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Social Emotional Learning in Elementary Classrooms

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Capstone Project: A School Improvement Plan

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Abstract

This school improvement plan focuses on how a social-emotional curriculum can positively impact various aspects of an elementary school, such as academic progress, behavior, and the overall school environment. It uses reliable research to emphasize the importance of integrating social-emotional learning seamlessly. The plan is based on evidence that clearly demonstrates how this curriculum can promote good behavior and improve academic success. A key highlight of this effort is the combination of studies that show how a carefully designed social-emotional program, when fully implemented, can bring about significant positive changes in the school culture and environment, creating a better atmosphere for learning and personal development.

Keywords: social and emotional learning, implementation, school climate, school improvement plan

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Introduction

Today's world is constantly changing and evolving, this means that the world of education is no longer just focused on imparting knowledge. Educators and researchers have started to focus on the importance of social-emotional learning in the classroom. Social-emotional learning focuses on embarking students to understand and manage their emotions, establish and maintain positive relationships, demonstrate empathy, and make responsible decisions. When students feel safe, supported, and connected they are more likely to engage in meaningful learning experiences and develop life skills. Research has consistently shown that integrating social-emotional learning into the curriculum can enhance academic achievement, improve classroom behavior, and lead to long-term positive success for students. Social and Emotional Learning reflects the critical role of positive relationships and emotional connections in the learning process and helps students develop a range of skills they need for school and life (Vinnard, 2019). Through understanding the foundations and practices of social-emotional learning, teachers can create inclusive and supporting learning environments that empower students to thrive. Social-emotional learning needs to be integrated into elementary classrooms to provide students with long-term success.

The purpose of this school improvement plan for social-emotional learning in the classroom is to nurture students' emotional intelligence, social skills, academic achievement, and overall well-being. Social-emotional programs help to recognize, understand, and manage their emotions and emotions of others. With the fostering of emotional intelligences, students can navigate relationships, resolve conflicts, and make responsible decisions. With relationship building, students are able to be supported in working collaboratively, valuing diversity, and radiating positivity in an inclusive classroom community. There is a consistent connection with

social-emotional learning and academic performance. When students feel that they are emotional secure and can manage stress, build resilience, set goals, they are more engaged with the learning process. Among the skills that students will gain through social-emotional learning, they are learning lifelong skills. Social-emotional learning helps prepare students with personal and professional success. Students' social-emotional needs should be met before expecting them to absorb and retain academic information (Kaspar & Massey, 2022). With addressing social and emotional needs of students alongside academic instruction, the foundation is being laid for student's success and the ability to thrive in an interconnected world.

Research for the importance of social-emotional learning in the classroom is conducted using journals from the DeWitt Library at Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa. The articles were all within the last ten years, peer reviewed, and used a variety of methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods. The articles used were about different practices, implementations, understanding, and the importance of implementing social-emotional learning in the classroom. The articles were mostly focused on students in the primary age but had a variety of different geographical locations. This scope of research allows for the understanding of the importance and of implementing social-emotional learning in elementary classrooms.

Implementing social-emotional learning in elementary classrooms as a school improvement plan holds promise in fostering student success. Social-emotional learning allows for the potential of enhancing students' well-being, academic achievement, and creating a positive learning community. With prioritizing the development of social and emotional skills, students are able to learn about empathy, resilience, and how to make decisions responsibly. These skills will help to equip students with life skills that will carry them past the classroom and build a foundation of lifelong success.

This school improvement project is designed to show the importance to integrate social-emotional learning in elementary classrooms to enhance students' overall development. The most widely used theoretical framework for social-emotional learning, developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, divides habits, mindsets, and skills into five domains (Jackson, 2021). Social-emotional learning focuses on five different competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Through nurturing these competencies, students are better able to build positive relationships, make informed choices, and to navigate challenges. With the teaching of social-emotional learning, a safe and supportive classroom will allow for students to feel valued, respected, and connected. With having clear behavioral expectations, there can be reduced behavior in the classroom and a sense of belonging. Integrating social-emotional learning into the classroom can be done through curriculum integration, professional development for teacher, parent involvement, and collecting data on the improvements. Social-emotional learning can encourage classrooms to become nurturing environments where students' social and emotional growth is prioritized with academic learning.

Review of the Literature

Social-emotional learning is a critical aspect of child development and education. This literature review aims to provide overview of the key topics of social-emotional learning. Exploring the foundation, benefits, professional development and implementation that social-emotional learning entails. Through examining the foundation, we gain insights to the significance to students' academic achievement and well-being. Noting the benefits, such as improved behaviors, reduced aggressions, and enhanced coping skills, will show the importance of incorporating social-emotional learning into the classrooms. With social-emotional learning in

the classrooms, teachers will have to be equipped with knowledge and skills to effectively implement these skills. Lastly, the review will cover the implementation of social-emotional learning in the classrooms and its effectiveness. Through all of these areas of research, the review aims to inform educators, policymakers, and researchers on the integration of social-emotional skills in the classroom.

Foundation of Social-Emotional Learning

In the late 1990s, the concept of fixed and growth mindsets was introduced. Fixed mindset is believed that intelligence is static and cannot be developed whereas growth mindset is believed to have a potential for growth and development through effort. It has been demonstrated that students with a growth mindset have greater academic improvement compared to those with fixed mindsets. “A fixed mindset approach to learning can result in individuals giving up when learning becomes too challenging, while students with a growth mindset approach to learning embrace opportunities that provide challenge and where failure is a very real possibility” (Fraser, 2018, p.646). Mindsets play a crucial role in motivation and achievement. Beyond academic learning, a growth mindset helps teach the ability to overcome social challenges and adversity. Teaching social attributes can help reduce aggression and improve behaviors. Fraser (2018), noted changing the culture and learning approaches can have a lasting impact on students. Teachers play a huge part in fostering a growth mindset through implementing strategies to promote growth.

Through a growth mindset, students are able to acknowledge challenges and grow socially and emotionally. Research conducted by Frydenberg, E (2021), explores the growing recognition of social-emotional learning as an essential aspect of child development and education. The study at the Early Learning Centre at the University of Melbourne, focused on

coping strategies for children and their practical applications. Frydenberg, E (2021), expressed the importance of coping in individuals' responses to specific situations, encompassing thoughts, feelings, and actions. It was evident that developing good coping skills at a young age is critical for positive outcomes with adaptation. From this research the Early Years Coping Project was initiated to understand children's concerns and coping strategies. The Early Years Coping Project has contributed to building knowledge about coping in young children, developing practical tools, and enhancing the capacity of educators, parents, and professionals to support children's social and emotional development. With this project, there were various phases such as identification, analysis, and creating visual teaching tools focused on children's social skills. Emphasizing on the importance of addressing children's emotional learning and coping strategies in their development and educational settings.

In the research from Oltean (2021), he focuses on the importance of stimulation and training children's social and emotional skills and long-term benefits that it has. Oltean (2021) highlights some research from D. Goleman's model of emotional intelligence that includes self-awareness, self-control, motivation, empathy, and social relations management and their link to social emotional development. Oltean (2021) expresses the importance of a supportive environment, multiple activities, and practice of internalizing social-emotional skills. Inadequate development of social-emotional skills can lead to challenging behaviors, emphasizing the role of social-emotional learning is a preventative measure. Students can gain these skills through trained teachers who manage interactions, foster social-emotional skills, and encourage lessons of emotional recognition and discussion. In other words, it is important to train student's social-emotional skills and ensure they have teachers equipped to do so.

Findings were provided from Lawson et al. (2019) about the implementation of social-emotional learning programs in schools that approach the development of competencies in students. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) published a framework to identify standards for social-emotional learning programs to meet. There are five competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making skills. “The implementation of universal social and emotional learning (SEL) programs in school setting is a promising approach to foster affective, cognitive, and behavioral skills among children” (Lawson et al., 2019, p. 457). Implementing social-emotional learning programs in schools faces barriers such as limited resources, priorities, and teacher training. These barriers need to be addressed to have effective implementation. Understanding the core components can help to examine the impact of the social-emotional learning programs.

The foundation of social-emotional learning shows importance in child development and education. There are highlighted benefits of a growth mindset in academic improvement and overcoming challenges, which emphasizes the role of teachers in fostering student growth. This is shown in the research by Fraser (2018) and Frydenberg, E (2021). The foundation also explores the recognition of social-emotional learning as essential in focusing on coping strategies for students and the importance of stimulating their social-emotional skills. The implementation of social-emotional learning programs in schools addresses the competencies and understanding the core components to an effective implementation.

