Using an Interoception-Based Curriculum for Social-Emotional Learning in Preschool to increase Emotional Regulation

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Capstone Project: A School Improvement Plan

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Abstract

This paper presents a school improvement plan aimed at implementing and integrated interoception-based curriculum for social-emotional learning (SEL) in preschool classrooms, with the goal of fostering emotional regulation skills among young children. Drawing on recent research emphasizing the significance of SEL from early childhood through adolescence, this plan addresses the need for explicit teaching of emotional awareness and regulation in preschool settings. The proposed curriculum integrates interoception-based activities to enhance children’s ability to recognize and respond to internal bodily sensations and emotions. Through a review of relevant literature and personal classroom experience, this paper explores the foundations and practical implications of interoception-focused interventions for SEL. By implementing an interoception-based curriculum, educators aim to increase emotional awareness and regulation in preschoolers, laying the foundation for lifelong social-emotional well-being.

Keywords: interoception, social-emotional learning, preschool, emotional regulation, early childhood education, mindfulness, restorative practices, emotional awareness, self-regulation
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In recent years, and more increasingly since the pandemic, we have seen a push for Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) in schools. This push starts at the early childhood level through grade twelve and beyond. Research shows that children who are provided systematic support for SEL early in their school experience demonstrate long-term positive outcomes (Steed, Shapland, & Leech, 2022). While the opposing position might be that social-emotional learning is too progressive, children need to learn the social-emotional skills necessary for emotional regulation, executive functioning, interacting with others, and emotional intelligence to become productive community members in the future. With so many options for SEL programs, it is hard to know where to start. Educators, students, and parents hear so many buzzwords related to the topic of SEL it can become confusing and overwhelming. SEL is a complex topic. Children need various social-emotional skills to become emotionally aware and develop the ability to regulate their emotions. School-aged children who struggle with emotional regulation often have a hard time regulating their classroom behaviors, leading to decreases in classroom participation and academic achievement (Hample, Mahler, & Amspacher 2020). The problem is young children need to be explicitly taught to identify their emotions and body signals before they can regulate their emotions.

The purpose of this school improvement plan is to implement an integrated interoception-based curriculum for social-emotional learning in our preschool classrooms to support the district's shift toward a restorative approach to behaviors. During my first couple of years teaching preschool, I implemented a daily feeling check-in to support the social-emotional learning of my students. As a transition activity from circle time to line up each student would
use visuals to identify if they were feeling happy, sad, or mad that day. This is a class of three-year-old students so I felt that 3 common emotions would be a great place to start. I quickly found that the students would often always answer with happy. This sounds like a great problem to have if all of my students are happy, but I knew that this was not the case. I also wanted students to increase their emotional awareness, be able to describe how they were feeling, and regulate their emotions. As time went on, I found that students would pick any emotion at random. For example, they may pick sad because they wanted a hug and they thought being sad would get them a hug. I noticed that some would pick mad and then giggle because they found this to be funny. I spoke with some colleagues about this issue and how I wanted to implement more explicit social-emotional learning in our classroom.

A member of the Autism Team from the local AEA suggested the use of *The Interoception Curriculum.* (Mahler, 2019) This curriculum is suggested for developing mindful self-regulation, which requires emotional awareness. Through this curriculum, students gain interoception skills. Interoception is the ability to notice and connect bodily sensations with emotions. In discussing this with my colleague I felt that I could potentially solve two struggles I was facing in my classroom and building. I could incorporate some explicit social-emotional learning while helping children potentially increase their emotional awareness and regulation.

Research for this literature review utilized both Google Scholar and the DeWitt Library at Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa to collect scholarly journals. All scholarly journals included in this literature review were peer-reviewed and published within the past ten years. I focused on finding articles connected to interoception, social-emotional learning, restorative practices, and emotional regulation. I focused primarily on finding research studies that included early childhood education, as Atlantic Early Learning Center serves three and four-year-old
students. The scope of research also included studies involving elementary and high school students, as well as adults. This large perimeter of exploration allowed me to consider the effects of these social-emotional elements on young children in a preschool setting.

Research by Mahler (2022), found that the use of an interoception-based approach can improve emotional regulation in autistic children with increases in interoception in as little as eight weeks. Research also shows a clear link between interoception and emotions. Zamariola et. al. (2019) suggests that people with low interoceptive abilities show more difficulties in verbalizing their feelings. As explained by Mahler (2019) the connection between interoception and emotion defines interoceptive awareness and the ability to notice body cues and the ability to connect those cues to an emotion or need. The belief is that when educators at Atlantic Early Learning Center implement an integrated interoception-based curriculum, students will become more emotionally aware and increase their emotional regulation skills. This increase in emotional regulation and awareness will occur because teachers will be implementing a curriculum that explicitly teaches building self-regulation by sequentially teaching the learner to notice body signals and connect them to emotions and then determine what action to take. The natural development of interoception takes years and thousands of opportunities to form connections between the body and emotions (Mahler, 2019). By providing these opportunities starting in preschool at the age of three we can help children develop interoceptive awareness.

I have organized the literature review by key themes deemed important to support social-emotional learning through an interoception-based curriculum. The literature review will begin with interoception and interoceptive awareness. Next, the literature review will cover the importance of emotional regulation. The literature review will then focus on social-emotional learning in schools and preschool settings. Followed by a look into mindfulness-based and
interoception-based interventions. Finally, the literature review will focus on restorative practices as an approach to behavior.

**Review of the Literature**

Interoception, the ability to perceive internal bodily sensations, plays a fundamental role in human experience. (Mahler, 2019) It influences emotional regulation, decision-making, and overall well-being. This review examines the current body of research surrounding interoception, exploring its significance in emotional, physical, and cognitive development, as well as emotional regulation. Through this analysis of existing literature, gaps in the research will be identified, highlighting the need for further investigation into the relationship between interoception and human behavior (Murphy, 2017).

