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Improving The Social And Emotional Education Curriculum In A Middle School, School Within A School Gifted And Talented Program

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IMPROVING THE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN A
MIDDLE SCHOOL, SCHOOL WITHIN A SCHOOL GIFTED AND TALENTED
PROGRAM

By

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Masters of Arts in Education.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Overview

For the past eight years I have had the privilege of being able to work with gifted 6th and 7th grade students in a school within a school model. This is a program that is in a large, second ring suburban middle school in the upper midwest. These students have their four core classes (English, math, science, and social studies) together at an advanced grade level or deeper level to help meet their academic needs. Working with them has been incredibly eye opening and challenging at times. The need to develop new academic curriculum has been a given as these students learn differently than their age level peers, and in many cases they are learning completely different academic standards than their grade level peers.

When creating the program, our school district promised that we would not only meet the academic needs of our highly gifted students but also the social and emotional needs of our gifted students (Halldin, 2010). After working with these students, I feel that our district and program could be doing a significantly better job of meeting these needs which led me to wonder: *how can staff address the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students in a middle school, school within a school gifted and talented program?* My capstone project addresses this need by creating a three year social emotional learning curriculum for the program, additional lessons to be implemented with groups and topics that need small group activities, along with some basic resources for parents of gifted and talented students.

Evidence of Need

According to Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG), gifted students are more prone to asynchronous development (Jean Goerss, 2011). This means that a gifted student could be two years or more advanced academically in a subject but be behind two years or more in fine motor skills or social and emotional behaviors. This is evident in many of the students that I work with each year.

Take Austin (not his real name) for example. Austin is a young man who has been accelerated two years ahead in our math program. He is currently a 7th grader who is taking 9th grade level math, is a leader in our after school math club, and is doing well because academically he is very gifted overall. However, when it comes to social and emotional situations, he behaves more like one would expect a 4th or 5th grader to respond. He does not like to work with students that he does not choose to work with, or “like.” When he does not get his way, he will often put his head on his desk and refuse to work. His lack of coping strategies continues the negative cycle and it impacts his academic and social life. This shows the asynchronous development between his social and emotional skills and his academic abilities.

Another thing that is common for gifted students is for them to be aware of situations that are larger than they are or that are world issues. They want to help solve these problems but often get frustrated when they cannot or feel like they cannot (Delisle, Galbraith, & Espeland, 2002). I could continue with examples from many more individual students in my class. The needs would range from struggles connecting with age level peers, to challenges with organization, not being able to manage their anxiety,

depression, or perfectionist tendencies. All of these emotional and social concerns are not uncommon for gifted students to be facing and are situations that I come across every year.

As a staff, we have implemented different types of lessons each year into our classrooms to try to meet the needs of our students. These lessons have varied from year to year because of the students who were in our program and the needs that they had in the given year. In addition, some years the teachers and staff were able to do more because there were counseling interns in our school who wanted to work with our program more as their focus, which allowed for more programming, while other years this has not been an option. The teachers and staff have noticed an inconsistency in our programming and an inconsistency in how we meet the needs of our students' social and emotional needs.

Each year the program surveys our students and parents about how they feel our program is meeting the students' needs. We ask them a variety of questions, including how they feel our program is overall meeting the needs of their student academically, developmentally, and social and emotionally. Over the past four years of data (2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016 and 2016-2017) we have continually noticed that the lowest overall score for our program has been social and emotional needs. This is consistent when we look at both the middle school parent and student data (Buffalo Hanover Montrose Schools, 2014-2017). The 2016-2017 school year data showed that the middle school parents ranked the social and emotional needs as a 3.5 out of 5 and the middle school students as a 3.1 out of 5 (Buffalo Hanover Montrose Schools, 2017). This

is significantly lower than a score of 4.3 out of 5 for parents and 4.6 out of 5 for students in regards to meeting the students' academic needs (Buffalo Hanover Montrose Schools, 2017).

Given that the surveys consistently indicate a greater need for social and emotional support for gifted students and given my own observations of these students' social and emotional needs, the focus of: *how can staff address the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students in a middle school, school within a school gifted and talented program?* seemed like the obvious choice for my capstone because it would help improve our program, but more importantly help the students that the program was created to serve.

Impact of the Project

The impact of this project will reach many different stakeholders in our district including staff, students, parents, and the gifted school within a school model program itself.

Students. The main focus of this project is to help bridge the asynchronous gap between academic and social and emotional needs of our students in our full time gifted and talented program. By developing this curriculum, the students will be able to get their needs better met within our program and they will be more successful in and out of the classroom. The program will be developed so that there will be consistent language used across classrooms and grade levels for consistency and scaffolding so students can continue to grow. As teachers, we want our students to be successful once they leave our

classroom, and by teaching them these social and emotional (affective) skills we are helping to ensure that.

Staff. The staff will benefit from this project as well because they will have access to a curriculum that will help meet the needs of their students. By having the social and emotional needs of their students better met, it will also help them be more successful academically in all classrooms. This is because, when students are better able to navigate their social world and own emotions, they can better focus on the academic parts of their day. The resources are going to be housed on a shared Google Drive which will give teachers access to information and curriculum that will improve their knowledge on the topic of social and emotional needs of the gifted. Having a common curriculum that all staff will be able to use across the board will help our curriculum be more reliable because it will no longer be dependent on a single staff person and it will be able to survive any staff changes to the program.

Parents/Guardians. As critical members of any successful school, parents need to be involved in this conversation about the social and emotional curriculum being taught in our gifted and talented classes. There will be a parent letter and communication sent home to help educate parents on the importance of the social emotional learning curriculum that will have a more formal role in the classroom than it used to. It will also include helpful resource links to further their understanding and education in this area. By communicating this change and the reasons behind it to parents, our hope is that we will increase parent support. It will also help parents at home with conversations with

their children. They will be included in this process because they are a crucial part of their child's success beyond the school walls.

Program. Currently our program offers some social and emotional education to our students, but by having a strong, consistent social and emotional curriculum along with a strong academic curriculum, our overall program will be strengthened. This will allow for our program to grow and our survey data to hopefully improve in the social and emotional category along with it.