Benefits

Social emotional learning is a preventive measure to address the increasing burden of mental health disorders and behavioral problems. In Australia, 13.6% of children from four to eleven

years old have at least one mental health disorder criteria met (Blewitt et al., 2021, p. 17). In social-emotional learning interventions implemented in education settings and fostering social-emotional skills there is the potential of promoting the overall well-being of students. Through the implementation of social-emotional learning, there can be a positive impact on children's mental health extending past the classroom. "SEL intervention supports educators to foster children's social-emotional development thorough explicit teaching, modeling, practice, and integration within other areas of learning" (Blewitt et al., 2021, p. 17). Fostering high quality interactions and explicit social-emotional learning instruction can reduce behavior challenges and improve long-term health outcomes.

The Journal of Educational Psychology published a study from Panayiotou et al. (2020) that covers the concept of well-being and how mental health is an aspect of that. Peer social support plays a significant role in children's lives, providing emotional support, opportunities for skill development, and a sense of security. Positive peer relationships contribute to resilience, reduce the risk of peer victimization, and promote positive school experiences. Student's school experiences are linked to academic achievements, healthy development, and reduced mental health difficulties and behavioral issues. "School connectedness has been shown to be associated with academic achievement, general healthy development, and less mental health difficulties and risky behaviors" (Panayiotou et al., 2020, p. 237). The PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) curriculum is validated in improving social-emotional competence, fostering positive peer relationships, and creating supporting school environments. The PATHS program focuses on the explicit teaching of social-emotional learning to positively impact student's well-being. "SEL theory forecasts a stronger sense of school connectedness among children exposed to

programs such as PATHS because they create learning environments that are well-managed and participatory, and in which students feel cared for and safe” (Panayiotou et al., 2020, p. 238).

Academic content is crucial but social-emotional learning is growing in the aspects of students needing to develop and internalize social-emotional skills to succeed in life. These skill sets are necessary for success in schooling, workplace, relationships, and citizenship. Strategic planning and development of social-emotional skills in school settings provide valuable tools for learning, resilience, and character development. There are several frameworks that are proposed to organize social-emotional competencies and learning. The CASEL framework, based on evidence and research, has a balanced approach to five competencies. These five key competencies include: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. All of these competencies cover emotional, cognitive, and social skills that are needed for academic success. “Teaching practices for SEL include student-centered discipline, creating a caring and responsive culture, cooperative learning, classroom discussions, self-reflection, and self-assessment” (Wallender et al., 2020, p. 35). Positive outcomes of effectively teaching these competencies can include improved school climates, enhance social-emotional learning, reduce negative behaviors, and increase academic achievement. In this action research plan, Wallender et al. (2020) recognized the explicit Second Step program and the tools it utilizes to build a supportive learning environment. Through integrating a social-emotional curriculum along academic content, student success and overall development is the positive outcome.

Yang et al. (2018) examined the associations between student perceptions of three factors related to school-wide social and emotional learning: teacher-student connection, teacher support, and student-student support. The findings reveal that all three of these factors are

significantly associated with emotional engagement, where teacher support is the strongest association. It suggested that teacher-student connection had the highest emotional engagement when students received adequate social emotional learning support from their teachers. “These two strategies are the systematic and quality instruction of SEL skills and the establishment of a caring, safe, and cooperative school-wide environment” (Yang et al., 2018, p. 61). The review suggests that having the school-wide social-emotional learning had a positive influence on student engagement for fostering positive relationships and creating a caring social climate.

Jackson (2021) examined the impact of social-emotional development and their long-term outcomes in high school students. Through the research, it is suggested that individuals who demonstrate positive mindsets and social-emotional development tend to have better outcomes in school and life. Surveys are provided to students to measure their emotional development, capture their experiences, track behaviors, and their attitudes. It is also found that students who feel supported in their social-emotional development have larger effects on their attendance and behavioral infractions. Using student surveys is a valuable information piece to determine the outcomes of social-emotional learning and its effectiveness.

Social-emotional learning is a preventative measure to address mental health disorders and behavioral problems in children. With implementing social-emotional learning interventions in education settings, students’ overall well-being can be promoted, leading to positive impacts on their mental health beyond the classrooms. Students’ school experiences are linked to academic achievements, healthy development, and reduced mental health and behavioral issues. The CASEL framework outlines five key competencies that cover emotional, cognitive, and social skills necessary for academic success. Effective teaching of these competencies to improved school climate, enhanced social-emotional learning, reduced negative behaviors, and increases

academic achievement. School-wide social-emotional learning positively influences students' engagement and fosters positive relationships. Positive mindsets and social-emotional development are linked to better outcomes to school and life.

Teacher's Role

There is an alarmingly increasing rate of teacher burnout and the need to support their well-being. Isbell & Miller (2023) reviews the significance of social-emotional learning in providing teachers with the necessary skills to manage stress, reduce burnout, and improve retention. Through identifying and regulating emotions and improving relationships, teachers can have a positive teaching experience. Teachers' emotional competence positively influences student engagement, motivation, behavior, well-being and learning outcomes. Teachers' emotional well-being is tied to their professional job and supporting their SEL development can reduce job challenges. Opposing viewpoints in the article written by Isbell & Miller (2023), suggest that supporting teacher SEL poses financial burdens and conflicts with other curriculum priorities. Through acknowledging the curriculum adaptations, faculty expertise, professional development, and school cultures, teachers' longevity and satisfaction will feel supported. "Teachers need social and emotional support now more than ever. We cannot expect our teachers to care for students and foster their SEL without helping teachers manage stress" (Isbell & Miller, 2023, p. 26)

Teachers continue to play a vital role in children's educational and social-emotional well-being. Teachers foster emotional regulation, guide appropriate emotional expression and facilitate social learning within their classroom climate. Positive interactions with teachers contribute to the social competence and emotional understanding. "As a result, children could be able to handle situations and interactions with others in a more positive manner that is conducive

to positive emotions” (Lam & Wong, 2017, p. 2). Teachers’ own emotional competence are essential for establishing responsive relationships with students and creating high-quality learning environments. Unfortunately, many teachers receive limited training in emotional learning and how to communicate emotional experiences. Teachers need proper explicit social-emotional training to promote social-emotional development effectively to students.

Searching for the right curriculum to implement will make a difference in helping teacher and student well-being. With the proper training, teachers can implement social-emotional learning curriculum into their everyday content. Joseph & Strain (2003) examined several different social-emotional learning curriculums to determine what is beneficial and what is not, two of these included PATHS and Second Step. Evidence suggests that children’s social and emotional competence is closely linked to their cognitive and academic competencies. Without the appropriate interventions, emotional and behavioral challenges can arise therefor teachers need to be trained to be able to effectively implement the curriculum. Through adapting evidence-based practices, educators can make informed decisions to implement social-emotional curriculum to support children’s social and emotional development.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a current social-emotional learning program that has been implemented in schools. With the implementation of this program and others like it (Second Step, Leader in Me), an examination was done with the effectiveness of these changes that took place with the implementation. These curriculums emphasize the need for highly qualified teachers and the evidence-based practices to improve academic achievement. With the implementation of these learning programs, there have been improvements in addressing behavioral issues in the classroom. With teachers participating in training in social-emotional learning curriculum, schools can ensure the well-being and success

of students. “Teachers must be empowered to build relationships with students based on trust, which will help students feel safe in school” (Plumb et al., 2016, p. 47).

In an action research plan done in South Africa, a group of educators shared their findings with social-emotional skills in the learning environment. Not all of the schools implemented a specific SEL program however the educators all found the importance. Implementing activities began to have a positive impact on student learning and engagement. Educators most frequently mentioned that the SEL skills students were using were relationship-building, self-management, and social awareness. These skills are essential for creating a positive learning environment. Educators shared how interconnected these skills were and how it allowed for meaningful bonds, fostering communication, empathy, and respect in the classroom. Through this study, educators began to recognize the importance for SEL skills in themselves. Believing that implementing SEL interventions would enhance positive classroom environments, improve educators’ efficacy, and lead to more fulfilled teaching experiences. “The voice of participating educators concurs with other studies worldwide, suggesting that educators benefit personally and professionally from being aware of, and implementing SEL interventions” (Marsay, 2022, p. 222).