**What Is Interoception And Why Is It Important?**

Interoception allows us to feel internal sensations or signals from the body. Noticing and understanding these signals helps us identify how we feel. Mahler (2019) describes interoception as a seventh sense. Much like seeing, tasting, smelling, and touching, interoception helps us understand the world around us and make decisions based on sensations that we experience. For many people, this process happens quickly without even thinking about it, but for others, this process takes work to notice and understand these signals. Individuals with conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), severe trauma, and cognitive disabilities may struggle to develop interoception. This has prompted several studies and within the last ten years to better understand these effects.

Critchley and Garfinkel (2017) investigated previous research on interoception and brought to light how the brain, heart, and body react to outside emotional stimuli resulting in physiological changes within the body. In reviewing the literature, they concluded that emotions
and interoception go hand and hand due to the body’s physiological changes in heart rate and brain stimulation when presented with emotional stimuli such as facial expressions. In contrast, Garfinkel et al. (2015) investigated how a person’s thoughts and feelings influence the way one can notice what is happening inside their body. In this study, participants were asked to focus on their heartbeat while recalling a pleasant memory. Then they were asked to do the same when recalling a stressful event. Through these experiments, Garfinkel’s team determined that emotions and thoughts can change how a person can sense what is going on inside their bodies based on the emotions they are feeling at the time.

Price and Hoovan (2018) also reviewed current literature on interoception within adults to create a framework for an integrated learning process with Mindful Awareness in Body-Oriented Therapy (MABT). Implementation of this approach with adult clients in therapy was successful in helping them reach optimal emotional response. This approach uses a combination of mindfulness practice, and hands-on coaching, teaching clients to tune in to the delicateness of physiological sensation and develop interoceptive awareness. These interoceptive awareness skills facilitate optimal emotional response and the individual’s ability to process and interpret feelings. The findings of Price and Hoovan (2018) suggest that interoception plays a key role in emotional awareness and response. Zamariola et al. (2019) involved 100 healthy participants with a range of interoceptive abilities. The participants engaged in a heartbeat counting task and a questionnaire assessing their interoceptive sensibility to determine their interoceptive ability. In the second phase participants were interviewed on their perceived emotions, bodily sensations, and ability to regulate their emotions in everyday life situations. Zamariola’s findings revealed that participants with low interoceptive abilities showed more difficulties in verbalizing their feelings and in decreasing the impact of emotions generated by negative experiences in daily life.
The findings of Zamariola (2019) as well as Price and Hooven (2018) seem to support the idea that interoception plays a key role in the way individuals identify, interpret, and respond to emotions.

In contrast to the connection between emotional response and interoception, Georgiou et al. (2015) conducted a study with 49 healthy children with a mean age of 9.72 years who were part of Germany’s Join the Healthy Boat Program to investigate the interaction between interoception and physical activity in children. The interoceptive awareness of the participants was measured using a heartbeat perception task. Physical activity was then measured by using a physical distance performance task, assessing the distance covered by each participant during a six-minute run. Everyday physical activity was then measured with a subset of 21 children using multi-sensor device for ten hours per day for five days. The results of Georgiou’s (2015) research discovered a correlation between higher interoceptive awareness and better performance on the physical distance performance task. These findings also indicated interoception interacts positively with the degree of physical activity in children. These findings by Georgiou et al. (2015) suggest that interoception is not only linked to emotional health but physical health as well.

However, Murphy et al. (2017) conducted a qualitative literature review to discover how interception across the lifespan may influence a change in cognition. Murphy’s (2017) theory suggests that atypical interoception underlines the onset of risky behavior in adolescence and decreased socio-emotional competence in late adulthood. By reviewing available literature on the topic, it was found that there is a severe lack of reliable research on interoception across all age ranges in general. Murphy also highlights that the typical heartbeat assessment used to gauge interoceptive awareness is not appropriate to assess young children and infants and is not very
reliable as it is based on the individual’s perception. Although most of this research was inconclusive, Murphy was able to address the need for further research on interoception as valuable information may be found on this topic.

A common theme has emerged from the available research regarding interoceptive awareness. The most commonly used heartbeat tasks and questionnaires are self-reported by the participants and may have room for errors in the data based on personal perceptions suggesting that research gathered in this manner may not be accurate. On the other hand, there is also a common theme among researchers addressing the importance of gathering information about interoception. Researchers Murphy (2017), Garfinkel et al. (2015) Critchley and Garfinkel (2017), Price and Hoovan (2018), and Zamariola (2019) all agree that there is an urgent need for continued research on this topic as evidence does support a clear connection between interoception and emotions. Understanding this connection and the role interoception plays across the lifespan could better help individuals notice, regulate, and express their emotions.

While there are varying opinions and research on the way interoception and emotion are connected there is no denying that there is a clear connection based on the brain scan research conducted by Barrett et al. (2016) whose research discovered that the body sends signals to the brain based on sensations such as hunger or pain. The use of an MRI showed that these signals affected the emotions of participants based on the areas of the brain that were triggered. This provides clear evidence that interoception and emotions go hand and hand.

Social-emotional Learning in Early Childhood:

Social-emotional Skills are a big focus in most early childhood programs and are fundamental for young children’s development. These skills influence their ability to navigate relationships, regulate emotions, and solve social problems. These skills are taught and modeled
by teachers and practiced daily through play experiences and interactions with peers. Young children are continuing to develop the skills needed for successful peer interactions, solving social problems, identifying emotions, and responding to the emotions of oneself and others. Although social-emotional learning (SEL) is often integrated into most early childhood curriculums, it is not often that a separate social-emotional learning curriculum is used that explicitly teaches young children these skills (Thümmler et al., 2022). An integrated approach involves infusing social-emotional concepts and practices into daily routines, play experiences, and peer interactions. This is usually done through structured activities, group discussions, and guided play with teachers supporting as facilitators to support social-emotional growth.

However, there are potential limitations to an integrated approach despite the advantages mentioned. Without a dedicated curriculum or explicit instructions, some students may not receive enough support in developing certain social-emotional skills. Additional limitations included a lack of teacher training, classroom environment, and implementation (Steed et al. 2022). This made me question if the current integrated approach is enough to support a young child’s social development. What can parents and teachers do to support social-emotional learning at school and home?