Overview of Project

I developed a curriculum to infuse social and emotional curriculum into the four core subjects (English, Math, Science, and Social Studies) for sixth to eighth grade to answer the question *how can staff address the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students in a middle school, school within a school gifted and talented program?* This curriculum is housed on a shared Google Drive so that all teachers will have access to the strategies, common language, and resources. There is also a letter that will have information for parents so that they have a better understanding of asynchronous development in gifted students and the importance of social and emotional education within a program like ours.

Conclusion

Social and emotional education is critical in a full time gifted and talented program for middle school students. My program has shown that it is an area of growth and that our students will benefit from a consistent, well thought out curriculum that also includes parent education. This will not only benefit the students, but also the staff,

parents and strength of the program overall. I have a true desire to help these students be successful and for many of them, their asynchronous development is getting in the way. With the implementation of this curriculum and teaching of important strategies, the hope is that, over time, they would be able to bridge that gap and become whatever they want to be in the future.

In chapter 2, I look at the research behind asynchronous development in gifted and talented students and the best practices for teaching social and emotional strategies with gifted and talented students. After reviewing the literature, in chapter 3 I will explain how I developed the curriculum and created the website to house it and the information for the parents and students. Finally, in chapter 4 I will reflect on the process of creating my capstone project and the impact that it had on me professionally.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Overview

As a teacher advances in their career, it is easy to begin to reflect on their education preparation that they had in their undergraduate program. Most programs do a great job of preparing future teachers in the content area that they will be teaching. Teacher education programs teach classroom management strategies, education pedagogy, technology integration, and even spend a good amount of time on special education. Where the gap lies in most programs is a subcategory of education, and that tends to be in the area of gifted education. Courses spend little time training teachers on who these students are, let alone how to meet the needs of this population of students. Some schools only provide one hour focused on gifted students as part of a special education course (Dr. Postma, 2015). Although education preparation programs are starting to educate future teachers on the social and emotional needs of their students, there are a lot of gaps in preparing future educators to meet the affective needs of gifted students. In this chapter I discuss the literature that will help me answer the question, *how can staff address the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students in a middle school, school within a school gifted and talented program?*

I start by defining and discussing asynchronous development and how this impacts the gifted student population. This research is key to understanding my second focus of the literature review, the affective (social and emotional) needs of the gifted students. I then review the five main intensities for the gifted and talented student

population: intellectual, psychomotor, imaginal, emotional and sensual, as well as the social and emotional concern about peer relationships that go along with this group of students. Next, twice-exceptional students, or students who are gifted and also have been diagnosed with a learning disability, or social/behavioral disorder, are explored and how their affective needs are different than a traditional gifted student's needs. Finally, I discuss affective (social and emotional) curriculums; the implications of having a school within a school model on the social and emotional well being of students and what the literature shows for affective curricular development to meet the needs of this group of students. I also review some of the recommended strategies to utilize within a curriculum, as well as key stakeholders that should be involved in the implementation and development of a social emotional learning curriculum.

Asynchronous Development

One of the main characteristics that gifted students have is that many of them are asynchronous in their development. According to the Social Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG, 2011), asynchronous development is defined as “an uneven rate of development in cognitive, affective, and physical domains” (p.1). The level of asynchrony will vary from child to child, as will their level of giftedness. The type of asynchrony will also vary depending on what areas of development are stronger in each child (Jean Goerss, 2011).

Challenges of Asynchronous Development. While all students have some degree of asynchrony, gifted and talented students have a greater degree of it (Cross, 2016; Daniels & Piechowski, 2009; Jean Goerss, 2011; Peterson, 2009). These

challenges can range from having few to no good, strong friendships (Cross, 2016; Jean Goerss, 2011; Wiley, 2016), getting frustrated because of expectations on themselves that cannot be achieved (Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented, 2007), to having difficulty with handwriting because their mind is working at such a fast rate that their fine motor skills are not able to keep up with them (Walker, 1991). More about these challenges will be discussed in the next section on social and emotional needs as asynchronous development is the root of many of the affective (social and emotional) needs of this group of students.

Social and Emotional Needs of Gifted Students

Students who are gifted and talented have a unique social and emotional need, partly because of their asynchronous development, but also because of their inherent intellectual abilities and how that makes them experience things in different ways. These traits become more evident in the middle school years (Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented, 2017). Sometimes students who are high achieving or gifted and talented are able to hide these needs because their academic achievement is so high, or teachers feel that there are other students with more pressing concerns (Moon, 2009). That makes it even more important to seek out these concerns and address them, because the longer they are hidden or unmanaged the more damaging they can be to a student.

In order for these students to be successful in the classroom, the different intensities that they have due to these social and emotional exceptionalities need to be understood and addressed. The intensities are: intellectual, psychomotor, imaginal, emotional and sensual, first known as overexcitabilities by Kazimierz Dabrowski

(Daniels & Piechowski, 2009; Galbraith & Delisle, 2011). It is important to note that not all gifted and talented students will show these intensities in the same way or to the same degree; each student is unique with their needs and processing. Teachers and staff that work with these students need to be trained and familiar with these intensities and some of the ways to overcome and embrace the intensities (Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented, 2017; Meeting the needs of high ability and high potential learners in the middle grades, 2005; NAGC pre-K-grade 12 gifted education programming standards, 2010).

In addition to these intensities I also address the literature regarding peer relationships. This will be discussed following the five intensities as some of the causes of struggling with peer relationships are the result of the intensities or can be related back to them.

Intellectual Intensity. It is important to start off with the fact that intellectual intensity is different than a student's intelligence. Intellectual intensity is the driving force behind a student's desire to figure things out and observe their world around them (Galbraith & Delisle, 2011). Oftentimes gifted and talented students who have intellectual intensities will look at the world and see the big issues that are going on. While most students their age would possibly not even notice the issue, these students will not only notice, but feel driven to solve the problem. When these problems are beyond their locus of control this can be very difficult for them to accept and process emotionally (Casper, 2017; Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented, 2007; Schmitz & Galbraith, 1985). Finding ways for these students to find solutions to the

problems that are within their locus of control can help them feel success and also build connections between their interests and concerns for world social justice issues. It is also important to help them process these big, global issues as sometimes, due to their asynchronous development, they are processing situations beyond what they are emotionally ready for or capable of processing.

