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School Improvement Plan

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Introduction

You're in the middle of teaching a phonics lesson and you see one of your students run to hide under the table, then start throwing things around the classroom. It's a common occurrence in some elementary classrooms around the United States. As a teacher many things start running through your mind ranging from how to approach the student and what skill or strategy to offer them, or should you call for additional help or remove the other students from the classroom to ensure everyone is safe.

Social skills are the skills that “are used to communicate with others daily in a variety of ways” (Indeed Editorial Team, 2021, para. 2). Everyone uses social skills; students to interact with their peers, adults in the workplace, when someone is at the grocery store, and any time people are interacting. Social skills ensure that we have positive relationships and allow us to make good decisions. So why do so many students struggle with displaying appropriate social skills? Does the school they attend have a plan in place to instruct them in social skills? Is there a plan in place for how to respond to negative behavior in the moment?

A study titled “The Effects of Teaching Social Skills on Students’ Behavior: A Qualitative Study” conducted by researcher Gigantiello (2015) found positive results in their students after social skills instruction was put in place 2-3 times per week for 30 minutes each (Gigantiello, 2015). The study, which included twenty 5th graders, who found that students perceived themselves in a more positive way after weekly social skills instruction. They also found that students were more invested in the classroom community and family.

This School Improvement Plan has been created for a Title 1 elementary school in Council Bluffs, IA. The population of the school includes 454 students, with 52% males, 48% fe-

males, and 67.8% of the students being considered low social-economic status. The School Improvement plan will show that at the elementary school mentioned above there are students who are having to leave the classroom due to displaying behaviors that are disruptive to the learning environment. It will look at how often this is happening, what grade the students are in, and if it is the same students or different students getting “first responder calls.” A first responder call is when an adult in the building (teacher, paraeducator, etc.) calls the office asking for additional help due to a student’s behavior. These behaviors could be disruptive to the learning environment, the student could be out of instructional control, or the student could be displaying behaviors that are unsafe to themselves/others. The School Improvement Plan will then use the data to determine what could be put in place to improve student’s social/coping skills, and to improve this data.

This literature review will look at data about social skills instruction using research articles that were written within the last 10 years. The literature review will then look at specific types of social skills instruction and activities to implement into the classroom to determine what would be most effective to implement within classrooms to improve student’s social/coping skills, and to improve data. Through the review of these articles, it will be determined what will be written into the School Improvement Plan to best meet the needs of this school.

Literature Review

One thing that a lot of educators see daily in schools is a student who has dysregulated emotions. This could be due to a student lacking social skills, a student who has experienced trauma in their life, or a handful of other reasons. Students in schools deal with a variety of emotions, and students may not have the skills or tools to know how to handle them yet. Teachers

don't give up on their students, they find ways to teach them and to help them learn how to deal with what they're feeling. The best way to help students based on many studies that were reviewed in this literature review are through social skills instruction. One specific curriculum that was found to be very beneficial for students in regulating their emotions was the Zones of Regulation.

Increasing Student's Positive Behaviors

Gigantiello (2015) conducted a research study exploring the effects of teaching social skills and students' behaviors. This study included twenty 5th grade students at a Title 1 elementary classroom in Washington. The study was set up so that social skills were taught and practiced during morning meetings two to three times a week in a classroom that consisted of general education students including 6 students who also received additional support due to learning and/or behavior problems. During the class' morning meetings the students and teacher greet each other, and then participate in an activity and discussion. The class learned and practiced skills such as communication, teamwork, listening, and how actions affect others. The students participated in class discussion about what social skill they learned that day and how they were to use the social skill in their daily lives. This study found that the students involved in the social skills instruction perceived themselves in a much more positive way than how they felt about themselves prior to the study. The teachers found that their students were more invested in the classroom community and "family" which had a positive impact on their behavior.