To answer a similar question, Steed et al. (2022) gathered data through an online survey of 1,154 early childhood teachers in the United States to determine if early childhood educators perceive that their school’s SEL approaches are effective and if they perceive that their classroom SEL approaches are effective. It was discovered that most early childhood teachers agree that both their school and classroom SEL approach is effective. However, it was indicated that there is still some ineffectiveness in the lack of training for staff, inconsistent implantation, no clear SEL curriculum in place, and no set time for teaching SEL. Although Steed’s (2022)
results support the idea that overall early childhood teachers feel that their SEL approach is effective this was a very small sample of educators across the United States. For social-emotional learning to be most effective it needs to be explicitly taught. To do so a school should adopt a clear SEL approach, provide support and training to all personnel using the approach, and delegate sufficient time in the school schedule specifically for SEL instruction (Lawson et al., 2019). The ineffectiveness of SEL highlighted by Steed et al. (2022) directly contradicts the components Lawson et al. (2019) state are needed for effective SEL instruction.

Steed et al. (2022) and Lawson et al. (2019) highlighted the need for teachers to be trained on SEL and the need for a set SEL curriculum. In agreeance, Thümmler et al. (2022) conducted research using 3 popular SEL programs to determine if they include elements that increase teachers’ skills in supporting children in developing social-emotional skills. According to Thümmler et al. (2022), teachers need to have experience in emotional development and training in this area can help teachers strengthen their knowledge. The interaction between teacher and child is a vital part of emotional development in young children. During early developmental stages, teacher modeling and support promote self-awareness of the child (Thümmler et al., 2022). Thümmler (2022) concluded that SEL programs often push too much for the children to develop their emotional skills and not the importance of the teacher-child relationship supporting this learning and development.

In contrast, Lambie and Lindberg (2016) determined that greater emotional validation by mothers was associated with greater emotional awareness in children. They discovered this by studying 65 mother-child groups while they engaged in a game of snakes and ladders. Lambie and Lindberg (2016) also determined that the mother’s emotional invalidation was a negative predictor of the child’s emotional awareness. The emotions and responses of parents toward their
children directly affect the emotional awareness of the child. Focusing on this in parenting and parental training could increase children’s direct awareness of their own emotions (Lambie and Lindberg, 2016). Children need direct teaching and modeling of social and emotional skills within home and school settings. They cannot effectively implement and practice these skills without the support of adults such as parents and teachers helping them learn to be aware of their emotions and the emotions of others.

Given these considerations, implementing a separate SEL curriculum along with an integrated approach could provide structure, resources, and training for teachers. While integrated approaches hold value in early childhood programs, there are benefits to more explicit and targeted instruction. As well as incorporating a SEL curriculum, collaboration between teachers and families is essential in supporting a child’s social-emotional development. This extends the learning beyond the classroom and involves parents in supporting their child’s development (Lambie and Lindberg, 2016). By incorporating a structured SEL curriculum and fostering collaboration with families, teachers can enhance their efforts to support the social-emotional development of their students.

**Interventions for Emotional Regulation:**

Once children begin to understand their emotions and the emotions of others, they need to begin to understand how to regulate their emotions. Often this is something that we simply expect to happen once they begin to identify their own emotions. (Steed et al., 2022). Emotional Regulation requires a lot of practice and a certain level of interoceptive awareness. This is something that develops naturally for some without thinking much about it, but for others, this takes work (Mahler, 2019). Individuals with high levels of trauma, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and other delays may struggle with interception which is often diagnosed as a condition called
Alexithymia. According to Brewer et al. (2016) Alexithymia is best described as a general deficit of interoception rather than the common description which is an emotional identification and recognition deficit. By acknowledging the complex skills required for emotional regulation and implementing evidence-based practices, teachers and caregivers can better support children in developing the ability to identify their emotions and regulate their bodies.

Interoceptive awareness allows us to recognize cues within the body and plan, thus allowing us to emotionally regulate before becoming overwhelmed. Similarly, to individuals with Alexithymia, young children are still learning to notice body signals, interpret them, and build their interoceptive awareness. According to Hample et al. (2019), interoceptive awareness is described as the degree to which one can notice and connect body signals to their needs. This awareness is needed for self-regulation which is challenging for young children as they continue to develop interoceptive awareness. Interoception builds on and supports emotional regulation as well as other social-emotional skills such as executive functioning. Interoception can be described as mindful body awareness, as it is the conscious perception (mindful) of internal body signals (body awareness) (Goodall, 2021). This awareness is necessary for one to understand the feelings and cues happening within their body. Some research has been done on how to increase and teach interception, but most of this research has taken place with adults or children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Mahler et al. (2022) are some of the big players in this area of research. Mahler et al. (2020) conducted a pilot study and a follow-up study on the impact of The Interoceptive Curriculum developed and published by Kelly Mahler (2019). This research was conducted with students diagnosed with ASD to determine the feasibility and effectiveness of an embedded school-based intervention and its ability to improve interoception and emotional regulation. The
results of both the pilot study by Mahler et al. (2020) and follow-up study by Mahler et al. (2022) concluded that *The Interoceptive Curriculum* was both a feasible intervention and can improve emotional regulation in autistic children. Mahler et al. (2022) call for future research on the impact of interoception-based interventions on other populations such as class-wide, young children, and children without ASD.

However, researchers such as Courbet et al. (2022) as well as Nieminen and Sajaniemi (2016) believe that mindful awareness and yoga-based interventions are valuable approaches to improving emotional regulation. According to Nieminen and Sajaniemi (2016), mindfulness training is the ideal way to begin teaching children how to regulate emotions, focus attention, and reduce stress. Similarly, Mahler et al. (2022) and Nieminen and Sajaniemi (2016) advocate for the need to teach reflective skills and body awareness daily with embedded practice and modeling to help students improve emotional regulation. In either an interoception-based or mindfulness approach it seems that repetitive interventions teaching emotional, body, and mind awareness are needed to support students in regulating their own emotions effectively.

