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Social Emotional Skills And Their Impact On Kindergarten Students

Sarah Hutchins-Haavisto
Hamline University

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Social Emotional Skills and their impact on Kindergarten Students

by

Sarah Hutchins-Haavisto

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

Hamline University

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

My Journey to Teaching the Whole Child

As a kindergarten teacher I have struggled to find the time to fit social emotional learning (SEL) into the schedule along with core academics. I have also found that it is essential to make time to teach SEL. According to the Every Student Succeeds act (2015) social emotional learning is the process of acquiring and applying the knowledge and skills necessary to manage and understand emotions, set goals, establish and maintain relationships and show and feel empathy. Given the importance of SEL skills for learning it is imperative that I find a way and time to teach explicit social emotional learning.

In my classroom, I use various trade books and picture books to teach SEL however, there is a need for a more explicit curriculum with common vocabulary and expectations that can be shared with my grade level team. Without a curriculum, my students are not given an opportunity to learn and practice social skills in a structured setting. The need for an explicit curriculum for teaching SEL evolved into the research question for this project - *How does teaching explicit social skills in the area of body awareness and communication impact prosocial behaviors in a kindergarten classroom?* The variables to explore will include the difference in prior knowledge between my students, the temperament of students, and outside forces that are out of our control.

In 2003 as a sophomore in high school it was clear my destiny was to be teacher. Not just any type of teacher but a special education teacher for students with emotional impairments. My goals have changed, but my passion for teaching social emotional learning has not. After

teaching students with emotional impairments and autism spectrum disorder for six years, I moved to teaching kindergarten.

I left the world of small groups and individualized lessons for a class of 20 students, who required instruction in many of the same skills I had been teaching in my special education classroom. Students in my class needed to not only focus on academics but also on personal space awareness, conflict resolution, peer relationships, behavior management, and emotional management. Numerous students came to school unprepared for being in a social setting with peers and lacking the skills necessary to participate fully in their education. My experience as a kindergarten teacher lead me to my capstone question and the development of this project.

Within this chapter the researcher will explore the purpose of the project and its desired goals. The project will include the exploration of which skills are necessary to include in a curriculum. This chapter explores the connection with social emotional learning and the researchers teaching experiences that have led to exploring this topic. The chapter also discusses what the project will look like and also include the impact it will have within a kindergarten setting as well as the potential for broader impact. This will be done while focusing on the needs of a child and how social emotional learning can impact them from k-12 and beyond.

Overview of SEL and The Purpose of this Capstone

Gresham and Elliott (1984) defined social skills as socially acceptable learned behaviors that enable a person to interact with others in ways that elicit positive responses and assist in avoiding negative responses. The authors also note how for many children this is something that needs to be explicitly taught. Gresham and Elliott (1984) also state that once they are taught these skills, children will be able to forge relationships with peers and use social awareness to understand the world around them.

The purpose of this project is to create a social emotional learning curriculum that meets the needs of a rural districts kindergarten program that will impact 70 students. After the curriculum is developed, it was integrated with our core curriculum. The curriculum was designed to give my students explicit instruction in a skill, and then follow up with support to practice skills in a structured setting. The curriculum also included a way to evaluate its impact on students by using a combination of behavior referral data and a pre- and post- assessment.

In 2017, as a first year kindergarten teacher it became clear through observation and interactions with students, that there were a large number of students who did not know how to coexist with other students. They were constantly putting their hands on one another, touching each other, or sitting too close; sometimes it was an okay touch, other times it was painful or inappropriate. Some children seemed to evolve and stop these behaviors after they were pointed out, but others still continued to struggle. There were some materials available to use as teaching aids, however no set curriculum to be used in the general education setting. The school counselor was able to teach a social skills based lunch group once a week that focused on relationship building, communication with peers, and disagreeing appropriately. This was often accomplished through games, role playing, and structured play.

With some intensive teaching on personal space and boundaries, the students in the social skills based lunch group suddenly were not bickering in line or smooshed next to a peer on the carpet. Their hands were now by their sides or giving an appropriate high five. They suddenly had friends on the playground and at lunch. By teaching these students appropriate prosocial behavior skills they were able to build and maintain or improve their relationships with peers, thus giving them a more positive school experience.