In our education system, teachers face the challenge of differentiating instruction to meet the social-emotional needs of students and fostering positive relationships in the classroom. To address all of the dynamics that students face, teachers need to incorporate social-emotional learning activities that promote teamwork, empathy, and respect among students and with their teachers to facilitate academic learning. Teachers play a crucial role in promoting these skills through lessons that encourage sharing, turn-taking, empathy development, and responsibility. “It is up to us to implement tasks that build positive relationships in the classroom and to

differentiate instruction to meet the social-emotional needs of all our learners” (Vinnard, 2019, p. 39).

Teachers are significant in promoting social-emotional learning and supporting the well-being of both themselves and their students. Through explicit social-emotional learning training, teachers can develop the necessary skills to manage stress, reduce burnout, and improve retention. “Teachers must feel valued and encouraged by a professional environment that acknowledges, cares about, and fosters teachers’ social and emotional health” (Isbell & Miller, 2023, p. 20) Implementing a suitable SEL curriculum allows teachers to address emotional and behavioral challenges and improve academic outcomes. By creating a positive classroom environment through relationship-building, self-management, and social awareness, teachers foster positive relationships and meet the social-emotional needs of learners and themselves.

Implementation of Social-Emotional Learning

With social-emotional learning gaining increasing attention in the field of education, advocates are arguing the social-emotional learning is just as important as academic content. “Legislators support social-emotional learning as evidence by the passing of the Every Student Succeeds Act” (Kaspar & Massey, 2022, p. 641). Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) supports implementing social-emotional learning being a priority. With the implementation of SEL in the classrooms there are challenges. These can include time management, financial considerations, and stakeholder buy-in. To ensure proper implementation, teachers need to have training, support, create a positive learning environment, and an effective SEL curriculum. Research has shown that with proper implementation, it can significantly improve academic performance, school climate, and enhance overall well-being. “Students’ social-emotional needs should be met before expecting them to absorb and retain academic information” (Kaspar & Massey, 2022, p.

641). The beginning steps to implementation is determining a curriculum, providing professional development, gain support from stakeholders, and collect data for evaluation.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) identifies five core components: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These are the competencies that are essential for success in education, work, and life. SEL programs have been created to enhance these skills. In the research from McClelland et al. (2017), it states that longitudinal research suggests that these positive effects from SEL programs can endure for up to 15 years after completion of curriculum. In a study, it began with doing a survey to determine where students were falling in their social-emotional skills prior to implementation of lessons. After implementation, another survey was completed to see if student growth was present. McClelland et al. (2017) stated that with the implementation of an SEL program, students were able to improve in reducing emotional and behavioral problems. Students were shown to have benefited from the implementation of SEL curriculum in the classroom. The collaborative efforts that the teachers and students put into implementation of SEL were able to pay off and have a successful outcome.

Ng & Bull (2019) conducted a qualitative study on facilitating social-emotional learning in classrooms. This research has shown that social and emotional development in early childhood has significant impact on academic outcomes, future employability, and overall life satisfaction. Social and emotional competencies also enhance children's engagement and capacities in learning and leading to better academic performance. The CASEL competencies have allowed for students to understand and manage emotions, set positive goals, empathize with others, have healthy relationships, and make responsible choices. In kindergarten classrooms, these are

carried out through many various activities including whole-group lessons, learning centers, activities, and other components of the school day. Teachers have to effectively teach these skills through modeling positive behaviors, using role play, seizing teachable moments, small group activities, stories, and working with families. Previous studies identified that strategies such as tone setting and how one responds to situations can support children's social-emotional learning. Intentional teaching opportunities can enhance the students and teachers' knowledge and skills.

Successful social-emotional learning programs should be well-designed and well-conducted, incorporating developmentally and culturally appropriate strategies. Raimundo et al. (2012) conducted an action research study that covered the use of the Slowly but Steadily Program and its effectiveness. This study covered 16 teachers and how they implemented this curriculum in their classrooms with 318 students total across six different schools. Students were assessed on their emotional knowledge, social competence, anxiety, aggressiveness, social problems and the program satisfaction. The findings were that in one academic year there was growth in the social-emotional competencies. SEL programs hold a promise to promoting the competencies that social-emotional learning can provide and allow for psychological improvements among students. "Managing one's emotions and relating to others are among the greatest challenges that individuals face in life" (Raimundo et al., 2012, p. 178).

The implementation of social-emotional learning in classrooms is gaining recognition as an essential component of education. Proper implementation of SEL requires teacher training, support, positive learning environment, and an effective curriculum. Research shows that with correct implementation, SEL significantly improves school climate. Academic performance, and well-being. Teachers' efforts in implementing an SEL program will lead to successful outcomes, reducing emotional and behavioral problem. Managing emotions and relationships are critical

challenges in life and SEL programs hold a promise in addressing these challenges and promoting students' competencies.

School Profile

Community Characteristics

The rural town of Nevada, Iowa is where Nevada Community School District resides. Nevada is located in Story county in central Iowa. It is about 10 miles east of Ames, Iowa, where Iowa State University is located. In 2020, the population was 6,737 residents (DataUSA, n.d.). The median household income is \$60,144 in a community with a median age of 38.5 (DataUSA, n.d.). White is the largest ethnic group in Nevada, with 91.7% of the town's population (DataUSA, n.d.). Following is Hispanic ethnicity at 6.46% (DataUSA, n.d.). The town recognizes the school district as an exceptional resource to its residents.

School Characteristics

Nevada Community School District is a public-school district in central Iowa. The district is made up of three buildings: Central Elementary, Nevada Middle School and Nevada High School. The elementary building is preschool through fourth grade, middle school is fifth through eighth grade, and the high school is ninth through twelfth grade. There are 1,443 students enrolled in the district. The district falls under the Heartland Area Education Agency to help serve our Individualized Education Plan (IEP) learners. The district can begin school serves to three-year old's, if they meet the criteria. Otherwise, students can enter preschool at age four. At the Nevada Community School District, there are 106 full-time staff and 6 administrators. Of the staff, 93 are career teachers and 4 are beginning teachers. 89.1 of 100 staff is retained, the state average is 82.3. Teacher to student ratios are differ among the buildings, starting with

Central at 13:1, the middle school and the high school are both at 15:1 (Iowa Department of Education, 2022).

School Mission & Vision

The goal is to equip all students with the necessary competencies and skills to effectively tackle future challenges. The district prioritizes providing diverse learning opportunities to go beyond the classroom and enable students to thrive. Through a strong foundation, pathways are created for success that foster communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. The Nevada Community School District's mission statement is "Preparing Learners Today for Tomorrow" (Nevada Community School District, n.d.). The district's vision is "The Nevada Community School District is a learning community where all teachers, staff, students, and parents collaborate in the learning process to ensure success for all students" (Nevada Community School District, n.d.).

Student Characteristics

The Nevada Community School District is made up of students from the town Nevada, Iowa. The districts allow for open enrollment for students in neighboring districts. There is a total of 1,443 students enrolled in the district. At the Nevada Community School District, we have diversity among our learners. For special education services, we have 12.8% of our students on an IEP and 87.2% that are not. 4.2% of our students are English-language learners, with 95.8% not. There are 33.1% of our students from a low socio-economic status compared to 66.9% that are not. There are a few different ethnicities represented at the Nevada Community School District. Majority of our students are white (82.9%), followed by Hispanic (9.8%), Multi-

Racial (5.0%), Asian (1.1%), African American (1.0%), and finally Native American (0.1%) (Iowa Department of Education, 2022).

Student Learning Goals

Every academic year, the Nevada Community School District creates new student learning goals to work on throughout the year. The goals are set in the areas of literacy, math, and social-emotional learning. The following goals were for the 2022-2023 school year at Central Elementary. The literacy goal was, “By the end of the 2022-2023 school year, 92% of Kindergarten-Fourth grade students will meet grade level expectations or show one year of growth in reading” (Nevada Community School District, n.d.). This goal was met, with 92% of students meeting or making a year’s growth. The social-emotional learning goal states, “By the end of the 2022-2023, all classrooms will have implemented a CASEL “SElect” program and will use the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) for assessment and data driven tier 2 interventions and support” (Nevada Community School District, n.d.). At completion of the school year, all but one teacher had submitted proof of implementing a tier 1 SEL curriculum. For the DESSA assessment piece, all teachers did a screener on each student and students who qualified were given the full DESSA report with interventions in place. Finally, the math goal states, “By the end of 2022-2023, all K-4 classroom teachers will have implemented Bridges mathematics curriculum in their classrooms” (Nevada Community School District, n.d.). This goal was met and students’ goal was an 80% and the building scored an 86%.