Stephanie Skorman-Cicero (2013) conducted a quantitative study to see if teaching students' mindfulness had a positive impact on students' stress and anxiety. During this study students attended a social skills group one time per week where they were taught coping skills to

deal with stress and anxiety. During social skills group time, the students participated in mindfulness discussions to learn more about how to be aware of their emotions, how their actions affect others around them, and relaxation techniques. The results of the study found that two mindfulness strategies were the most effective including the relaxing techniques and the ability to talk to others about one's problems. Once the study was completed students said they noticed a difference within themselves. They felt they experienced less anxiety during situations that would have made them feel anxious. Teachers shared that they noticed a positive difference in their students.

Both of the studies completed by Gigantiello (2015) and Skorman-Cicero (2013) had results that prove that social skills are beneficial to student's self thoughts and positive behaviors in the classroom. When sharing the results of the study both researchers stated that students noticed a difference within themselves and how they felt throughout the day. The group of teachers in each study also shared that they noticed positive differences in their students.

Zones of Regulation

Zones of Regulation is a curriculum that teaches students to build awareness of their internal state (Kuyper, 2011), that ranges from teaching early emotional skills all the way to how to navigate in certain social situations (Day, 2021). Zones of Regulation teaches students to understand their emotions and the way they feel, while matching student emotions to a specific color that represents their emotions.. Zones of Regulation uses 4 colors (red, green, yellow, and blue) as their zones. Each color represents different feelings and emotions students could have. For example, if a student is in the red zone, they would be expressing the feeling of being mad, frustrated, angry, or out of control. If a student is in the blue zone, they would be feeling sad, tired,

or sick. Using colors helps students to “self-identify” their feelings and emotions (Day, 2021). In the Zones of Regulation curriculum there are lessons to teach regulation strategies, tools they can use, and other social skills. The goal is for students to be able to identify their emotion and then regulate how that emotion affects them independently. The Zones of Regulation curriculum is intended to teach students that it is okay to feel a variety of emotions and that learning to control their emotions is an important step to social skill development.

Studies on Zones of Regulation

Multiple studies have shown success with student behaviors after using the Zones of Regulation curriculum for Social Emotional Learning. Marti Quale (2019) completed a study where there were eleven lessons taught to groups of students from the Zones curriculum. After those eleven lessons were taught there was then a “maintenance” period. During this maintenance period there was no direct instruction of lessons from the Zones curriculum, but Zones materials and language were still being used. The results of this study were that when lessons from the Zones of Regulation curriculum were being directly delivered to students through instruction the students’ negative behaviors decreased. The results showed that during the maintenance period students’ negative behaviors were still lower than the baseline, but they did begin to increase again.

Researcher Carly Mutter (2016) conducted a study using the Zones of Regulation curriculum looking at the impact of the curriculum on student self-regulation skills. In this study all students from the school were taught the Zones of Regulation curriculum, but 26 students were chosen from grades K-5 to assess and look at results the impact of small group instruction using the Zones of Regulation curriculum had on their behavior over a period of time. The decision of

which students would receive the additional instruction was based on their needs and their behaviors that were displayed at school. Assessments were given to the selected students during this study. The assessments showed little change within the student's answers when they were assessed, however the teachers who worked with these students said they saw a positive change in their students' behaviors in the classroom. The teachers stated that their students were more successful with self-regulation skills.

Similarly, Rachel Scherz (2016) completed a study in which the Zones curriculum was taught to students in two ways. In the first cycle Zones were taught to all students in the 3rd grade at the elementary that was participating in the study. Within the 3 specific classrooms being studied "regulation stations" were implemented. At the regulation station students completed an activity where they were able to practice and gain more knowledge and understanding about the Zones. After the first cycle teachers determined which students needed additional instruction and that had the greatest need for additional social skills instruction. During this time the intervention was only continued with students who needed additional practice and instruction. This study found that all students benefitted from instruction with Zones of Regulation, and the zones instruction was beneficial in helping the students to regulate their emotions.