**Restorative Practices**

The use of restorative practices (RP) in schools is gaining attention and momentum as an effective approach to behavior an alternative approach to traditional punitive discipline. With an RP approach schools proactively build a positive climate to prevent misbehavior by creating strong relationships between students and teachers as well as among peers. When misbehavior occurs, RP allows students the opportunity to repair the harm caused rather than receive a punishment. (Dhaliwal et al., 2023) Positive results with the use of restorative practices include school climate, discipline, conflict management, decrease in suspensions, decreased misbehavior,
positive relationships among students and teachers, social-emotional skills, and school community (Lodi et al., 2022).

While this approach has benefits, Dhaliwal et al. (2023) conducted research to address the challenges and hindrances to implementing RP. Six main hindrances were reported by teachers who are using an RP approach including lack of support, lack of cohesion, lack of capacity, lack of training, lack of will, and lack of time. Of these hindrances lack of time was the highest reported by the educators (Dhaliwal et al., 2023). While educators also shared the positive effects of RP amount of time needed to implement this approach and to change their mindset on discipline may reduce the effectiveness.

Despite the hindrances, RP supports the inclusion of children with persistent challenging behaviors (PCBs). McGuire and Hedda (2022) state that integrating students with PCBs into the classroom and school community provided these students with the opportunity to participate in social activities, build relationships, and as a result decrease challenging behavior. By incorporating RP teachers strengthen relationships and create an environment that is safe and conducive to improving student learning outcomes, especially for students who exhibit externalizing behaviors (Forsberg and Leko, 2022).

**School Profile**

**Community Characteristics:**

Atlantic is located in Western Iowa between Des Moines and Council Bluffs. According to the 2020 census by the United States Census Bureau (2022) the population is approximately 6,792 with roughly 3,142 households. This population reflects a predominantly white demographic, comprising over 96% of the population. Atlantic has had a recent increase in the
Pacific Islander population, but current statistics are not available. The median household income in Atlantic is $41,542 with a 21.45% poverty rate. Atlantic has several factories which employ a large number of community members and members of surrounding communities. Atlantic has the county hospital and serves as the county seat. Atlantic boasts a historic downtown with shops and restaurants. Local initiatives such as SHIFT ATL are working to increase amenities and infrastructure within the community as several businesses were lost after the pandemic. A

**District Characteristics:**

Atlantic Community School District (ACSD) is located in Atlantic, Iowa. Within ACSD there are six educational buildings, each playing a vital role in educating children in the area. However, three out of six of the buildings have been identified as targeted schools in need of assistance by the state Department of Education, particularly for students with disabilities. The public-school enrollment in 2023 was 1,485 an increase from the 1,447 reported in 2022. This district has about 40% of students who receive free or reduced-priced lunch (Iowa Department of Education, 2022). The student population for ACSD is approximately 87.3% white, 5.8% Hispanic, 4.6% Pacific Islander, and 1.8% other (Iowa Department of Education, 2022). The district has about 65 English Language Learners receiving support in our Elementary buildings. ACSD has a graduation rate of 93.1% which falls above the state average. There are roughly 106 licensed teachers in the district with seven teachers having their initial teaching license with an overall retention rate of 85.8% (Department of Education, 2022). ACSD has 5 administrators including four principals and one assistant principal located at the high school building. The district is looking to add an additional admin role for a Director of Student Services this year. The district superintendent is currently on a two-year interim contract until the end of the 2024-2025 school year.
School Mission/Vision:

Atlantic Community School District (2022) is guided by a mission to empower learners to become creative, innovative, and productive citizens. ACSD places a strong emphasis on fostering a positive, disciplined, and challenging learning environment. The district’s preschool through third-grade school philosophy articulates core beliefs, including the importance of student learning, safety, diversity, and the cultivation of life-long skills (Atlantic Community School District, 2022). The district has developed a portrait of graduate. This outlines the goals for students to work toward and achieve by the time they graduate high school. This includes five core pillars: act with integrity, communicate effectively, pursue a passion, be resilient, and think critically (Atlantic Community School District, 2022). All buildings within the district focus on these five pillars to help students develop the skills needed to be ready for graduation and productive members of the community. The mission of Atlantic Early Learning Center, a partnership of school staff, parents, and the community, is to prepare students to be lifelong learners who can become successful, productive future citizens (Atlantic Community School District, 2022). This will be accomplished by recognizing the value of each individual and promoting academic and personal growth in a challenging and caring environment.

School Characteristics:

As part of the state-wide voluntary preschool program, the Atlantic Early Learning Center educates approximately 65 three and four-year-old students. Twenty-three of them are provided specially designed instruction throughout the school day in a fully inclusive setting to support their individual learning needs. Reflecting the diversity of the Atlantic community, from my personal data collection the student body at the AELC comprises 93% Caucasian and 7%
Pacific Islanders. The AELC holds classes four days per week and divides students into morning and afternoon sessions lasting from eight o’clock to eleven and noon to three o’clock. This building has four classrooms with one certified teacher in each room. Each of these educators also holds an endorsement in special education allowing them to provide education to students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Each classroom has two paraprofessionals available to support students and their learning needs. Two of the classrooms are for four-year-old students while the other two are for three-year-old students.

**Student Learning Goals:**

Aligned with its mission, the Atlantic Early Learning Center (AELC) sets ambitious goals for student learning, emphasizing competency in social and emotional, physical, cognitive, and language development skills. Additionally, AELC aims to cultivate a love for learning among its young learners, ensuring they feel safe, healthy, and supported throughout their educational journey. AELC uses the Iowa Early Learning Standards to ensure that students are meeting the state standards and are prepared for their future educational career. The curriculum at AELC aligns with the standards and with the GOLD early childhood development assessment mentioned in the assessment section. Teachers use scaffolding techniques to push students to grow and develop their skills and meet learning goals and standards before kindergarten.

**Student Performance:**

Staff at the Atlantic Early Learning Center are currently gathering GOLD assessment data for the 2023-2024 school year. GOLD has three checkpoints including Fall, Winter, and Spring. To comply with the state-wide voluntary preschool program preschools are required to gather GOLD data during at least one benchmark. This year the AELC decided to gather data
during the Spring benchmark due to teachers being on maternity leave for the Fall and Winter benchmarks. The Spring benchmark opened at the end of February and will close at the end of May. Staff members are working to gather data daily and enter it into the GOLD monitoring system weekly for all four-year-old students and three-year-old students with IEPs. This is the only formal data collected for the year at the preschool level. Other data gathered is done through formative assessment and is not formal data.