Student Performance

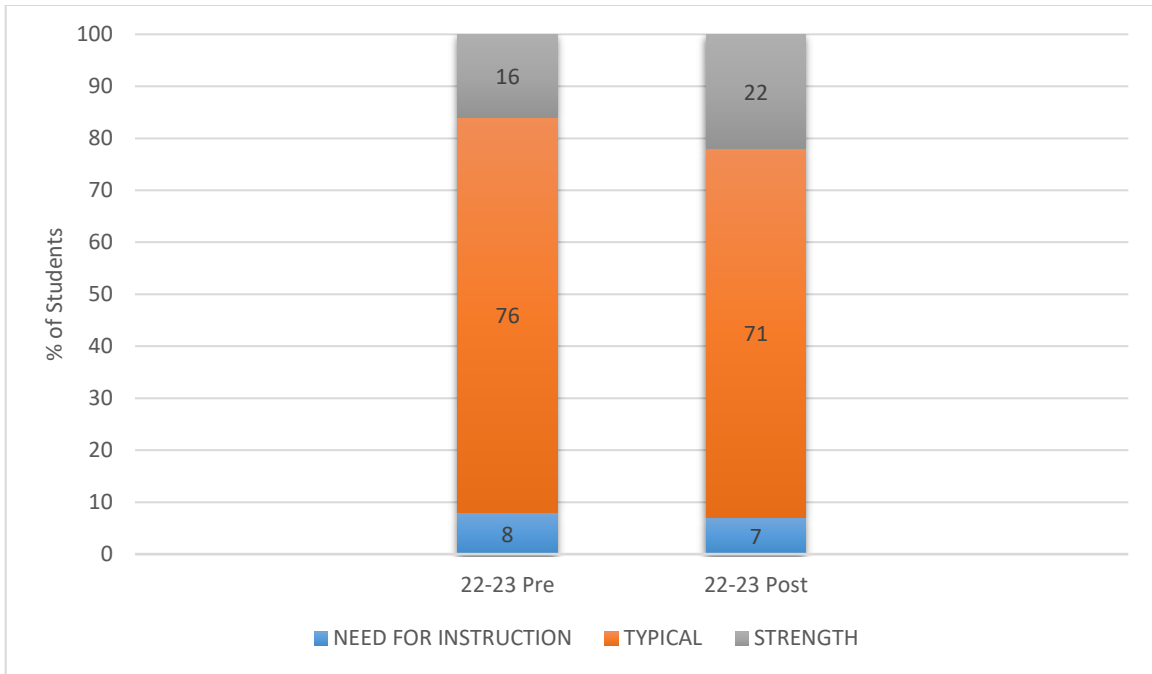
With the Nevada Community School District being comprised of multiple buildings, social emotional learning is assessed differently among grade levels. The preschool program uses

Teaching Strategies GOLD to assess student achievement. This program requires three assessments a year: fall, winter, and spring. At the end of the year, students should be aligned with their age group colored band. For preschoolers, 86.67% of students exceed the program's expectations, 6.67% of students met the goal, and 6.67% fell below the goal line. Elementary students utilize the DESSA program to conduct social-emotional assessments with students. This utilizes the five CASEL competencies and assesses each student twice a year. All students were screened and students who qualified would receive the full DESSA screening with interventions. In the pre-interventions, 8% of students needed instruction, 76% were typical among peers, and 16% were strong in SEL competence. Following the interventions, 7% had a need for instruction, 71% are typical among peers, and 22% are strong in their SEL skills. Figure 1, shows the comparison to students social and emotional competence from the start of the school year to the end.

This is the current practices utilized in the elementary, however the entire district is a Capturing Kids' Hearts district. The goal for the Capturing Kids' Hearts program is to get teachers and staff equipped in training on cultivating relational capacity, improving school culture, strengthening trust between teachers and students, building self-managing classrooms, creating accountability, improving academic performance, and fostering trauma-informed care. As stated before, preschool uses GOLD and kindergarten through fourth uses DESSA to track social-emotional growth. The middle school and high school both currently just use strategies from the Capturing Kids' Hearts program and do not have any additional SEL curriculums to evaluate their social-emotional learning.

Figure 1

DESSA Data for Overall Social and Emotional Competence in the 2022-2023 School Year



Instruction

A priority of Nevada Community School District is student learning. This is accomplished by establishing learning targets, adequate instruction, and checking for understanding. Teachers create learning goals for each curriculum area and work toward student’s achieving them. These learning goals can be created at the weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings. This group is made of teachers within the same grade level or subject. Members on this team meet to collaborate on effective teaching strategies, align curriculum and assessments, and provide support in the implementation. There are a variety of different instructional methods used to cater the diverse group of students. Teachers use traditional and innovative approaches to teaching and learning. There are collaborative learning strategies such as group work and cooperative projects. The district also embraces the use of technology by providing all students with a one-to-one device. Having diverse instructional

methods ensures that all students have the opportunity to thrive and succeed in their educational journey.

Curriculum

The preschool program uses Teaching Strategies Creative Curriculum and IGDIs to meet the needs to the students. The rest of the district utilizes the Iowa Core Standards and utilizes different curriculums (Bridges, Literacy Footprints) to meet those standards. All grade levels work together to make sure that there is a vertical alignment to ensure smooth transitions and progression of learning through their educational journey. As for social-emotional learning, there is implementation of Capturing Kids' Hearts but not daily SEL instruction built into the daily routine. Current practices implemented through Capturing Kids' Hearts is having a social contract to review daily, the use of questions with students when behaviors have appeared, and a calm down area. Additional support to this content area would be a program to teach daily lessons. This could include a role-play lesson, songs, discussions, and mindful moments.

Assessment

Assessments play an important role in the educational process. Assessments are used a tool to measures student learning and progress, as well as the effectiveness of teaching methods. Assessments are different for each grade level and subject area. The two types of assessments are formative and summative. Formative assessments are done during a unit, such as a quiz or discussion. Summative assessments are completed at the end of instruction, such as a standardized test to provide the students' overall understanding of a topic. Teachers report three times a year to how students are doing based on assessments in all curriculum areas. These reports reflect mostly on the summative assessment of a content area. An example being in

preschool there is grade on the understanding of letter knowledge. The district uses a standards reference grading scale ranging from 1 (beginning) to 4 (exceeding). Below is an example of how report cards are marked. This grading scale allows for the communication of growth and mastery among the standards. Teachers use the assessment data to adjust instruction, identify areas of strength and improvement, and tailor interventions for support.

Table 1

Nevada Community School District Grading Scale

Skills indicate end of year expectations	
4	Exceeds Expectations
3	Meets Expectation
2	Progressing Towards Expectation
1	Improvements Needed
(-)	Areas Not Assessed

Professional Development Practices

The Nevada Community School District has a 90-minute late start every Monday morning to provide professional learning developments for teachers. At the start of the school year, the district kicks off with “Nevada-U”. This is an opportunity for educators to have a variety of different professional development sessions in two-days on-campus. Teachers are also organized into collaborative teams by their subject or grade level. The Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings occur weekly to discuss assessment practices, instructional methods, and student growth. The district will support any professional development ideas that educators present. The district takes pride in educator growth.

Parent Involvement

The Nevada Community District has many families to communicate with throughout the school year. To begin, each parent receives a weekly email from their students' principal with any upcoming events and news to share. Each classroom teacher communicates with parents in the way that best works for them. Common practices are email, Seesaw, Class Dojo, and Facebook class pages. The preschool program conducts home visits prior to each school year to have parents, teacher, classroom para, and child meet. All three buildings conduct a back to school night prior to the first day of the school year for students to see their classroom and mingle with the teacher and peers. All three buildings offer parent-teacher conferences in the fall and spring for parents and the teacher to discuss student growth. The district also has a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) that is open to all parents. The PTA plans all the extra school events and fundraisers throughout the school year (carnival, book fairs, ect.).

Needs Assessment

Nevada Community School District is working towards improving school culture and student success through social-emotional learning. Central Elementary has begun to implement social-emotional learning instruction, allowing for weekly SEL activities. For a SEL program to be fully integrated and successful, more time must be provided for the program (Dowling & Berry, 2020). Implementing activities and lessons once a week will not yield desirable results. Through implementing daily social-emotional instruction, the desired results that research supports will be met through higher achievement and low behavioral issues. Programs like Second Step will provide higher quality of social-emotional learning implementation and offer daily curriculum. As shown in the DESSA data in Figure 1 above, there are positive results for the students that got the full interventions grew emotionally. With all students fully being able to participate in a social-emotional learning curriculum, the goal of this school improvement plan is

to have high quality implementation of an SEL program to improve student behavior and academic success.