Researcher Kayley Sanger (2020) also conducted a study where students were taught the Zones of Regulation curriculum through lessons that were delivered two times per week. The lessons students were taught focused on the skills of accepting the word "no", waiting, and sharing. Throughout these lessons students were taught self-regulation strategies and emotion recognition. Through assessment the results found that all students demonstrated a significant increase in their self-regulation skills after being taught lessons from the Zones of Regulation curriculum.

Conclusion

Based on the studies that were reviewed, the results showed that students' behaviors and emotions benefit from receiving social skills instruction and feeling a sense of community and "family" within their classrooms. The research studies by Sanger (2020), Scherz (2016), Mutter (2016), and Quale (2019) agreed in their findings that the Zones of Regulations curriculum was beneficial for students in recognizing their emotions, regulating behaviors, and increasing positive student behaviors. Using the information gathered from the studies determine that using Zones of Regulation is beneficial and meet the needs outlined in the attached school improvement plan.

Raw Data

School Background

Data was gathered from the Title 1 PK-5th Grade Elementary School in Council Bluffs, Iowa. The population of the school includes 454 students, with 52% males, 48% females, and 67.8% of the students being considered low social-economic status. The student subgroups at this school are very diverse with 70.5% identifying as White, 17% identifying as Hispanic, 0.4% identifying as Native American, 4.6% identifying as Multi-Racial, 5.9% identifying as Black/African American, 1.3% identifying as Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 0.2% identifying as Asian. There is a group of English Language Learners which consists of 5.7% of the school population, and 14.8% of the students are on an IEP and considered students with disabilities.

First Responder Calls

A first responder call is when an adult in the building (teacher, paraeducator, etc.) calls the office asking for additional help due to a student's behavior. These behaviors could be disruptive to the

learning environment, the student could be out of instructional control, or the student could be displaying behaviors that are unsafe to themselves/others. The chart below displays the data related to first responder calls at the elementary school where this was completed. The first column of the chart shows the total number of times a first responder call was made for any student in the building, preschool through 5th grade. The second column on the chart below shows the number of times a first responder call was made because of the behaviors of a student who is receiving additional support and instruction for their behavior and social skills through an IEP. The last column shows the times an adult at school had to make a first responder call for a student who was not in their homeroom. The last column helped to realize and include in the school improvement plan that all teachers within the building needed to have a peace corner, and be trained on the Zones of Regulation curriculum.

	First Responder Calls 20-21	Calls Belonging to Student w/ Behavior IEP	Calls From Teacher Other Than Classroom Teacher
August/September	28	13	13
October	39	10	11
November	19	6	7
December	13	5	4
January	53	18	17
February	89	24	26
March	148	61	40
April	127	29	40

May	69	32	24
Total:	585	198	182

School Improvement Plan - Methodology

District Level Goals -

District Focus: All schools in the district will be trauma responsive schools.

Trauma responsive schools are schools where the adults in the school are trained to recognize and respond to trauma using trauma informed strategies. The district has this goal because they feel it will be beneficial to our students who have experienced trauma, and those we may not know have experienced trauma, to have staff working with them who are trained in these strategies. The goal of using trauma informed strategies is to help students regulate their own emotions, and to keep them in the classroom as often as possible.

Student Outcome: Students will be able to regulate their emotions in order to stay in the classroom to fully utilize instructional time.

PK-5 Title 1 Elementary Building Goal -

Reduce first responder calls by 20% by the end of the 2021-2022 school year.

- There were 585 First Responder Calls during the 2020-2021 school year. This will need to be reduced to 468 or less calls during the 2021-2022 school year in order to meet the school goal.

	First Responder Calls 20-21	First Responder Calls 21-22	Change
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August/September	28		
October	39		
November	19		
December	13		
January	53		
February	89		
March	148		
April	127		
May	69		
Total:	585		

Action Steps - The bullets below list the steps needed in order to make this plan successful.

Prior to School Starting -

- Purchase Zones of Regulation Book (<https://www.zonesofregulation.com/index.html>)
- Create visuals for common places.