Parent Involvement:

Recognizing the important role of families in supporting student success, the Atlantic Early Learning Center fosters a culture of collaboration and partnership between educators and parents. Families are encouraged to actively engage in their child’s education, feeling welcomed in the classroom and school environment. AELC promotes meaningful partnerships by providing opportunities such as back-to-school night where students and families can see the building, and classroom, and meet their teachers before the first day of school. A family carnival where parents and students spend time together after school hours engaging in planned activities hosted by the AELC staff. Parents are encouraged to attend parent-teacher conferences twice per year to discuss their child’s growth and development toward learning goals as well as progress on their social-emotional learning. The AELC staff hosts special events during school hours including parent’s day, grandparent’s day, and family movie hour which allow guests to come in and engage in planned activities with their students. The AELC staff also welcomes parent volunteers for field trips and classroom parties as a way for parents to come into the classroom and be involved in their child’s learning. All of these opportunities allow parents to engage in their child’s learning experience as well as build relationships with teachers and staff to create a supportive and united environment at school and home.
Teacher Work:

Teachers at Atlantic Early Learning Center play a vital role in creating an inclusive and engaging learning environment. Teachers implement research-based teaching strategies to support student learning and development. In this fully inclusive setting, teachers at AELC work to implement effective and consistent universal supports as well as tiered support and interventions for students with diverse needs. Teachers at AELC are certified to provide specially designed instruction, accommodations, and services for students with IEPs in the classroom with their general education peers. This ensures that every student receives the support needed to thrive academically and socially. The teacher-to-student ratio in each of the four preschool classrooms is about 1 teacher to 4 students. Each classroom has a licensed teacher, classroom, paraprofessional, a special education paraprofessional who may serve one or multiple students depending on the needs. A typical day for staff at the AELC starts by welcoming the students at eight o’clock for the morning session. The day starts with large group learning followed by about an hour of play-based learning in various learning centers. Teachers support students during playtime by modeling play skills and appropriate peer interactions. Playtime is then followed by small group learning and snack. The day ends with music and movement or gross motor play. Teachers and Paraprofessionals provided support and modeling of expectations throughout the day. Staff is also available to help students solve social problems, manage emotions, and regulate emotions as needed. Staff provides verbal and visual prompts, supports, and directions throughout the day with clear expectations and a predictable routine. This helps students quickly learn and follow the expectations and allows for effective learning time.

Curriculum and Instructional Strategies:
Atlantic Early Learning Center prioritizes early childhood development, social-emotional skills, language development, and cognative growth. Creative Curriculum GOLD, a research and evidence-based comprehensive curriculum is used in AELC preschool classrooms. It addresses all areas of early learning including language and literacy, math, science, physical skills, and social skills. It provides children an opportunity to learn in a variety of ways through play, problem-solving, movement, art, music, drawing and writing, listening, and storytelling. Creative Curriculum is grounded in research-based strategies tailored to meet the diverse needs of students providing for a rich and engaging learning experience. Teachers at AELC employ a variety of instructional strategies from hands-on to play-based learning experiences, creating dynamic and interactive lessons that support all learning styles and abilities.

Assessment Practices:

The Atlantic Early Learning Center’s believes that assessment of young children should be purposeful, developmentally appropriate, and take place in the natural setting by familiar adults (Atlantic Community School District, 2022). The results of assessments are used for planning learning experiences and to guide instruction. Assessment will never be used to label children or to include or exclude them from a program. A family’s culture and a child’s experiences outside the school setting are recognized as being an important piece of the child’s growth and development. All assessment results are kept confidential and stored in a secure location. In line with best practices in early childhood education, teachers monitor student progress through ongoing formative assessments to identify areas for growth and to make educational decisions. Teachers at AELC also complete the GOLD assessment for early childhood which meets the requirements for state-wide voluntary preschool programs. Teachers
and paraprofessionals are trained in GOLD data collection and scoring to ensure that quality and accurate data is gathered in all domains for each student.

**Professional Development:**

Teachers at Atlantic Early Learning Center are committed to continuous improvement and invest time into professional development opportunities for the growth and development of educators. Teachers meet weekly to collaborate, plan, and make curriculum decisions and adjustments as needed based on formative assessments. AELC teachers and paraprofessionals are currently engaging in Yoga and Mindfulness professional development through the Green Hills AEA. This training provides teachers with strategies to support social-emotional learning and to teach students the skills needed for emotional regulation through mindfulness and yoga. By prioritizing professional growth and learning, educators at AELC are better equipped to meet the evolving needs of their students.

**Needs Assessment**

Social-emotional Learning is a big topic within education and has become even more prominent post-pandemic. As early childhood educators, it is our role to help young children develop cognitive, motor, and language skills, and also social-emotional skills. Development of these skills is essential for children to successfully engage with the world around them and to become successful community members and contributors. Teachers play an important role in supporting young children to develop these skills. (Thümmler et al., 2022) In my classroom, I have struggled with how to more effectively and explicitly teach SEL other than through play experiences. Discussions with a colleague led me to question if The Interoception Curriculum would be an effective class-wide approach to developing emotional awareness and
self-regulation in my classroom and all of our Atlantic Early Learning Center classrooms (Mahler, 2019).

The Atlantic Community School District was notified via e-mail from the superintendent that our district will be adopting a restorative approach to behavior in the 2024-2025 school year. The district has a committee that has been trained in restorative practices, working on plans for staff training and roll out of this new approach. This shift is still in the early planning phase, but we want to be prepared to support this new approach at the Atlantic Early Learning Center.

While our current approach to behavior is restorative due to the young age of our students, we know there are areas that we may need to adjust. We have identified that more and more children struggle with social-emotional skills based on classroom observation, GOLD data, and the increase in students requiring specially designed instruction in the area of social-emotional and behavior. We have also determined from implementing daily feelings check-ins that students struggle to truly identify and express their emotions. I believe that this disconnect is because preschool-aged students are still developing interoceptive awareness.