This intellectual intensity might also be what drives them to learn and figure out problems on a daily basis and in the classroom as well. It is a curiosity that is within them (Galbraith & Delisle, 2011). Students that are intellectually intense will ask a lot of questions and often times are thinking about why things are the way they are. These students need opportunities to explore their deep interests and be taught how to do inquiry based research, so they can answer their questions. While it is true that sometimes having these inquisitive students in class can be difficult, teachers can learn ways to harness this energy and help the student(s) focus it in ways that will benefit both the student(s) and class as a whole (Daniels & Meckstroth, 2009). For instance, one strategy might involve limiting the number of questions as a way to encourage students to ask thoughtful questions or hold questions until another time of day.

Psychomotor Intensity. This intensity relates to the bodily energy that some students experience on an intense level because of built up intensity. Students with this intensity will show signs of extra movement in the classroom and daily life and expressive behaviors as well (Galbraith & Delisle, 2011). This intensity expresses itself in a variety of ways, from physical to verbal, and can impact a student's ability to function in the classroom and in their regular everyday life outside of school.

Students often tend to move on a regular basis with this intensity. They are often asked to stop or to take their seats in class. These students need to be taught ways to cope with this intensity within confines of school expectations, while on the other side, schools need to work on ways to accommodate expectations to help meet the needs of this intensity. Teachers can help with this by varying the types of activity to include movement for students and also allowing students options that allow for fidgets that are not too distracting. Allowing students to stand and work or walk and work is another strategy within the classroom that can benefit these students. Students with this intensity also can find release through sports or other physical activities (Daniels & Meckstroth, 2009).

Another way that this intensity plays out in a student's life is verbally. Students who have psychomotor intensity tend to talk about topics for longer than someone would expect, or at times appreciate. This can impact relationships with peers as it can be a challenge for people to listen to a topic for an extended period of time if they are not engaged or interested in the topic of conversation. Having a time limit can be a good way for students to practice this skill (Daniels & Meckstroth, 2009).

The minds and bodies of students with psychomotor intensity are constantly going and thinking, so it can take more time at the end of the day for them to slow down and to finally be able to fall asleep. Working with these students to develop relaxation techniques is a great way to help them quiet their brains and bodies at the end of the day (Daniels & Meckstroth, 2009).

Imaginational Intensity. This intensity is related to a student's ability to use their imagination. Students with imaginational intensity will show signs of fantasy, invention and great creativity (Daniels & Meckstroth, 2009; Galbraith & Delisle, 2011). Sometimes, when a student is very intense, the line between imagination and reality can blur for them, causing challenges. It is up to the adults in their life to help guide them through these two worlds, while still encouraging their creativity and imagination. It is important to be careful when doing this so that one does not discourage their creativity (Daniels & Meckstroth, 2009).

Students with this intensity thrive with the opportunity to be creative with projects and explore their ideas in a variety of different ways. Offering these students choice in how they show their learning is a great way for them to express their imaginational intensity (Galbraith & Delisle, 2011). This will allow them to demonstrate their learning creatively.

Emotional Intensity. Students with emotional intensity feel emotions on a deep level that can at times even connect to intense physical symptoms. Their emotions take over their entire body and mind (Daniels & Meckstroth, 2009; Galbraith & Delisle, 2011). These students can benefit from being empathetic and understanding how their peers are feeling or what others are going through. At the same time they can struggle because they get frustrated that a classmate is not feeling the same way they are and they do not know why (Daniels & Meckstroth, 2009).

Students with this intensity are often more sensitive and take criticism to heart. It is important to explain things clearly to these students. They need opportunities to see

their successes and also to be taught how to read emotions and feelings in others so that they can react more appropriately to emotional situations (Schmitz & Galbraith, 1985).

Students who have emotional intensity need to have a space where they can express their emotions and process their emotions through relaxation or journaling. Learning how to express their emotions is the first step in learning how to process their emotions. along with knowing the signs for when their emotions are starting to take over or when they are getting frustrated or overwhelmed by their emotions (Daniels & Meckstroth, 2009). By learning these skills, the students can manage their emotions more effectively and be more productive.

Sensual Intensity. Students with sensual intensity experience the five senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch) at an intensified level. They are said to see the world through their feelings. This can be a positive intensity where they take great joy and pleasure in the increased experience. It can also be a negative intensity where a student is extremely bothered by the increased sensitivity to that sense or those senses (Daniels & Meckstroth, 2009; Fonseca, 2011; Galbraith & Delisle, 2011).

It is important to be mindful of sensory needs when working with students who have this intensity. If they are experiencing a positive sensory experience, it is important to help them monitor the extent to which they are exposing themselves to that sense. For example, if it is a taste that brings them great joy, make sure that they are not overeating. However, if it is a negative experience, teachers need to be mindful of students' sensory needs and help them find coping strategies or an environment that will be suitable to their intensity so that they can focus and learn (Daniels & Meckstroth, 2009).

Because students with sensual intensity react to and experience emotions at a greater level, it is important to point out the research that discusses brain development in adolescents of middle school age. Because the brain is not fully developed, especially in the prefrontal cortex, these gifted students are less likely to understand facial and vocal expression accurately, causing their already intensified brain to overreact to a situation. In order to limit misunderstandings and help control their emotional reactions, students with sensual intensity need to be taught that if they are unsure of another person's emotions, to ask for clarification (Fonseca, 2011).

Peer Relationships. Gifted students are aware of the fact that they are different from their peers. They know that they think differently, feel differently and in many cases react differently in a variety of situations. Because of this, gifted and talented students often struggle with making friends and often feel isolated (Schmitz & Galbraith, 1985; Silverman, 2011). Along with this self-awareness, gifted students have a tendency to be hard on themselves and the people around them, and some have the inherent need to be right. These factors compound the difficulty of making and keeping friends (Fonseca, 2011; MEGT, (Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented), 2007).

One solution to making friends is to allow students to interact with different age groups. By doing so students are more likely to find someone that is intellectually at their same level and they will be able to find a like minded friend with similar interests. Due to the social and emotional needs, intensities, and asynchronous development, this relationship may not always be found in the same age group or grade level as the gifted and talented student in school (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009).

Twice-Exceptional Students

Within the gifted and talented student population there is a sub-group of students that have a unique set of social and emotional needs. This group of students are often referred to as twice-exceptional students. These students have been identified as gifted and talented with an advanced ability in a certain area, but also have been diagnosed with a disability. The disability can be a physical, emotional, social, or academic (Sornik, 2011). For the purpose of this literature review, I will focus on the social/emotional and academic disabilities as they have a more direct connection to the capstone project.

