peace corner supports self-regulation and social-emotional learning among students. This study was a step forward in studying strategies that can help students self-regulate their behaviors in the classroom. The researcher believes that giving the students a tool like the classroom peace corner will potentially help encourage positive behaviors and strategies to self-regulate long term.

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