Children age three and four are still developing interoceptive awareness, emotional awareness, and emotional regulation skills. Focusing on noticing what their bodies are telling them (interoception) could help students to identify and put words to their emotions and increase self-regulation. Interoception allows us to feel internal sensations or signals from the body. Noticing and understanding these signals helps us identify how we feel. Typically, this process happens quickly without even thinking about it, but for some, this process takes work to notice and understand these signals (Mahler, 2019). Young children are still learning to notice these signals, interpret them, and build their interoceptive awareness. This awareness is needed for self-regulation which is challenging for young children as they continue to develop interoceptive
awareness. The Interoception Curriculum provides a framework for building self-regulation by sequentially teaching the learner to notice body signals, connect them to emotions, and then determine what action to take (Mahler, 2019).

I believe that teaching interoception to students at the Atlantic Early Learning Center will help them develop the skills needed to reflect on and understand their behavior. As well as provide teachers the tools needed to implement a restorative approach successfully with our students. I am excited to see the Atlantic Community School District move to a restorative approach next year. Although this is still in the planning phase I feel that this school improvement plan will help staff plan, prepare, and implement this approach at the Atlantic Early Learning Center. This school improvement plan explains why an interoception-based curriculum is beneficial to support social-emotional development and learning for preschool-aged children and supports the district wide restorative approach to behavior.

Data Analysis

I have gathered three sources of data that indicate that the Atlantic Early Learning Center needs a solution for teaching Social-emotional Learning to our students. I have noticed a disconnect in our student’s ability to identify emotions, express emotions, and regulate emotions. I noticed this when gathering informal data during feelings check-in time. During my informal observation watching my students, I saw children who were smiling, pointing to the visual picture card indicating that they were sad. When asked why they were sad they could not answer. When I pointed out that they had a smile on their face and were skipping into the classroom they then pointed to happy. I also observed a student who was crying as he entered the classroom pointing to the happy visual. When I mentioned that he had tears coming down his face he then pointed to sad. This event happens almost daily, and similar situations happened when I used this
method last year. I believe that students this age are struggling to connect their emotions with the signals that their bodies are sending to them (Mahler, 2019). I believe that this is due to a lack of interoceptive awareness (Mahler, 2019). This informal observation is what prompted me to dig deeper with more formal data.

The first step that I took was to look at the GOLD assessment data for our preschool students in the area of social-emotional. I used the most recent data for the Spring checkpoint for all of the four-year-old students in our building. Although, we are still gathering data for this checkpoint both four-year-old classroom teachers have completed gathering all data for the social-emotional standards. In reviewing this data, I found that there were several objectives where more than twenty percent of students fell below the expected developmental benchmark. These objectives include:

1a. Manages Feelings: 21% of students fell below the objective
1b. Follows Limits and Expectations: 23% of students fell below the objective
1c. Takes Care of Own Needs Appropriately: 28% of students fell below the objective
2c. Interacts with Peers: 44% of students fell below the objective

Tables 1 and 2 reveal notable challenges among students. In Class A shown in Table 1, 5 students struggle with managing their feelings and taking care of their needs appropriately while a significant 10 students struggle to interact with their peers. This data indicates that there are quite a few students who struggle with social-emotional skills. Similarly, a third of the students in Class B, shown in Table 2 struggle to follow expectations and interact with their peers. These findings highlight the urgency for implementing targeted interventions and increasing social-emotional learning to close these gaps and support emotional development among preschool
students. Table 1 and Table 2 (below) show a breakdown of the number of students meeting and falling below each indicated social-emotional objective in Class A and Class B.

Table 1

*Students in Class A Falling Above or Below Objective*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Number of Students Below Objective</th>
<th>Number of Students Meeting Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a. Manages Feelings</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b. Follows Limits and Expectations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c. Takes Care of Own Needs Appropriately</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c. Interacts with Peers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

*Students in Class B Falling Above or Below Objective*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Number of Students Below Objective</th>
<th>Number of Students Meeting Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a. Manages Feelings</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b. Follows Limits and Expectations</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c. Takes Care of Own Needs Appropriately</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c. Interacts with Peers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After reviewing the GOLD data for all four-year-old students I decided to dig into the data on all of our students with IEPs. This data included three-year-old and four-year-old students. Our preschool has a total of twenty-four students on IEPs receiving specially designed instruction in one or more areas. From my own data collection, it was determined that out of these twenty-four students, twenty-two of them received support in the goal areas of social-emotional, and/or behavior. This is 91% of our students with IEPs. Also discovered from my own data collection, six of these twenty-two students require a one-on-one paraprofessional to support them with social or behavioral needs. This indicates that social-emotional learning is an area that could use focus and improvement. Individuals with high levels of trauma, ASD, and other diagnoses may struggle with interception (Brewer et al., 2016). Often individuals with these conditions and delays are the children who receive support through an IEP. It is important for us to acknowledge the complex skills required for emotional regulation, especially for those whom it may not come naturally for as we often expect. These skills have to be modeled, practiced, and taught explicitly with more repetition for these children.

To further support this data analysis, I think that additional data would be needed on every student in our preschool. Having the teachers and parents of each student complete an Ages and Stages Questionnaire- Social-emotional (ASQ-SE) would help determine exact deficits in social-emotional development for all students attending preschool. This would provide more detailed information on exactly where each student is struggling with social-emotional skills and development. To gather this data the teachers and parents of each student would fill out a social-emotional based questionnaire based on their child’s age. They would complete the questionnaire by choosing a score of always, sometimes, or never for each question based on the child. There is also an additional score given if the question is indicated as a concern. The teacher would then
use the scores to determine if each child falls below the cutoff score for a child of their age. The cutoff score varies based on the age of the child. If the child falls above the cutoff score this would indicate that the child’s social-emotional skills are below what is developmentally expected for a child their age. Gathering this information on each of our students would indicate any students who are struggling with social-emotional development and concerns parents may have for their child beyond what we see during the school day.

**Action Plan**

After reviewing the relevant literature, three research-based practices were identified to support this school improvement plan to implement a social-emotional learning curriculum to increase emotional regulation in the Atlantic Early Learning Center’s three and four-year-old classrooms. These themes include using an interoception-based curriculum, mindfulness practices, and implementing a restorative approach to behavior. These research-based practices can be effective in increasing emotional regulation and decreasing challenging behaviors in the classroom. These practices have proven to be effective with students including those with disabilities.