Types of Twice-Exceptional Diagnosis. There are a variety of diagnoses that would lead to the label of twice-exceptional. Most of the common diagnoses include Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Specific Learning Disabilities (broad category which would include diagnoses such as dyslexia or basic difficulties in reading or math), Emotional Behavioral Disorder (broad category which would include diagnoses such as depression, anxiety, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, and others) (Foley-Nicpon, 2016). In order for a student or person to be considered twice-exceptional, they would need to have one of these diagnosis as well as a label of giftedness.

Impact Socially and Emotionally on Twice Exceptional Students. It would be impossible to explain the needs of each twice-exceptional child because each child and their needs are unique (Dr. Postma, 2015). However, there are some common needs that different groups of students have shown based on their twice-exceptionality that should

be taken into account when working with these students or when developing a curriculum.

According to Foley-Nicpon (2016), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is commonly associated with twice-exceptional students. It is the twice-exceptionality that is often portrayed in media and literature, but the degree of this twice-exceptionality truly depends on the individual. Individuals with this type of twice-exceptionality commonly face the challenge of poor social skills, which leads them to remove themselves from relationships and other peer situations. They also have behaviors that people might see as odd and struggle with changes in routine. In addition to these social challenges, inattention, hyperactivity, and sometimes depression are common concerns that come out in the research surrounding gifted students who are also diagnosed with ASD (Foley-Nicpon, 2016).

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is another common diagnosis for twice exceptional students. This is a difficult diagnosis because many of the tendencies that someone would expect to see in a person with ADHD are very similar to a gifted trait. When diagnosing a person who is gifted with ADHD, the accuracy of the diagnosis depends on using more than just a rating scale that will help ensure that other diagnoses, with similar behaviors are not missed (Foley-Nicpon, 2016). Another challenge with ADHD and giftedness is that oftentimes students who have this disability will compensate for it with their talents and achieve at a normal level for their age. This leads them to not achieve at their potential, but also not to get noticed by their teachers, therefore, not get diagnosed as twice-exceptional (Foley-Nicpon, 2016; Sornik, 2011).

Students with ADHD tend to struggle with social situations, withdrawing from classmates and friends. They have lower self-esteem and lower levels of reported happiness (Foley-Nicpon, 2016).

Another category of twice-exceptional learners is Specific Learning Disability (SLD). Students in this category have a wide range of needs specific to their disability, however, overall they tend to withdraw from social situations and academic situations that fall within their area of difficulty. They also have trouble with changes in routine and sometimes are hyperactive (Foley-Nicpon, 2016). Students who are twice-exceptional with SLD can get angry and sometimes aggressive when they have not been taught how to cope with their frustration by a variety of things, but a main cause of frustration is over how much effort they put into their work compared to what they get out of it (Foley-Nicpon, 2016; Strop & Goldman, 2011).

Students of all types of twice-exceptionality can face a variety of emotions because they have to work harder than their intellectual peers. The extra work comes from needing to navigate not only the gifted world, but also strategies to help them with the unique challenges that their other diagnoses creates. They can be frustrated with themselves for not understanding concepts that they feel should come easily to them, or not meeting the expectations that teachers and parents are placing on them (King, 2005; Strop & Goldman, 2011). Students often try to gain control of situations that make them uncomfortable by avoiding them. This can spiral into underachievement and bigger issues of depression and anxiety if students are not given the skills to cope and manage their feelings and needs (Strop & Goldman, 2011).

Ways to Address Social and Emotional Concerns of Twice-Exceptional

Students. Twice-exceptional students have more social and emotional needs than typical gifted and talented students. They need to have more services and programs available to them. It is also important to note that the research shows that parents and teachers often indicated that twice-exceptional learners had a higher need socially and emotionally than the students indicated themselves (Foley-Nicpon, 2016). This shows that students who are twice-exceptional are not always as self-aware; this should also be a part of the work that is done with this group of students.

While all gifted and talented students need perseverance, resilience, and social and emotional curriculum in their schools, twice-exceptional students need it even more so because of the two worlds that they are living in. They need to be taught how to compensate for their challenges and how to shine where they have gifts (King, 2005; Strop & Goldman, 2011). They also need to learn how to be a self-advocate. Learning how to set and achieve goals and having emotional support along the way is a huge step in ensuring a student's success (Foley-Nicpon, 2016). Working with these students on executive functioning skills such as organization can also be very beneficial, because many of the challenges twice-exceptional students face lead to organizational and time management challenges (Sornik, 2011).

Affective (Social and Emotional) Curriculum

The research on intensities, social and emotional needs, and twice-exceptional students makes it apparent that gifted and talented students need extra support in social emotional learning in order to be successful. According to the Supporting the Emotional

Needs of the Gifted [SENG] (2011), “if normal social and emotional development tasks are not accomplished, the best curriculum in the world will not make up for the resulting handicaps” (p. 1). Accelerated curriculum, enrichment opportunities, and challenging or rigorous lessons cannot take the place of an affective curriculum for gifted and talented students. Solely focusing on academics can even make the social and emotional needs worse, and the asynchronous gap greater (Ferguson, 2011). Teachers of gifted and talented students need to develop and implement curriculum that will benefit the students academically as well as socially.

Impact of Alternative Gifted Programming. One way that schools try to help minimize some of the social and emotional concerns is to put students who are gifted and talented in the same classroom, which is sometimes called cluster grouping, or a school within a school model. These students are combined because they have similar ability. The hope is that they will be able to receive appropriate education at a higher level than they would in a traditional classroom setting. Some schools will accelerate courses, or enrich them in different ways when these students are grouped together. Schools also hope that by placing students in these classrooms that they will be able to meet the social needs of these students because they will be in a classroom of intellectually similar peers who understand each other because they think the same way (Adams-Byers, Whitsell, & Moon, 2004; Schmitz & Galbraith, 1985).

While it can be true that homogeneous grouping can be positive for the academic side of student learning, it can also lead to challenges in the social and emotional arena. Students view themselves differently when they are in an all gifted and talented

classroom as compared to a heterogeneous classroom. When students no longer see themselves as the smartest in the class, this can have a dramatic impact on their self-identity and for some students a deep impact on their self-esteem. There is also a chance of an increase of stress because of more challenge and competition within their classroom that was not present in the heterogeneous classroom. It has been indicated that there is still a lack of research in this area and that there needs to be more research to show the impact of homogeneous grouping on students' social and emotional learning (Adams-Byers, Whitsell, & Moon, 2004; Plucker & Dilley, 2016).