According to CASEL (2003) elementary students with a background of social emotional learning skills and prosocial behaviors are less likely to bully peers. Thus, teaching social emotional skills may decrease the incidences of bullying in schools, making them a safer place to attend and learn, which also leads to a reduced rate of absenteeism. Children with SEL skills become adults with these skills. Adults with well developed SEL skills are also prepared to be good citizens which according to CASEL (2003) includes:

- handling emotions in relationships effectively
- establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships based on cooperation
- negotiating solutions to conflict
- seeking help when needed.

These are foundational skills to building and maintaining relationships with peers and with other members of the community. Adults who have developed SEL are likely to have the interpersonal skills to be successful in the workplace and beyond.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) indicates that Social Emotional Learning is a cornerstone to success (US DOE, 2015). ESSA changes the scope of education from simply academics to a well rounded expectation, implying that schools are expected to meet the social emotional learning needs of their students. However, even with ESSA forcing an emphasis on social emotional learning, it is still not a tested standard. In an environment of No Child Left Behind (US DOE, 2001) required testing, my experience is that core subjects such as math and reading take much of the focus and leave little time for stressed educators to teach other subjects such as science, social studies, or social emotional learning. The goal in developing this curriculum is to make social emotional learning a topic that easily integrates with core subjects.

Integrating the teaching of SEL with core subjects allows teachers a way to teach them without feeling like they are giving up time to focus on something else. This also gives schools and districts a way to meet the social emotional standards of ESSA (US DOE, 2015).

Potential Significance of This Capstone Project for All Early Childhood Educators

The potential significance of social emotional learning in early childhood education is described by the Brookings Institute (2012). Their research documents that 48% of children living below the national poverty level were unprepared to enter kindergarten due to a lack of access to preschool programming. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2015) there is an equity issue with access to preschool education. The U.S. Department of Education studied access to preschool education in 2015. Their findings concluded that states, local communities, and parents need help to close the school readiness gaps between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Since preschool is one of the key environments in a child's life that helps them develop social skills, a lack of access means that students are not prepared with the skills they need for kindergarten.

By providing explicit social skills instruction in kindergarten and providing play based opportunities for practicing social skills, the goal of this project is to bridge the gap for children with limited preschool experience. Many teachers may not have access to curriculum that is affordable or integrates into their state standards. The goal of this project is to provide a curriculum that is easily accessible and joins with state standards.

Conclusion

As educators it is our responsibility to be willing to try something different and out of the box to meet the social emotional needs of our students. Teachers need to be champions for what

is best for students not just what standards are tested and provide social emotional learning opportunities to learn and practice prosocial behaviors. Taking on the challenge of explicit teaching of SEL has the potential to create lifelong learners who are able to integrate within their workplaces and social lives.

In Chapter Two, I share key findings revealed by the review of the research literature related to the capstone research question . The first section will focus on early childhood experiences and social skills acquisition. In this section I discuss where children learn their social skills and how. I also examine the transitions among early childhood programs and its effect on children's classroom experience.

In the next section, I investigate the influence of social skills instruction and the academic impact positive prosocial behaviors have within a classroom. It also looks at how prosocial behaviors impact peer and adult relationships. Finally, I analyze the impact prosocial behaviors have on a positive classroom environment.

In the last section of chapter two, I examine how prosocial behaviors impact mental health. I also explore how prosocial behaviors impact lifetime involvement with society as a whole.

Chapter Three will explore the theoretical foundation for my social emotional curriculum. It will also detail the key components of the curriculum development and the curriculum itself.

In chapter four I reflect upon the design of the project, how the design was implemented, and the successes and limitations of the project as well as reflect on my growth while working on the capstone project.