Interoception is described by Mahler (2019) as a seventh sense. Much our other senses, interoception helps us understand the world around us and make decisions based on sensations that we experience. For a majority of people and adults, this happens quickly without even thinking about it, but for young children, this process often takes work to notice and understand these signals (Mahler, 2019). Similarly, individuals with conditions such as ASD, trauma, and cognitive disabilities may struggle to develop interoception. This can be especially challenging for young children with these conditions. Without interoceptive awareness skills it is extremely challenging to regulate emotions and behaviors. By explicitly teaching these skills with *The*
Interoception Curriculum by Kelly Mahler (2019) we can help children increase their emotional regulation.

Similarly, Nieminen and Sajaniemi (2016) advocate for the need to explicitly teach reflective skills and body awareness daily with embedded practice and modeling in to help students improve emotional regulation. Nieminen and Sanjaniemi (2016) and Mahler et al. (2022) agree that emotional regulation cannot develop without some sort of mindful body awareness understanding. In either an interoception-based or mindfulness approach it seems that repetitive interventions teaching emotional, body, and mind awareness are needed to support students in regulating their own emotions effectively.

Children who struggle with emotional regulation often exhibit persistent challenging behaviors (PCBs) at school and home. McGuire and Hedda (2022) believe that integrating students with PCBs into the classroom and school community provided these students with the opportunity to participate, build relationships, and result in a decrease in challenging behaviors. By incorporating restorative practices in the classroom teachers strengthen relationships and create an environment that is safe and conducive to improving student learning outcomes, especially for those who exhibit externalizing behaviors (Forsberg and Leko, 2022).

The following is a detailed plan outlining the steps necessary for the implementation of an effective social-emotional learning intervention at Atlantic Early Learning Center in August of 2024. This involves integrating an interoceptive-based curriculum, restorative practices, and mindfulness techniques. Through planning, collaboration, and ongoing evaluation, we can create a supportive learning environment for effective social-emotional learning and development of skills. These steps ensure that the intervention implementation stays on track and all staff is prepared to begin implementation at the beginning of the school year by completing the steps on
the checklist. Teachers at the Atlantic ELC and their administrators will keep the staff on track and accountable by using the checklist (see Figure 1 below).

1. Teachers Assess current needs by completing Spring GOLD data and gathering an ASQ-SE score for all students in each classroom for the current year. Repeat this process in the Fall with new students.

2. Teachers, Admin, and Early Childhood Consultant meet to analyze the data and input it into a spreadsheet to determine areas of concern and identify students with social-emotional skills that are developmentally behind. Identify trends, patterns, and areas of focus based on data.

3. Teachers engage in professional learning time to dig into The Interoception Curriculum. Teachers will review the curriculum to become familiar with the layout and use. Teachers will prepare the materials needed for the implementation of this curriculum.

4. Teachers and Support staff will engage in professional development training on The Interoception Curriculum as well as restorative practices training. Teachers and staff have previously been trained in mindfulness practices for the classroom.

5. Teachers will lesson plan together to create a scope and sequence, hands-on experiences, and formative assessment opportunities. Teachers will establish checkpoints for formative and summative assessment data. Teachers will also collaborate to create dedicated time in the daily schedule for social-emotional learning, mindfulness, and restorative circles. Teachers will order and prepare any materials needed for lessons.

6. Teachers and staff will implement the new curriculum and approaches following the plans and schedule determined in step five starting in September of the 2024-2025 school year.
7. Teachers and staff will conduct regular and ongoing progress monitoring, formative assessments, and summative assessments gathering data based on the established checkpoints. Teachers will meet to review the data monthly to ensure progress is being made and to make instructional decisions based on the data.

**Implementation of School Improvement Plan**

**Timeline**

For the successful implementation of this program, a timeline was created with clear responsibilities listed for the successful implementation of the social-emotional learning intervention. Teachers and staff must begin and complete gathering data before the end of the school year in May. This data will help teachers determine areas of need and focus as they plan to implement in September of the 2024-2025 school year. The Administrator must schedule data meetings, approve the purchase of materials, and approve summer work hours for teachers to work on planning before the end of the current school year. Teachers must agree to participate in summer hours to collaborate and prepare the new curriculum and approach for this intervention to be successful. The support staff must agree to attend required training and support the teachers as needed throughout this process. When the new school year starts in September of 2024 the teachers and support staff must be ready to begin gathering data right away and be ready for implementation. The checklist (figure 1 below) will be used to ensure that implementation is on track and to hold the team accountable. The building administrator, teachers, and support staff will all play a vital role in ensuring the successful implementation and outcomes of this social-emotional learning intervention.

**Figure 1**

*ELC Preschool Social-emotional Learning Intervention Implementation Checklist*
### March/April

**Teacher Responsibilities:**
- All teachers complete ASQ-SE for each child in their class.
- All teachers send home ASQ-SE forms for parents to complete and ensure they are returned by the end of April.
- All teachers complete Mindfulness and Yoga for teachers training through the Green Hills AEA. (April 4)
- All teachers participate in Trauma Informed Care training with AEA Early Childhood Consultant. (April 10)

**Support Staff Responsibilities:**
- All support staff complete Mindfulness and Yoga for teachers training through the Green Hills AEA. (April 4)
- All support staff participate in Trauma Informed Care training with AEA Early Childhood Consultant. (April 10)

**Administrator Responsibilities:**
- Administrator schedule data meeting.

### May

**Teacher Responsibilities:**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interoception-Based Curriculum for Social-Emotional Learning in Preschool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All teachers complete Spring GOLD data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers ensure all data is collected, scored, and ready to discuss at data meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All teachers meet during end-of-the-year Teacher Inservice days to become familiar with <em>The Interoception Curriculum</em>. They will review the curriculum to become familiar with the layout and use as well as order materials needed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Team Responsibilities:**