Mind Up Curriculum. One type of social and emotional curriculum that is currently available on the market is called Mind Up. This curriculum has 15 lessons and is available for grades preschool to eight. They focus on four pillars: Neuroscience, Positive Psychology, Mindful Awareness, and Social Emotional Learning. They cover a variety of topics ranging from gratitude, to mindfulness, to looking at different perspectives. Over 10 years of research on this program demonstrate the success of these lessons (Hawn Foundation, 2018). Critics of this program claim that it is not a full social-emotional curriculum, instead it focuses more on stress relief and relaxation strategies (Casper, 2017b). This curriculum also does not claim to be formatted for gifted students.

Second Step Curriculum. Another social and emotional curriculum that is available is called Second Step. This program offers a combination of weekly 25-minute lessons and advisory activities to be used with the students. Second Step focuses on four areas: mindset and goals, values and friendships, emotions and decision making, and

serious peer conflicts (Committee for Children, 2018). Critics of this program have questioned their research because none of it was done with gifted students. They also question the fact that the curriculum was made for normal developmental levels, and with asynchrony being the norm for gifted students, the curriculum may not be a good fit (Casper, 2017). Second step does not specify lessons for gifted students, rather it is geared for the general education classroom.

Lions Quest. Lions Quest is another social and emotional learning program that is available. This curriculum focuses on activities and journals for the students to reflect and process. They have six areas of focus within their lessons: Positive Behavior; Connection to School; Character Education; Anti-Bullying; Drug, Alcohol, and Tobacco Awareness; and Service Learning (Lions Clubs International, 2015). This curriculum is not designed specifically for gifted students.

One Size Fits All Curriculum. When thinking about adding a curriculum to a gifted and talented program, it would be easy to adopt a pre-designed curriculum that is already created for this purpose. However, research shows that there is not a curriculum out there that is ready to meet the needs of gifted and talented students, and if there is one that claims to meet the need of the entire gifted population, it should be looked at with caution (Casper, 2017). Many of the curriculums that are targeted towards this group of students are created by people who have no background in gifted education. They do not meet the needs of gifted students because they are too simplistic in their examples (not real life), or they are sequential and do not take into account the actual needs that students have in that age group (depending on asynchronous development) or the needs of the

specific group of students. It is important to keep in mind that it is impossible for a pre-packaged curriculum to meet the needs of this entire group because the needs vary from group to group and student to student (Casper, 2017b).

Identification of Student Needs. It is important to know the students in a program. Who are the students the program is servicing, and what are their unique needs and talents? This is something that might change from year to year and even quarter to quarter or semester to semester, so finding a way to check in with the kids on issues that are bothering them, or skills that they may need help in is key to the success of any social and emotional curriculum. This process will help with topic selection (Casper, 2017a; Delisle et al., 2002; Peterson & Lorimer, 2011). One way to understand a students' needs is the CASPER Assessment for Social Emotional Skills (CASES), which is a rubric that helps teachers see where a student's strengths and weaknesses are on a number of areas within the area of social and emotional measures (Casper, 2017a).

Program Purpose. It is also important to know the purpose of the program and to share that purpose with key stakeholders: teachers who are teaching the program, teachers and staff who are working with the students in the school, parents, and the students themselves (Peterson & Lorimer, 2011). When everyone understands the purpose of the program, there are no secrets and no one is wondering why the activities or groups are taking place, and students are more likely to be engaged and present in them.

Types of Programs/Activities. Once the purpose is clear and the stakeholders are known, it is time to determine the curriculum that will be developed and used. There are

a variety of options available, and the majority of researchers would argue that there needs to be a variety of strategies used in order to meet the needs of all of the learners.

When developing social and emotional activities for gifted and talented students, it is important to make sure that they are based on real life situations that the students can relate to and find value in; otherwise they will feel as if it is a waste of time. On the same note, teachers should make connections whenever possible to the content so that the students can see how the topics and content relate to one another, just as they would in the real world. Teachers should be careful not to create situations where students are forced into partnering with people they are not comfortable with, or into embarrassing situations. This can lead to a negative situation that causes students to revert back to intensities that the program is trying to overcome (Casper, 2017).

A common form of curriculum is based around small group discussion about key topics related to the needs of the gifted and talented. This is a great way to hear what the students are experiencing and thinking. When doing this, teachers should make sure that there is enough time for meaningful discussion to take place so that students find value in the activity (Peterson & Lorimer, 2011).

Another activity that could be included along with the discussion is using cartoons. This strategy allows students to either create or analyze a cartoon related to a social or emotional situation that has been discussed. By doing this, they are able to remove themselves from the situation, which makes them feel more comfortable in the discussion (Rule & Montgomery, 2013).

Using books or bibliotherapy is another strategy that could be included in the creation of a curriculum. This format uses a book, article, or story that was chosen with a specific message or lesson in mind. There is pre-reading involved, followed by reading the selection, but the majority of the time is spent on reflecting on the message and processing it together. The reflecting focuses on more “why” questions to get at the meaning behind the story instead of finding specific content in the story (Schlichter & Burke, 1994).

Including executive functioning skills within the topical discussions and activities is important to the success of the students’ social and emotional well being as well (Dawson & Guare, 2010). According to Dawson and Guare (2010), “Executive skills allow us to manage our emotions and monitor our thoughts in order to work more efficiently and effectively” (p. 91). Students need to practice these skills to keep building pathways in the brain. Executive functioning takes place in the prefrontal cortex. This part of the brain develops significantly in the middle school years and young adolescent years. It is through repetition that pathways are formed in this part of the brain, which is why it is important to add lessons on executive functioning tasks such as making and achieving goals and problem solving, and incorporate repeating opportunities for them to practice so they can be more successful at learning these skills (Dawson & Guare, 2010).

By varying the instruction and finding real life situations that meet the needs of students’ social and emotional needs, teachers will be helping to fill the gaps that the academic curriculum cannot fill on its own. This also includes finding ways to connect the social and emotional curriculum to the classroom lessons and standards.