Half Day PD for Teacher Back to School Workdays -

- Share goal and data from last year’s SIP.
- All staff’s goal should be to establish authentic relationships with students which should begin Day 1.
 - Brainstorm Ideas - class meetings, building classroom community
- Discuss implementation of proactive, positive reinforcement system.
 - Teachers will hand out flyer cards (building wide) for positive behaviors
 - Flyer cards will be collected in grade level buckets

- At the end of the week names will be drawn from the flyer cards to earn prizes
- At the end of each quarter if the building meets the building goal, there will be a celebration
 - Brainstorm ideas for the celebration times - extra recess
- Why Zones of Regulation? (share data on zones from studies listed above)
- Intro to Zones of Regulation.
 - Read from Zones of Regulation book and discuss take aways at table
 - Share out what we learned
 - Discuss the zones (colors) and what they mean
 - Why is this important?
- What do we need as a staff in order to successfully implement the Zones of Regulation?
 - Staff buy-in.
 - Common language and visuals - visuals are being worked on for common places.
 - Consistent opportunities for students to check in - start getting to know the students in your classroom and see who may need more than just check ins within your classroom.
 - Brainstorm check in ideas - popsicle sticks, colored cards
 - Continue to educate staff who then educate students, so students/staff have all the tools to be successful with zones.
- Expectations of what needs to be done in their classrooms the first week of school. (work time during PD on the 1st day.)

- Teach what the zones (colors) are and what they mean - must be done by Friday week 1 of school.
- Implement daily zones check in - must be started by Monday week 2 of school.

First Day of School PD -

- Did anyone teach zones today? Has anyone created their check in?
- Questions, comments, concerns.
 - Brainstorm ideas for each other if needed
- Provide time to work on posters, check in, more reading in book, etc.

Second Social/Emotional PD -

- What is a peace corner?
 - A safe space for students who are dysregulated (out of instructional control) to go where they can use tools that help them to get regulated (back to the green zone and ready to learn)
- Brainstorm things appropriate to put into peace corner - fidgets, stuffed animals
- Discuss expectations for peace corner.
 - Is that consistent across the school? Classroom specific? Do we need a system to quietly ask for peace corner?
- Everyone is expected to have a peace corner (specials, lunch, designated space at recess, office, special education teachers, etc.)
- Expectations of when this needs to be implemented
 - Teach expectations and have peace corner available - must be done by Wednesday next week

- Implement peace corner reflection sheets - must be done by Friday next week

Other -

- Identify students who may need additional support outside of the general education environment as the year gets going.
- Determine/implement plan for that group of students. (group social skills, behavior point system, rewards system, out of general education check in, etc.)
- Implementation walk throughs for zones check in, peace corner, etc.
- Analyze data to determine next steps.

School Improvement Plan - Assessment

The bullets listed below will explain the steps needed in order to collect data to assess if the plan listed above is being successful, and steps that may be taken if needed if the plan is not being successful.

- Create a document to submit and track data when there is a first responder call.
 - Should include name, grade, adult calling, current behavior plan.
- Communicate how they will call for a first responder.
 - Call secretary and say, “This is (name of adult calling). I need a first responder to (location) for (name of student).”
 - Secretary will call over walkie talkie for support, and input information into form.
- Data on the form will be looked at by principal, behavior consultant, and school-family advocate and discussed at student support team meetings.
 - School behavior plan may be changed based on school wide data.
 - Student behavior plans may be changed based on individual student data.

- Additional interventions may be put in place in order to ensure goal is being met.

Conclusion

Social skills ensure that people can build positive relationships and appropriately interact with others. Social skills are an important piece in the life of an elementary student. The information gathered from the literature review and the school improvement plan written using the Zones of Regulation curriculum gives teachers the social skills lessons they need in order to teach students social skills and self-regulation strategies. The plan gives teachers the strategies to use when responding to students in their classroom who are having difficulty self-regulating, and allows the teachers to create a positive classroom environment where students can recognize their emotions.

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