- Hold data meeting.
  1. All teachers and admin meet to meet to analyze the data.
  2. Input data into a spreadsheet and identify trends, patterns, and areas of focus based on data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>June/July</th>
<th>Teacher Responsibilities:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers will use summer hours to lesson plan together to create a scope and sequence, hands-on experiences, and formative assessment opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers will order and prepare any additional materials needed for lessons and submit orders to the administrator.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| August   | Teacher Responsibilities: |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Staff Responsibilities:</th>
<th>Teacher Responsibilities:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o All support staff will engage in professional development during the district-wide restorative practice training. (August 21)</td>
<td>o Teachers implement the new curriculum and approach following the plans and schedule determined by the teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o All support staff will engage in training on The Interoception Curriculum. (August 20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All teachers will engage in professional development during the district-wide restorative practice training. (August 21)

All teachers will engage in training on *The Interoception Curriculum*. (August 20)

Teachers will establish checkpoints for formative and summative assessment data. They will set dates for these checkpoints to be completed and data to be reviewed.

Teachers collaborate to create dedicated time in the daily preschool schedule for social-emotional learning, mindfulness, and restorative circles.

Support Staff Responsibilities:

- All support staff will engage in professional development during the district-wide restorative practice training. (August 21)
- All support staff will engage in training on *The Interoception Curriculum*. (August 20)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>October/November/December</th>
<th>Teacher Responsibilities:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o  All teachers complete Fall GOLD Social-emotional data by the end of October.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o  Teachers complete all Fall GOLD data collection by the end of the Fall checkpoint determined by the State.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o  Teachers ensure all data is collected, scored, and ready to discuss at each monthly data meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o  Create a survey to gain insight on the effectiveness of the intervention. Send this survey to teachers, support staff, and families. Send in December and May.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Team Responsibilities:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support Staff Responsibilities:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o  Support teachers and students in implementing the new curriculum and approaches following the plans and schedule determined by the teachers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- All teachers complete ASQ-SE for each child in their class
- All teachers send home ASQ-SE from for parents to complete and ensure they are returned by the end of September.
- All teachers begin Fall GOLD data collection
Hold Data meetings on the last Wednesday of October, November, and December.

1. All teachers and admin meet to meet to analyze the data.

2. Input data into a spreadsheet and identify trends, patterns, and areas of focus based on data. Plan for instructional changes based on the Fall data.

3. Discuss what is going well with the implementation of the new Social-emotional Learning Curriculum and intervention. Discuss any changes or adjustments needed.

Data Collection

Regular progress monitoring will take place throughout the first year of implementation. Data will be collected through formative and summative assessments, as well as through observations. Data will be kept and collected by teachers and will be analyzed and assessed monthly by the team for the first year. This data will be used to determine effectiveness, track growth, and to make instructional changes. Surveys for teachers, support staff, and families will be used once per semester to gather qualitative feedback on the effectiveness of the intervention.

Barriers and Challenges

Addressing possible barriers and challenges requires proactive communication and flexibility. One barrier that is very common in schools, and especially in school improvement plan is time. Time is hard to come by for teachers, especially when respecting contract hours.
Implementing and new curriculum can be time-consuming and will require teachers to work outside of their contract hours for planning and preparation. For example, Dhaliwal et al. (2023) conducted research to address the challenges and hindrances to implementing RP. Of the six main hindrances identified, lack of time was the highest reported by the educators (Dhaliwal et al., 2023). Staff support and buy-in is another possible challenge for this plan. Staff members may not agree with the new approach and may not be interested in participating in the professional development training on these topics.

Implementation of this plan will result in many new changes to the school day and even the environment. This could raise a challenge for staff. Another barrier is the age and engagement level of the students. Young children require short and engaging hands-on lessons to remain focused and keep interest. Keeping engagement could be challenging during restorative circles and mindfulness practices. The final barrier that may arise is a lack of family support or involvement. Families may not reinforce social-emotional learning and skills at home which may make practicing and grasping these skills more difficult for our young learners. Collaboration between teachers and families is essential in supporting a child’s social-emotional development. This extends the learning beyond the classroom and involves parents in supporting their child’s development (Lambie and Lindberg, 2016). To overcome these barriers and challenges, clear communication about the importance of this intervention will be required as well as regular opportunities for feedback and reflection.

**Conclusion**

Young children need to be explicitly taught to identify their emotions and body signals before they can regulate their emotions. Through commitment and support from administrators, teachers, support staff, and families, this new social-emotional learning intervention can be
successful. According to Thümmler et al. (2022) teachers play an important role in supporting young children to develop social-emotional skills. Students can gain the social-emotional skills and practices needed to increase emotional regulation within the classroom with effective and explicit instruction in interoception and mindfulness, in conjunction with a restorative approach to behavior. Atlantic Early Learning Center will see growth in social-emotional skills and emotional regulation with all students, including those with challenging behaviors through this intentional research-based school improvement plan.

This plan represents a comprehensive approach to nurturing the development of our students. As early childhood educators, it is our role to help young children develop not only cognitive, motor, and language skills, but also social-emotional skills. Development of these skills is essential for children to successfully engage with the world around them and to become successful community members and contributors. The use of an interoception-based approach can improve emotional regulation in autistic children with increases in interoception in as little as eight weeks (Mahler 2022). Research also shows a clear link between interoception and emotions. (Zamariola et. al., 2019) In my classroom, I have struggled with how to more effectively and explicitly teach SEL other than through play experiences. Discussions with a colleague led me to question if an interoception-based curriculum would be an effective class-wide approach to developing emotional regulation and decreasing challenging behaviors.

Through the integration of an interoception-based curriculum, mindful practices, and a restorative approach we will build a foundation for students to develop their social-emotional skills. We will close the gaps that we have discovered in our current approach to SEL as well as gaps within student social-emotional development. Lawson (2019) states that schools should adopt a clear SEL approach, provide support and training to all personnel using the approach,
and delegate sufficient time in the school schedule specifically for SEL instruction. With the implementation of this school improvement plan we will achieve these standards, as well as set students up to learn lifelong skills that will impact their ability to interact with others, manage stress, build empathy, and regulate emotions as they grow and move through our district toward adulthood and become successful members of our community.
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