Stakeholders in Planning Social Emotional Learning

Research shows that a program needs to get many stakeholders on board when it comes to the effectiveness of implementing a social and emotional curriculum in a gifted and talented program (Minnesota Educators for the Gifted and Talented, 2011). The people who need to be involved will depend on the school or district that is planning to implement the curriculum. However, there are key people who need to be involved in any program in order for it to be successful.

Administration. One key stakeholder is the administration. The administration is key because their support can impact not only the ability of the curriculum to be developed, but also the training for staff who are going to be implementing the curriculum and the implementation itself. Administrators should also be interacting with the gifted students and should be knowledgeable of the affective needs of the students and the curriculum that is being used (Minnesota Educators for the Gifted and Talented, 2011).

Counselors. Another group that is needed are the counselors. Counselors are a key part of the social and emotional team. They can work with the teachers and students on strategies to help with the intensities the students are facing in large group settings and should also be working one on one with gifted and talented students (Wood, 2010). According to Wood (2010), studies show that counselors do not receive enough training in their preparation programs on gifted students; how they think and process information and could benefit from more professional development in this field. This is important because counselors are a crucial part to the success of this group of students (Wood,

2010). The National Association for Gifted Children Gifted Programming Standards includes counselors as an integral part of the programming (NAGC pre-K-grade 12 gifted education programming standards, 2010).

Teachers. The teachers who will be teaching the program are also important stakeholders. These teachers need to have enough training to be prepared to teach the curriculum in order to make it a meaningful experience for the students (Casper, 2017a; Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented, 2007; NAGC pre-K-grade 12 gifted education programming standards, 2010). It needs to be determined which teachers will be implementing the curriculum. In addition, certain factors need to be considered, such as whether will it be an all school implementation of gifted programming, subject based, a pull out, or another method. No matter the format, all teachers should be involved or knowledgeable in the preparation and implementation of the program. This is because all teachers will benefit from gifted education training. According to the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC), teachers who receive training on gifted education are more likely to have classrooms that demonstrate experiences in critical thinking, variety, and opportunity for student expression (Minnesota Educators for the Gifted and Talented, 2011).

Conclusion

In Chapter 2, I reviewed the relevant literature to assist in answering the question, *how can staff address the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students in a middle school, school within a school gifted and talented program?* First it was important to understand what it means for a gifted and talented student to be asynchronous. Then I

went into the literature surrounding the social and emotional needs of the gifted and talented student, focusing on the different intensities: intellectual, psychomotor, imaginal, emotional, and sensual. I continued with research surrounding the social-emotional needs of a subgroup of gifted students, the twice-exceptional students. Finally, I reviewed the literature on homogenous gifted classrooms and the development of an affective curriculum, looking at what should be considered when developing a curriculum, some strategies that have been effectively utilized in social and emotional lessons, and the stakeholders who should be involved in the development and implementation of the curriculum.

In Chapter 3, I share the development and design of the affective curriculum and for the middle school, school within a school gifted program and a Google Drive to house the curriculum and parent communications and resources. I also explain the curriculum framework and reasoning for choosing it for my final project.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Introduction

In this chapter I explain the social emotional learning curriculum project that was developed for my capstone project in order to address my research question: *how can staff address the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students in a middle school, school within a school gifted and talented program?* This question stemmed from my work with a gifted program, and the need and desire to fill a vacancy within the affective areas of our program model. Through my research that was explained in chapter two, it became clear that a social emotional learning program was necessary for the overall well being of the gifted students in our program.

Throughout this chapter I explain what my project is and the goals of the program. I also share my reasoning for choosing Understanding by Design as my curriculum framework. Next, I explain my format for the curriculum project and share some of the content that will be covered in the lessons. The setting and audience that the curriculum is designed for will also be described.

Overview of the Project

This project is the development of a social emotional learning curriculum for gifted and talented students. I developed a series of lessons that can be embedded in any academic instructional setting within a gifted and talented program. In my literature review I assessed different programs, and the research showed that there was no curriculum that would meet all of the needs of the gifted students in our program.

However, there are pieces of curriculums that have been developed that will be used as the foundation of our three year social and emotional learning curriculum cycle.

The program was developed with the specific social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students in mind. In order to have a more thorough curriculum than one that is already published, this project took some of the lessons from the *Mind Up Curriculum* (The Hawn Foundation, 2011), along with adapted and self-created lessons and activities that students will experience.

There is a a three year rotation schedule created to create a scope and sequence of the social emotional learning that will take place within the program during the three years. The curriculum also includes lessons and activities that are stand alone on specific topics that may not be needed every year, or only with small groups of students. Example topics would include what it means to be gifted for the students that are new to the program, and how to understand and help your friend who is suffering with depression.

The curriculum is housed on a shared Google Drive so that all staff members have access to the lessons and information. There is also a letter for parents that explains the program and gives them resources so they can access information on what social emotional learning is, the importance of it, and what they can do at home to support what is happening in the classroom.

Curriculum Framework

The curriculum framework that I chose for my social emotional learning curriculum is Understanding by Design (UbD), developed by Wiggins and McTighe

(2011). This framework was chosen because it melds two key concepts of curriculum design: “research on learning and cognition...and assessing for understanding,” (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011, p. 3) and a process for curriculum writing.

Eight Key Concepts of Understanding by Design. There are eight concepts within UbD curriculum development. The first is that it is a way to think about the curriculum you are developing; it encourages reflection on the process instead of a specific outline needed. Secondly, the main goal is to ensure students grasp the concepts that are being taught and to take their learning beyond the lesson. Third, it connects the curriculum to the standards that need to be covered, as well as the standards for gifted education. Next, it builds on students’ ability to show their learning in a variety of meaningful ways. The curriculum is developed in a backwards way starting with the assessment and goals and then developing lessons to meet those goals. In this method, teachers are the facilitators, not givers of information. This fits best with my teaching style, as well as provides a way to allow students to take ownership of their own social and emotional learning. This framework encourages teachers and staff to reflect on and make revisions to the units on a regular basis to ensure that it is working as effectively as it can. Finally, looking at student performance is what allows the lesson to move forward and that formative assessment is built into the curriculum framework (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011).

Understanding the Meaning of Understanding. The ultimate goal of any curriculum is to ensure that students understand the material. UbD defines understanding in a way that is distinct from the common definition. Through this curriculum process

the concept of understanding goes beyond recall of facts and into the arena of application (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011). This is very important with gifted students who need real life examples and application in order to grasp the importance and value of the material (Casper, 2017).