The district currently acknowledges the effectiveness of the Capturing Kids' Hearts program, which emphasizes the development of relationship between teacher and students. However, in order to provide every student with an opportunity for emotional growth, it is necessary to fully implement a SEL curriculum across all grade levels. Enhancing implementation can be achieved by integrating SEL lessons into the existing curriculum of specific subjects. This approach allows for more dedicated time for students to learn and ensures greater commitment from teachers, who can then incorporate SEL content into their own lessons. By implementing a comprehensive SEL program, particularly at the elementary level, the district aims to improve relationships and serve as a role model for students in their emotional responses. Ultimately, these SEL programs will equip students with the skills to recognize and cultivate confidence in their own abilities.

Data Analysis

Data Summary

At Central Elementary, social contracts play an integral role in the students' daily routine which is shown through the relationships built between students and teachers. "Teachers saw benefits of utilizing CKH by its impact on their teaching style and strong connections with students by building relationships intentionally each day" (Nail, 2021, p.63). As part of the Capturing Kids' Hearts program, each classroom collaboratively creates its own social contract, fostering a strong sense of community among the students and teachers. This agreement serves as a guide for classroom behavior throughout the school year and is referred to regularly as a gentle reminder of the commitments made. In addition to the social contract, teachers and

students work together to establish the consequences that will be enforced should anyone violate the terms of the agreement. This collaborative approach ensures that everyone has a stake in maintaining a positive learning environment.

To support the students' social-emotional development, teachers dedicate one whole-group lesson each week. These lessons are designed to address various social and emotional aspects, nurturing their growth in these essential areas. To measure students' progress in social-emotional development, teachers employ the DESSA assessment twice a year, fall and spring. This screener assessment helps identify students who may benefit from additional support. For those identified, a comprehensive DESSA report with personalized interventions is provided, helping them thrive academically and emotionally. Figure 2 below shows where students started in the five CASEL competencies.

Figure 2

Pre-Assessment in DESSA Social and Emotional Competencies in the 2022-2023 School Year

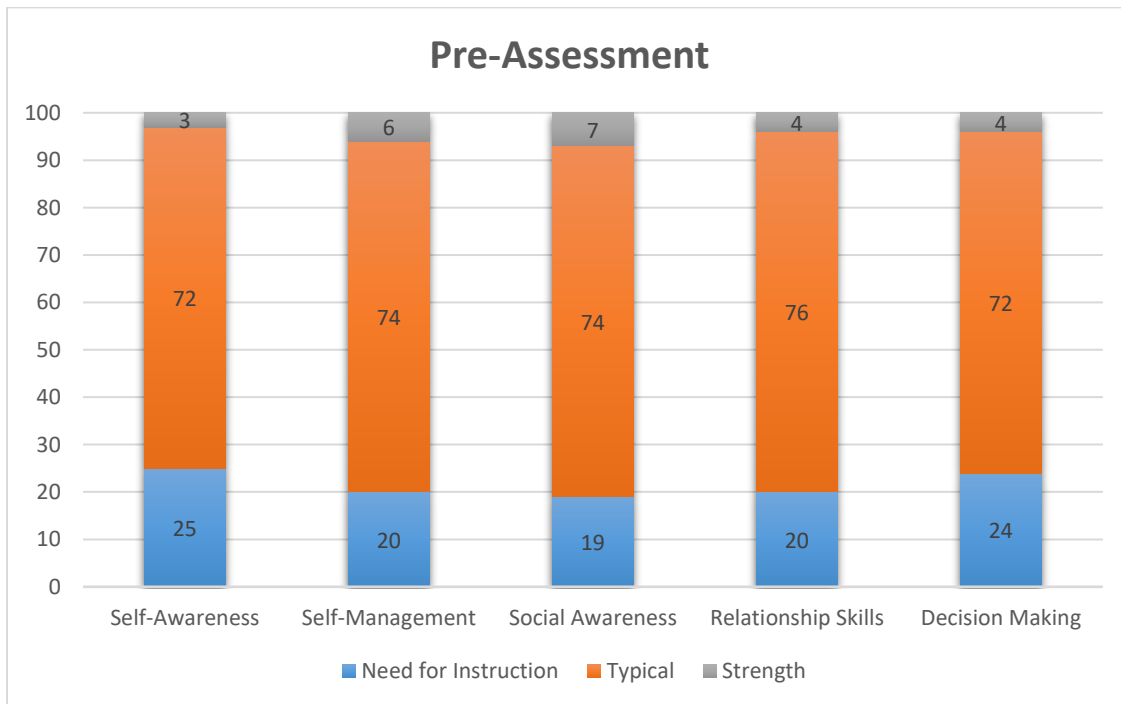
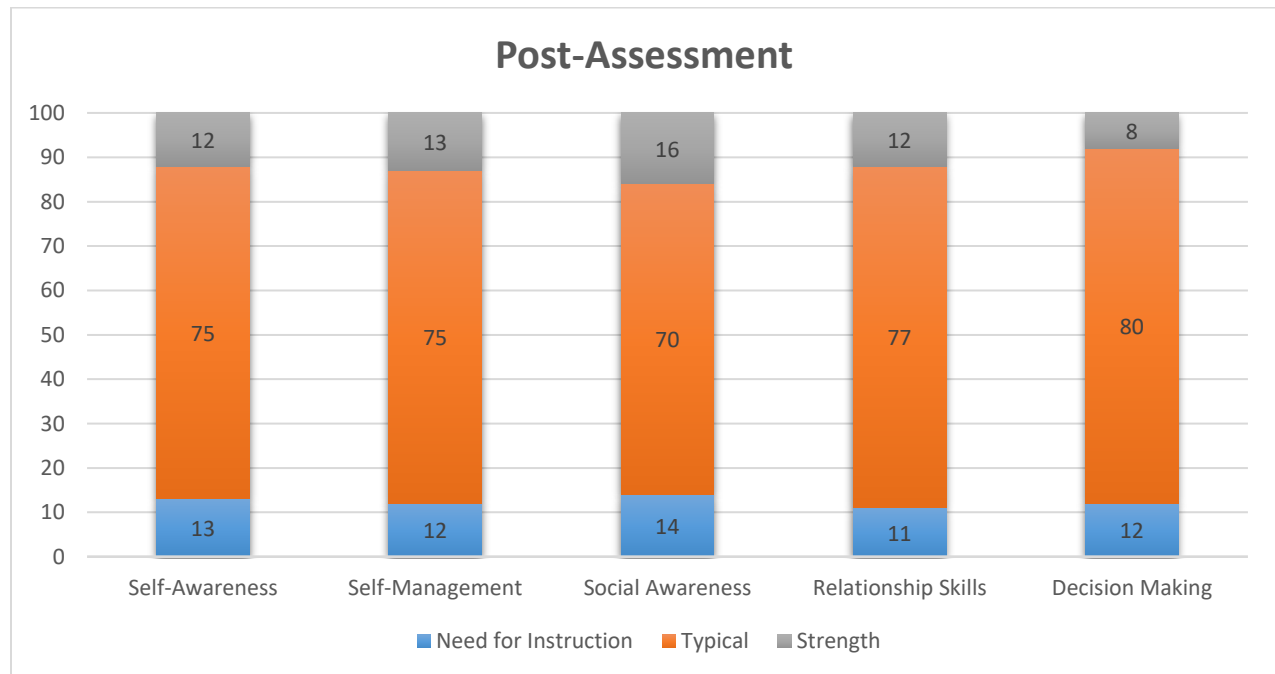


Figure 3 provides a compelling visual representation of the slight growth observed in students' social-emotional development throughout the school year. This positive trend can be attributed to the consistent and impactful social-emotional instruction that takes place once a week. While the growth may seem slight at first glance, it is important to recognize that fostering social-emotional learning is a gradual and iterative process, and even small improvements can have a profound long-term effect on students' overall development. The data in Figure 3 reinforces the value of dedicating time and resources to social-emotional education, ensuring that students have the necessary tools and support to navigate their emotions, build healthy relationships, and flourish academically and beyond.