Backward Design. UbD focusses on starting with the end product and goals and then working backward to the activities that will ensure you get the students there. It is important for a teacher to understand what they want the students to know, how they will know that they grasped the content, and how they will help the students get the knowledge and understanding that they need to be successful (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011).

Stages of Curriculum Development with UbD. There are three stages of backward design. Stage one is where the long-term goals for understanding are determined. The developer creates essential questions to help guide the students and their learning in this stage (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011).

Stage two is very closely tied to stage one. The curriculum designer must determine what evidence they will have that the objectives and goals were met. This could be done in a variety of ways and should include both formative and summative evidence (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011).

Stage three is the final step where the developer designs learning activities to help the students gather knowledge and understanding to meet the stated goals. This is where the sequence of lessons and activities are viewed to ensure they are aligned with stage one and two (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011).

This process is documented in the UbD template (Appendix A), which allows the curriculum developer to document the three steps and ensure that the outcome is met. I chose to use the simpler template because it allowed for greater flexibility and it would help the teachers who are not yet familiar with the curriculum framework. This template still ensures that all aspects of the curriculum writing process are considered and documented, which was important to me when making my decision (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011).

The Curriculum Cycle

The curriculum is broken down into three years with individual lessons on different topics. The first year of the curriculum (6th grade) is focused on identity: both the students' own identity as a gifted student and the identity of the gifted program in the middle school. The second year (7th grade) builds on that idea and focuses on community and relationships with others. The final year of the program (8th grade) returns to the topic of identity, but reaching wider into the students' role in the world. Topics will include content such as: mindfulness, how to handle perfectionism and stress, how to respectfully disagree, active listening, understanding perspectives, self-esteem verses self-image, and more.

The curriculum will have stand alone lessons that can be implemented in any of the gifted classes. The hope is that teachers will find connections with these lessons and their class content that can enhance the teaching of the concepts and ideas. This is not something that can be accomplished in this project but is the hope for an outcome from this project.

Setting and Curriculum Audience

This curriculum was designed for 6th-8th grade gifted students who are a part of a school within a school program in a second ring suburb public school. This school is made up of students who are 90% caucasian, 4% Hispanic, 3% of 2 or more races, 1% Asian and 1% African American (MN Department of Education, 2017). The school has 25.2% of the students using the free and reduced lunch program (US Department of Education, 2018).

The specific students from this school qualify for the gifted program through achievement test scores and the Cognitive Ability Test (CogAT), as well as teacher and parent recommendations and any outside testing data that they may have. Students are generally in the top 2-3% of the class if they qualify for the gifted services.

As of a 2013-2014 school year survey on the program, 50.3% of the students were male and 49.7% were female. Of the 175 students in the entire gifted program (2nd-9th grade), 1.1% identify as Asian, .6% identify as Black, 1.7% identify as Hispanic, and 96.6% identify as White (BHM Schools, 2013).

This curriculum is designed to be utilized in the school within a school setting so that there is consistency within the gifted students' four core subject areas: English, math, science, and social studies. The intention of the implementation in each subject is for the students to be able to see the social emotional learning taking place across multiple subject areas and classrooms to offer authenticity and real life applications to their learning. It will also provide consistency within concepts and more opportunities to practice the concepts that are taught or discussed.

Conclusion

This chapter started by explaining the Understanding by Design framework that was chosen for this curriculum development. Evidence was shared about the process and the impact of creating a curriculum with this design using the authors Wiggins and McTighe (2011). The chapter also looked at and reviewed the importance of understanding and backward design within this framework and analyzed the three main stages that are a part of that process. I also shared the process that I used to plan the curriculum and shared some of the main topics that will be covered along with sample assessments that will ensure the goals have been met. Demographic data for the school and program that this curriculum is intended for was also explained.

In Chapter 4 I will go over what I have learned throughout the process of the literature review and curriculum development. The implications of the project, limitations of my project, and how this project benefits the profession are also explored.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusions

Introduction

The focus of my project was to get an answer to my research question: *how can staff address the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students in a middle school, school within a school gifted and talented program?* After working with gifted and talented students in a school within a school setting for eight years, it became clear to me that there needed to be a more cohesive and planned curriculum that will help meet the students' affective needs along with their academic needs. After completing my research, I was able to compile a three year, fifty-one lesson social emotional curriculum for 6th-8th grade students, covering a range of social and emotional topics directed towards gifted learners.

This chapter will take you through my reflection on the capstone project process. I will talk about what I have learned and revisit the literature review. I will also look into my final project and the implications and limitations that it has. Finally, I will discuss what I can do with this topic and project moving forward, and how I plan to implement this curriculum.

My Learnings from the Capstone Process

The capstone project process was more intense than I ever could have expected. When I started, people gave me great advice about setting aside time on a regular basis, making sure my family knew what they were signing up for, and that I took my time to find a topic that was very important to me and relevant to my line of work. They said

that these things would help make a long and difficult process very rewarding. I was warned that I would possibly hate my topic at times, but in the end it would be worth it, and all of these things were true for me.

I learned the value of family and a great support system. Very early on, I knew that I would not be able to complete this project without help and support. Being humble enough to ask for help on content related issues was one thing, but also needing help with childcare when I needed to work, with meal preparation and cleaning at home so I could dedicate more time to research or curriculum development was a wonderful growing experience for me. I am a very independent person, so this was difficult for me but very rewarding.

I learned a lot about research organization and the process of inquiry. I have done smaller projects in the past but nothing to this magnitude. Learning how to access many reliable resources from databases and journals was a great skill that I gained. I also learned more about organizing sources; RefWorks was an incredible tool that proved its value throughout this process from the literature review to the final project.

I also learned that it was important to be passionate about my topic and to allow myself to get immersed in the research and be able to see how it all comes together in the end. There were days when this was hard - after a long day at work or driving more than an hour to class - but knowing that there was a final outcome that truly mattered pulled me through.

I learned a lot about myself through the development of this capstone project. I learned that I was stronger and capable of more than I thought I could do. I learned that

my support system was invaluable, more skills for inquiry based research, and that it is okay to ask for help.

Literature Review

Once I had my topic chosen, even though I had some knowledge of the topic, I had to dig into the research and what the experts had to say to learn more. I found this to be one of the most challenging parts of the process because it was the most research I have ever done, and it had honestly been a while since I had completed a research project.