Figure 3

Post-Assessment in DESSA Social and Emotional Competencies in the 2022-2023 School Year



School Strengths

Central Elementary excels in its teachers' adaptability and commitment to meeting the diverse needs of their students. Every student at the school is provided with the necessary resources and opportunities to assess and enhance their social-emotional learning. A pivotal factor in fostering a supportive learning environment is the daily check-ins between students and teachers, as seen with their social contracts. These regular interactions lay the foundation for positive and meaningful relationships, which greatly contribute to students' overall well-being and academic success. The school's weekly social-emotional lessons have proven to be highly effective in engaging students. This is evident when comparing the data presented in Figures 2 and 3. The results demonstrate that students have the potential for remarkable growth in their social-emotional skills. As students receive more exposure to these valuable lessons, their progress in this area can become even more pronounced. The school's dedication to promoting social-emotional development ensures that students are empowered to thrive personally and academically. By offering various opportunities for growth and consistently adapting their approaches, the school creates a nurturing environment where students can truly flourish.

School Challenges

Adapting to a daily social-emotional curriculum poses a significant challenge for teachers, primarily due to the demands of their already tight schedules. Currently, students receive social-emotional instruction on a weekly basis, so transitioning to daily sessions would necessitate substantial scheduling adjustments, potentially affecting other aspects of the academic program. Intertwining social-emotional curriculum with existing subject areas presents an additional challenge. While this integration holds the promise of a more immersive learning experience for students, it requires careful planning and coordination among teachers to ensure a seamless and coherent approach across all subjects. Although the current data indicates positive

growth in students' social-emotional skills, it stands to reason that more frequent instruction would likely yield even greater progress. However, implementing a daily program will require teachers to undergo additional training and gain sufficient practice in delivering effective social-emotional lessons.

Despite the obstacles, the potential benefits of a daily social-emotional curriculum are considerable. By addressing scheduling concerns, fostering collaboration among teachers, and investing in training, educators can create a more enriching learning environment that nurtures students' emotional well-being and fosters their overall development. With dedication and preparation, teachers can rise to meet these challenges and provide their students with a comprehensive and transformative educational experience.

Assessment Options

To obtain a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of social-emotional learning instruction, conducting surveys among both staff and students can be instrumental. These surveys can serve as valuable tools to gauge staff perceptions on the value and feasibility of implementing social-emotional learning. Additionally, student survey questions can provide insights into how students perceive the lessons' value and impact on their overall development. Furthermore, continuing with the DESSA assessments would be highly beneficial in tracking the growth of students in social-emotional learning over time. These assessments offer a quantifiable measure of progress and can provide valuable data for each of the CASEL competencies. By utilizing all the gathered data, a more profound understanding can be gained regarding the effectiveness of the social-emotional learning implementation. The combination of staff and student perspectives, along with objective DESSA assessment results, allows for a comprehensive evaluation of a program's success. This data-driven approach will enable

educators and administrators to make informed decisions and further enhance the social-emotional learning initiatives for the betterment of all students.

Action Plan

Strategy

The action plan for the implementation of a social-emotional learning curriculum encompasses several essential strategies. Firstly, a thorough needs assessment will be conducted to identify specific areas where social-emotional learning can have the most significant impact within the school community. This will be done through the DESSA screening with each student. The school will commit to fostering a positive and supportive social-emotional learning environment, emphasizing core competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making for each grade level. To equip teachers and staff effectively, professional development opportunities will be provided, enhancing their understanding of SEL concepts and evidence-based practices.

Secondly, the comprehensive plan will strategically center around generating widespread awareness regarding the invaluable advantages of social-emotional learning. By fostering open and engaging discussions and facilitating the sharing of compelling research and evidence, all relevant stakeholders will be enlightened about the transformative power of SEL on various crucial aspects of individual growth and development. This includes its profound impact on enhancing academic performance, promoting significant behavioral improvements, cultivating emotional resilience, and fostering the development of essential interpersonal skills. As exemplified by Ching Ng and Bull (2018), empirical evidence demonstrates that social-emotional curriculums have consistently yielded positive outcomes on academic achievements (p. 337). Through the dissemination of such noteworthy findings, the plan aims to inspire and

encourage widespread adoption of SEL practices, thereby cultivating a generation of well-rounded, socially adept, and academically thriving individuals who are better equipped to navigate life's challenges and contribute positively to society as a whole.

The teacher's role will be pivotal in the implementation process. A comprehensive training program will be designed to equip teachers with the necessary skills for delivering effective social-emotional learning lessons. To foster a supportive culture, collaboration among teachers will be encouraged, providing opportunities to share best practices, challenges, and successes related to SEL. Ongoing coaching and mentoring will support teachers' growth and confidence in implementing SEL strategies. Teachers will be encouraged to model social-emotional skills and behaviors, reinforcing the importance of SEL in the school environment.

Lastly, a structured and well-sequenced curriculum will be utilized, catering to the unique needs of different grade levels and student needs. Social-emotional learning will be integrated into various aspects of the school day, including morning meetings, whole group lessons, and subject-specific lessons, to reinforce its importance and practical application. Students will have opportunities to practice and apply social-emotional skills through role-plays, group discussions, and cooperative learning activities. Regular assessment and progress monitoring will track students' social-emotional development, identifying areas that may require additional support. Upon comparing the data presented in Figure 2 with that of Figure 3, clear indications of growth in the five competencies emerge. It is evident that with a more deliberate and purposeful implementation, students can anticipate even more substantial progress in these competencies.

By implementing these comprehensive strategies, the action plan aims to establish a strong foundation for social-emotional learning, showcasing its benefits and empowering teachers as facilitators to ensure successful and sustainable integration throughout the school

environment. This approach provides students with the necessary support to thrive emotionally, academically, and in their interpersonal relationships. By fostering a nurturing and inclusive atmosphere that values emotional intelligence and interpersonal development, students will gain essential life skills, such as self-awareness, empathy, resilience, and responsible decision-making. The plan's focus on sustainability and lasting effects aims to cultivate a generation of well-rounded individuals who are academically competent and emotionally intelligent, contributing to a brighter and more harmonious future for society. Through adept implementation, teachers guide students in developing healthy coping mechanisms and effective communication skills, fostering personal growth and resilience. Embracing SEL as a fundamental part of the educational journey instills emotional intelligence, enabling students to navigate relationships and conflicts with maturity and empathy, ultimately positively impacting their academic performance and overall well-being.

Steps to Solve the Problem

The complete implementation of the Second Step program at Central Elementary will follow a structured approach to ensure its effectiveness and impact. The process will commence in August 2023. One of the crucial initial steps is to secure approval and unwavering support from key stakeholders within the school community, including the administration, curriculum specialists, and dedicated classroom teachers. Their buy-in and commitment to the program will be instrumental in its success. In the 2023-2024 academic year, the focus will primarily be on the development and comprehensive training of the staff in the Second Step curriculum. This training will equip teachers with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to effectively implement the program in their classrooms. Teachers will be educated on the program's objectives, instructional strategies, and how to incorporate social-emotional learning activities

into their lessons. This will begin at the start of professional development days at the beginning on the school year. From the professional development, teachers will customize their schedules to be re-structured to accommodate and integrate the Second Step program seamlessly into the daily learning routine for the subsequent year. This careful consideration of scheduling ensures that the program becomes an integral part of the students' daily educational experiences, allowing them to receive consistent and meaningful social-emotional learning opportunities.

By methodically preparing and empowering all stakeholders, Central Elementary aims to establish a successful and impactful implementation of the Second Step program. The comprehensive training and preparation of teachers, along with the strategic integration of the curriculum into the daily schedule, demonstrate the school's commitment to nurturing a positive and nurturing learning environment. Ultimately, the goal is to create an atmosphere where students feel supported, emotionally secure, and equipped with essential social-emotional skills that contribute to their overall well-being and academic success. By laying this strong foundation, Central Elementary endeavors to create a lasting positive impact on its students' lives and foster a culture of emotional intelligence and compassionate interpersonal relationships throughout the school community.

Implementation of School Improvement Plan

When embarking on the implementation of a school improvement plan, numerous crucial variables warrant consideration. These encompass the time required to complete the improvement plan, potential challenges that may arise during its execution, and the roles of all stakeholders involved in ensuring the plan's success. Allocating ample time for training teachers and staff in social-emotional learning is of utmost importance. Without sufficient training, Central Elementary staff may lack the necessary resources to execute the improvement plan

successfully. Therefore, prioritizing comprehensive training and ongoing coaching for teachers throughout the process will strengthen their readiness and confidence in implementing the new social-emotional curriculum.

The initial step in this school improvement plan is professional development training for teachers at the start of the 2023-2024 academic year. This ensures that every teacher at Central Elementary is well-prepared to integrate the new curriculum seamlessly. “Educators benefit personally and professionally from being aware of, and implementing SEL interventions” (Marsay, 2022, p. 222). Subsequently, collaborative teaching teams, working alongside the instructional coach and principal, will engage in weekly meetings of discussing how the social-emotional skills being taught will progressively build upon one another. As Vinnard (2019) notes, “It is up to us to implement tasks that build positive relationships in the classroom and to differentiate instruction to meet the social-emotional needs of all our learners” (p.39). The next phase involves a six-week implementation of these new strategies, facilitated with support and modeling from the instructional coach. To monitor progress and identify any difficulties or changes in behaviors and academics, regular progress monitoring and collaborative teaching team discussions will be held for a minimum of two years.

However, this school improvement plan is not without potential barriers. One of the most critical factors to consider is securing approval and support from the principal or school leadership. The principal's endorsement serves as a pillar in driving and sustaining the successful implementation of the proposed implementation of social-emotional curriculum. Without their enthusiastic backing and commitment to the plan's vision, it may be challenging to garner the necessary resources, allocate time for professional development, and foster a school-wide culture that prioritizes social-emotional learning. To overcome this barrier, it is essential to engage in

open communication with the principal, articulating the rationale and evidence supporting the proposed strategies. Sharing research and case studies from other schools that have successfully integrated social-emotional learning can provide valuable insights and build a compelling case for the potential benefits of the plan. Additionally, emphasizing the alignment of these strategies with the school's mission and vision can help demonstrate how they complement the overall educational objectives.

Another crucial obstacle to navigate is ensuring teacher readiness to embrace and effectively implement the proposed strategies. Teachers play a central role in the success of any educational initiative, and their dedication in delivering social-emotional learning experiences are pivotal to its impact on students. However, integrating new approaches into their teaching practice may encounter resistance or hesitation from some educators. To address this challenge, providing comprehensive and ongoing professional development tailored to the specific needs of teachers is essential. The training should not only focus on the theoretical aspects of social-emotional learning but also offer practical, hands-on strategies and activities that teachers can easily incorporate into their classrooms. By offering support and resources, such as sample lesson plans, coaching, and peer collaboration opportunities, teachers can gain the confidence and competence necessary to embrace the new approach effectively. Recognizing and celebrating successes, no matter how small, can build confidence and motivate teachers to further engage with the strategies.

This school improvement plan holds tremendous promise for enhancing the social-emotional development of students and fostering a positive learning environment, it is crucial to acknowledge and proactively address potential barriers. Securing support from the principal and ensuring teacher readiness are foundational steps in navigating these challenges. Through

effective communication, research-based evidence, and tailored professional development, the plan can pave the way for a successful and transformative integration of social-emotional learning at the school, benefiting both teachers and students alike. By fostering a collaborative and supportive environment, the school community can work together to overcome obstacles, ensuring the plan's lasting impact and paving the way for a more emotionally intelligent and empowered generation of students. By considering these variables and addressing potential challenges proactively, Central Elementary can pave the way for a successful school improvement plan, providing students with a nurturing and supportive learning environment that fosters both their academic and social-emotional development.

Timeline

The school improvement plan is thoughtfully designed to span an entire academic year, allowing for a systematic and comprehensive approach to enhance social-emotional learning at Central Elementary. It encompasses a series of critical steps carefully crafted to ensure effective implementation and long-term success. Each phase is strategically planned with thoughtful consideration, ensuring that the introduction, integration, and evaluation of the strategies are given the necessary time and space to be embraced and internalized by both teachers and students. Regular progress monitoring and assessment are also integral to the plan, recognizing the importance of consistent reinforcement and ongoing evaluation. By adopting this approach, Central Elementary aims to lay a solid foundation for a nurturing and empowering educational environment that prepares students for sustained success in their academic pursuits and personal growth.

The first phase involves assessing teacher readiness through a survey distributed to all teachers, with two days provided for their responses. Subsequently, the principal dedicates one

week to carefully review and analyze the survey results, identifying patterns and key insights. During this time, the building leadership team invests two weeks in determining appropriate professional development training days for the full implementation of a social-emotional curriculum training. The heart of the plan lies in the social-emotional curriculum training provided to teachers. Equipped with the knowledge of what social-emotional learning entails at the elementary level, teachers can confidently proceed to the next phase.

During this pivotal phase of the school improvement plan, the principal and instructional coach embark on a dedicated two-week collaborative effort with each teaching team at Central Elementary. The objective is to establish a seamless and harmonious vertical alignment of social-emotional skills that will resonate throughout students' entire educational journey. By engaging in in-depth discussions and purposeful planning with each teaching team, the principal and instructional coach carefully identify how the social-emotional skills taught in different grade levels can build upon one another, forming a cohesive and progressive growth trajectory for students as they advance through the school years. This strategic alignment not only ensures that foundational skills cultivated in early grades complement and enrich the more advanced skills introduced in later grades but also fosters a deep sense of continuity and consistency in students' social-emotional development. The mutual exchange of insights and experiences during these two weeks fosters a spirit of collaboration, shared ownership, and a collective commitment to students' growth.

Upon the completion of the two-week collaborative planning phase, teachers at Central Elementary embark on a transformative four-week implementation of carefully designed social-emotional learning strategies within their classrooms. Drawing upon the insights gained during collaborative planning and comprehensive training, educators create dynamic and engaging

learning environments that foster the social and emotional growth of their students.

Simultaneously, the instructional coach conducts coaching cycles, providing personalized guidance, support, and feedback to ensure the strategies are implemented effectively and with fidelity. This ongoing support empowers teachers to establish positive and nurturing classroom environments, where students feel safe, supported, and encouraged to thrive emotionally and academically.

The implementation and coaching cycles will span one semester, marking the initial stage of program implementation. Progress monitoring and coaching will then continue throughout the remainder of the academic year, ensuring the sustained success and growth of the program. Periodic re-evaluation will be undertaken as necessary to ensure continuous improvement and alignment with evolving needs and goals. By adopting this well-structured and deliberate approach, the school improvement plan aims to create a lasting impact on students' social-emotional development and foster a nurturing learning environment at Central Elementary for years to come.

Table 2

Central Elementary SEL Implementation Tentative Plan

Time Frame	Action
August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acquire schoolboard approval - Send out teacher survey - Building leadership team determines professional development course of action

<p>September 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement professional development with teachers during Monday PD times - Learning teams collaborate with instructional coaches on implementation
<p>October 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers begin daily implementation of SEL curriculum in their classrooms - Coaches check-in frequently for advice, guidance, feedback - Do initial assessment of student SEL strengths
<p>November 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementations continue - Teachers continue meeting for support and discussions with their teams and coach
<p>December 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementations continue - Teachers continue meeting for support and discussions with their teams and coach
<p>Spring 2024 Semester</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Check-in with coaches and teams as needed - Post-implementation assessment of student SEL strengths - Review data to determine effectiveness
<p>2024-2025 School Year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue with implementation based on effectiveness - Continue with professional development and learning team discussions

Resources

Instructional coaches and teachers must attend the comprehensive training for the Second Step program, as it plays a pivotal role in ensuring the successful implementation and fidelity of the program. This training equips educators with a deeper understanding of the program's principles and methodologies, enabling them to teach and model social-emotional learning effectively. To support the implementation process, acquiring a subscription to the Second Step website and curriculum set becomes essential, as it provides a wealth of valuable activities, lessons, materials, and visuals that enrich the learning experience. Finally, allowing dedicated time for teachers to plan the integration of the program into their curriculum becomes crucial, enabling them to tailor the Second Step program seamlessly into their classroom practices and create a harmonious alignment between academic and social-emotional learning goals.

Role Clarifications and Assignments

For the successful implementation of the social-emotional curriculum at Central Elementary, a collaborative effort involving multiple individuals assuming additional roles and responsibilities will be crucial. The first component of the plan involves the building leadership team, comprising representatives from each collaborative teaching team, the special education resource teacher, the instructional coach, and the principal. This team will play a central role in designing the professional development calendar for the social-emotional curriculum training, ensuring a well-structured and comprehensive approach. Their collective expertise will guarantee an organized approach and can lay the groundwork for implementation of the new school-wide curriculum.