Inquiry did not cease to amaze me during the literature review process. Starting off with research on asynchronous development led me to a new area of focus: intensities in gifted students. This led me to think about different ways curriculums could be designed to meet the challenges and needs of the students and also to look at reviews for curriculums that already existed. When I thought I had covered the major topics, I realized I missed an entire category of the twice-exceptional students that I have in my classroom. One idea or topic led to another, which allowed me to get a better overview of the topics within my question.

There were so many amazing sources that I discovered through my literature review. The Social Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG, 2011) website included articles and resources that were a great overview of asynchronous development and the importance of social emotional learning in gifted classrooms. The book *When Gifted Kids Don't Have All The Answers* (Galbraith & Delisle, 2015) shared about the intensities of students, twice-exceptional students, and asynchrony in a way that included the impacts on students in the classroom. Kathleen Casper's article on canned

social-emotional curriculums offered insight into different programs that were currently available and their benefits and costs (Casper, 2017). There was more information than I honestly expected there to be regarding the social and emotional needs of gifted students in particular.

Even though there was a good amount of research on the needs of gifted students, I kept coming across the concern that there needed to be more research done with the social and emotional needs of gifted students in a homogeneous setting, like the one I teach in and that this curriculum was designed. There was research that suggested there were added stressors in the homogeneous setting, but I hope that in the future there is more research done in this area, as there seem to be more programs being created with homogeneous grouping.

I learned so much from my literature review. I learned key information that was used in my project, but I also found information along the way that I was able to directly take into my classroom. Learning about the different types of intensities of gifted students and how to better support them was one of these topics. This made the process of research easier because the application of the knowledge I was learning went beyond my capstone project and into my classroom for the day to day components.

The Final Project

My final project is a three year social and emotional curriculum that is intended to be used in 6th-8th grade school within a school gifted classroom setting. I developed these lessons with the social-emotional needs of the gifted learner in mind. There are also a series of lessons that do not fit in a certain year. Some of them are created as an

optional lesson to incorporate if a class or small group of students needs those lessons. Some were created to help students who enter the program after 6th grade to fill in some of the social-emotional gaps and also help them better understand the program and type of learner that they are. Most of the lessons in the curriculum are designed to be whole class lessons with activities that will carry over. Some of them, though, are best done in small groups with the students that are impacted by the topic. The curriculum is housed on a shared Google Drive so that all teachers in the program can access the lessons and resources to allow for more common vocabulary and practice of different skills across grade levels and content areas.

Successes. I feel that this curriculum project was a success because it has encompassed the many different unique needs that gifted students have, along with content that any middle school student would need to address. This has created a more well rounded social emotional learning curriculum that can be implemented into the classroom easily and with a lot of benefit.

This process has also allowed me to discuss with my principal options for implementation of lessons in small groups outside of the main classroom setting. I will be able to take on a new role for part of my day in the fall of 2018 to work on implementing these sessions with students during a time of day that will limit the loss of instructional time and increase the amount of small groups that can meet.

Implications. It became very clear throughout this process that in order to fully implement a social emotional learning curriculum into a gifted program there had to be dedicated time and resources to it. In order to make this project a success, having time to

make changes, add lessons, and implement the small group lessons will be very beneficial. The new position I have during our homeroom time will allow for that. I am grateful that our school is willing to put the time and resources into making this project a success

Limitations. When I started this project I had the idea that I would be able to develop lessons that would seamlessly fit into the classroom content of each content area (English, math, science and social studies)for each of the grades. When I was in the process of developing lessons, I realized that this was out of my locus of control. I am not able to create lessons for content that I do not teach and include these subjects.

Answers My Research Question. I feel that my capstone project answers my research question: *how can staff address the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students in a middle school, school within a school gifted and talented program?* My project gives the teachers, counselors, principals, and other stakeholders in our gifted and talented program resources to help meet our students' social and emotional needs.

Communication

I have had the benefit of working with a consulting team to help brainstorm the best topics for our group of students and to oversee the writing of my lessons. These members are some of the same staff that will be helping to implement this curriculum in the fall of 2018. The lessons will be copied onto a shared team drive on Google Drive so that we all have access to the information. The group is meeting this fall before school starts to communicate who is doing which pieces of the curriculum.

I also hope to share the curriculum at the Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented conference in the winter of 2020. This will allow me a full year to make any necessary changes and to continue to grow the curriculum before sharing it with my local gifted and talented teachers.

Benefit to Profession

It became clear early on, in both my personal experience as a teacher and in my research, that there was a gap when it came to a complete social-emotional learning curriculum. There were some curriculums developed without the gifted student in mind, and some that were geared towards gifted students but did not have all of the necessary topics and aspects of the regular and gifted student combined. By completing this project and connecting different resources together, this project fills that need in our field.

Moving Forward

Now that I have a set lesson structure and topics in place, I want to work with my team to implement this curriculum in the fall of 2018. Once I am able to share this with my team, I hope to be able to brainstorm ways together where the different lessons can be taught so students have a good understanding and then create a natural connection to a lesson or topic that is covered in the different classes.

I also want to continue to develop more lessons that can be used for specific groups of students and specific needs. The more resources I can continue to develop, the better off our program will be. I am aware that there is no way to predict all of the social and emotional needs our students will have, but by having this foundation and continuing

to take the time to develop additional lessons, our social and emotional tool box will remain full for our students.

I do not want my passion for social and emotional learning to fade. One way I plan to keep going is to work with my high potential services coordinator to improve our parent education. Specifically, we will work on communication and education related to asynchronous development and social and emotional learning. We have a start, but I am excited to see how it can grow and improve.

Summary

The process of developing a research question, doing a literature review, and creating a social and emotional learning curriculum has been an incredible experience; and one that has helped me to grow as a student, individual, and teacher. I know that the project I have developed will help not only our 6th-8th grade students but the staff that get to work with them as well. I look forward to the future and continuation and growth of this project.

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APPENDIX A

Understanding By Design TemplateAdapted From — Wiggins & McTighe, *Understanding By Design***Stage 1: Identify Desired Results****Established Goals****Enduring***Students will understand that...***Essential Questions***Students will be able to...***Stage 2: Determine Evidence for Assessing Learning****Performance Tasks:**

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Other Evidence:

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Stage 3: Build Learning Plan**Learning Activities:**

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