In the following phase of the school improvement plan, collaborative teaching teams, organized by grade levels, will meet with the principal and instructional coach to establish a hierarchy of essential social-emotional skills to be taught, ensuring a seamless growth for students. The instructional coach and principal take on additional responsibilities, leading professional development trainings to equip teachers with the necessary knowledge and tools for effective SEL instruction. They also provide ongoing support and coaching, fostering continuous improvement in the implementation of the social-emotional curriculum. This collaborative approach fosters a supportive school culture where SEL is embraced as an integral part of the educational experience, nurturing students' emotional intelligence and resilience. By engaging in this multifaceted role, the instructional coach and principal reinforce the commitment to fostering a transformative educational experience that equips students with essential life skills for long-term success at Central Elementary.

Teachers play a central and indispensable role in this transformative process, holding the key to successful implementation of the social-emotional learning initiatives. It is paramount that they actively engage in the professional development trainings, absorbing the wealth of knowledge and best practices presented during these sessions. Armed with this newfound expertise, teachers bear the vital responsibility of effectively relaying this valuable information to their classroom paraprofessionals, ensuring a cohesive and well-informed approach to SEL implementation throughout the entire school community. As facilitators of student growth, teachers are entrusted with the pivotal task of bringing the newly acquired curriculum to life within their classrooms. They create nurturing and supportive learning environments that prioritize social-emotional development, allowing students to thrive emotionally and academically. Through their dedication and expertise, teachers empower their students to acquire

essential life skills, fostering empathy, resilience, self-awareness, and responsible decision-making, setting them on a path towards lifelong success and personal fulfillment.

By fostering a well-coordinated team effort that involves administrators, coaches, teachers, parents, and students, Central Elementary is committed to implementing the social-emotional curriculum effectively. Each individual, including educators, parents, and students, plays a designated role in this transformative journey. Teachers actively engage in professional development trainings, assimilating valuable knowledge and strategies, which they share with their classroom paraprofessionals to ensure a consistent and comprehensive approach to SEL implementation. They create nurturing and supportive learning environments that prioritize social-emotional growth, enabling students to thrive emotionally and academically. Parents are actively involved in the process, being informed about the SEL initiatives, and encouraged to support their children's social-emotional development at home. Students actively participate in the curriculum, learning essential life skills such as empathy, resilience, and responsible decision-making. Through the collective dedication and commitment of all stakeholders, Central Elementary endeavors to create a positive and thriving educational environment, enriching the lives of its young learners and preparing them for long-term success and personal fulfillment.

Progress Monitoring

To ensure effective monitoring and evaluation of the social-emotional curriculum's implementation, each teacher will diligently maintain weekly anecdotal records. Students will also continue to use the DESSA screening assessment to track their growth. These records will serve as a valuable tool to identify both successes and challenges encountered during the curriculum delivery, as well as track changes in students' behavior and academic progress. Additionally, any areas requiring further clarification will be duly noted for timely adjustments.

During weekly collaborative teaching team meetings with the instructional coach and principal, teachers will bring forth their anecdotal records for collective review and discussion. This collaborative approach aims to identify patterns and trends over time, facilitating a comprehensive assessment of the curriculum's impact.

At the conclusion of the first year, teachers will participate in an additional survey to evaluate their increased comfort level with teaching social-emotional learning. The building leadership team will carefully analyze these survey results, comparing them with the data collected prior to the curriculum's implementation. This comparison will yield valuable insights into the program's efficacy, shedding light on its impact on teacher readiness and confidence in delivering social-emotional instruction. By leveraging this data-driven approach, Central Elementary can make informed decisions, further refine the program, and celebrate the positive progress achieved in nurturing a supportive and nurturing learning environment for its students.

By adopting a data-driven and reflective approach, Central Elementary demonstrates its unwavering commitment to continuous improvement in social-emotional learning. This evidence-based evaluation process enables the school to gain valuable insights into the effectiveness of the curriculum and its impact on students' emotional well-being and academic success. By carefully analyzing the data, the school can identify areas of strength and areas that may require further attention or refinement. This iterative process of assessment and enhancement ensures that the social-emotional curriculum remains relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of students and the school community. Through this proactive and adaptive approach, Central Elementary creates a dynamic and nurturing learning environment that empowers students to thrive.

Limitations

The school improvement plan may encounter potential limitations that warrant careful consideration. Firstly, ensuring that all teachers receive sufficient training within the current academic year while allowing ample time for implementation could pose a challenge. Striking the right balance between comprehensive training and practical application of new strategies within classrooms will be critical to the plan's success. Another limitation lies in the willingness of teachers to embrace the new curriculum and allocate adequate time within their schedules to effectively teach these essential social-emotional skills. The success of the plan hinges on teachers' commitment to implementing the curriculum with fidelity. Any deviation from the intended implementation could compromise the reliability of the results and may not align with findings from other studies conducted in the same field.

To address these potential limitations, a well-structured and phased approach to training can be employed, prioritizing essential concepts and providing ongoing support throughout the implementation process. Additionally, fostering a positive and supportive school culture, where teachers are encouraged and empowered to embrace the new curriculum, will be instrumental in ensuring its successful adoption. Moreover, open communication channels between teachers, instructional coaches, and school leadership will facilitate continuous feedback and address any challenges that may arise. Regular progress monitoring and collaborative discussions will allow for timely adjustments and enhancements to the implementation plan.

By acknowledging and proactively addressing the potential limitations, Central Elementary demonstrates its commitment to creating a successful integration of the social-emotional curriculum. By anticipating and navigating potential hurdles, the school establishes a strong foundation for nurturing a supportive and inclusive learning environment that benefits all students. Through a thoughtful and proactive approach, Central Elementary ensures that social-

emotional learning becomes an integral part of the educational experience, empowering students with essential life skills, emotional intelligence, and resilience. This comprehensive strategy paves the way for a transformative educational journey, where students thrive emotionally, academically, and personally, becoming well-rounded individuals equipped to navigate the challenges of the future with confidence and compassion.

Conclusion

Social-emotional curriculums and learning have garnered strong support from research studies, highlighting their manifold benefits, such as fostering enduring peer relationships and promoting positive behavior and school climate. Chin Ng and Bull (2018) observed that social-emotional competence directly influences an individual's relationships within their immediate environment, which, in turn, impacts the availability of learning resources. This underscores the pivotal role that emotional intelligence plays not only in personal development but also in optimizing the educational experience. Thus, for schools to fully reap the advantages of social-emotional learning, it is imperative to implement a well-structured social-emotional curriculum with fidelity.

Considering the data indicating that social-emotional development is an area of need for students at Central Elementary, and with research supporting the potential of a social-emotional curriculum to enhance skills in this domain, the development of such a curriculum stands as a valuable asset. This targeted approach not only addresses a critical need but also lays the groundwork for a well-rounded education that nurtures students. By ensuring its faithful implementation, the school can expect to witness improvements in student scores and reap the multiple benefits that social-emotional learning offers, both within and beyond the school setting. By embracing a data-driven and research-supported approach, Central Elementary can cultivate a

nurturing learning environment that empowers its students to thrive emotionally, socially, and academically, fostering not only academic success but also life-long well-being and resilience. In light of extensive research endorsing the merits of social-emotional curriculums and their impact on various aspects of education, it is evident that the implementation of this program holds immense potential. Studies have consistently shown that social-emotional curriculums contribute to the development of lasting peer relationships, cultivation of positive behaviors, and the creation of a conducive school atmosphere.

Given the clear data indicating a pertinent need for enhancing social-emotional skills among students at Central Elementary, coupled with research affirming the efficacy of a targeted curriculum in this realm, the implementation of the curriculum holds exceptional value. By steadfastly upholding its proper implementation, the school not only addresses a critical gap in students' development but also sets the stage for tangible improvements in student performance, thus fostering an environment where both academic and personal growth flourish. This approach not only equips students with essential life skills but also unlocks the manifold advantages that social-emotional learning affords, both within the school's confines and in the broader spectrum of students' lives, contributing to their overall well-being and success in various life contexts.

By firmly anchoring the approach in data-driven insights and aligning it with well-established research, Central Elementary demonstrates its commitment to fostering a nurturing educational environment that evolves with the evolving needs of its students. This proactive stance not only enables students to flourish emotionally, socially, and academically but also equips them with indispensable life skills that extend well beyond the classroom, empowering them to navigate complexities in the world beyond school walls. In embracing this comprehensive approach, Central Elementary positions itself to become a dynamic catalyst for

positive change, nurturing well-rounded individuals who are not only academically proficient but also emotionally resilient and socially adept. This concerted effort holds the promise of shaping a brighter future for both its students and the broader community, forging a path towards a more empathetic, capable, and harmonious society.

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