CHAPTER TWO

Introduction

Review of Literature

In the past two years of teaching there have been a vast number of experiences working with students who have strong emotional and behavioral issues. Many students have shown the ability to build peer relationships and maintain peer relationships ebb and flow by the day or incident. As the students' emotional distress increases, their academic success often trends downward as they struggle to maintain control of their small bodies and the emotions going on within them. Many of these students may not have the skills needed to control their emotions and bodies when their feelings get too big. They may lack the skills necessary to be able to express themselves healthily and safely.

In Chapter One, the researcher explores the reasoning behind their research question: *How does teaching explicit social skills in the area of body awareness impact prosocial behaviors in a kindergarten classroom?* This chapter summarizes the literature supporting social-emotional learning and the impact it has on prosocial behaviors in children. It focuses specifically on social skills acquisition, early childhood experiences with social-emotional learning, influence of social skills instruction, and general social-emotional wellbeing.

Early Childhood Experiences and Social Skills Acquisition

The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) (2008) defined social-emotional development as the “developing capacity of the child from birth through five years of age to form close and secure adult and peer relationships; experience, regulate, and express emotions in socially and culturally appropriate ways; and explore the

environment and learn”(p. 1). Social-emotional skills are developed primarily within two different settings; within students’ homes and through early childhood programming (Leuzinger-Bohleber, 2014).

According to Leuzinger (2014), preschool is one of the primary settings where children develop social skills crucial to their overall development. Some of those social skills include communication, body awareness, listening and understanding, and empathy. This is an indicator of how important an early childhood program is to the overall health and wellbeing of a child. Preschool provides children with a platform to learn social-emotional skills and provides a supportive environment in which to practice those emerging social skills.

As students work with their peers, a crucial social skill to practice within a structured setting is communication. Communication and listening are at the cornerstone of a child’s learning. Without communication, children cannot interact fully with the world around them. Within a school or structured setting children practice communication with peers and adults constantly. They learn and use non-verbal skills, such as eye contact, accepted hand gestures (i.e. hand shakes, high fives and fist bumps) and how to take turns in conversation.

Another social skill that children may be lacking is the ability to maintain personal space and body awareness with their peers and adults. There are generally six to seven children within the classroom that struggle to maintain an appropriate amount of space between themselves and peers. Within the researchers classroom children routinely sit on one another on the carpet, put hands on another student, and push each other in line.

A study done by Nix, Bierman, Domitrovich, and Gill (2013) likened preschool social-emotional play to school readiness and linked these skills directly with children’s abilities to adjust their behaviors. The idea that children learn through social-emotional play implies that

children, when given a chance to practice social-emotional play in a structured setting, will have better social skills. One of the settings in which children regularly have structured social-play opportunities is preschool, Head Start, or early childhood family education programming.

Leuzinger-Bohleber (2014) mentioned that children develop their social-emotional skills primarily at home and through early childhood education; however educators have an obligation to consider the importance of teaching social and emotional skills to students because they may not be getting what they need at home or in their daycare or preschool settings. It is also important to consider how to approach social and emotional learning with students who do not have access to early childhood education.

McIntyre and Welchons (2015) looked at the crucial time of transition between early childhood programming and kindergarten. They found that social and behavioral expectations are high for students. For example, the authors noted that beginning kindergarten students are expected to function autonomously, develop relationships with peers and teachers, understand and conform to classroom routines and rules, and remain on-task for considerably longer periods of time compared with demands in early education classrooms. With that in mind, a study by the Brookings's Institute (2012) supported the idea that students who do not have a program to transition from are often underprepared for kindergarten and are significantly behind their peers who had access to early childhood programming. This leads to the question of who these children are, and why they are not getting early childhood programming.

The Brookings's Institute 2012 study on school readiness found that 48% of children living below the national poverty level were unprepared to enter kindergarten. According to the report, this percentage of children did not have access to preschool programming or Head Start, and because of this, began school lacking skills in early math, reading, and with problem

behaviors. A study by the United States Department of Education (U.S. DOE, 2015) described how there is an equity issue across the U.S. involving access to preschool education. In this study, the U.S. Department of Education examined access to preschool education in 2015. Their findings included that states, local communities, and parents need help to close the school readiness gaps between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers (U.S. DOE, 2015).

Unfortunately, this means that children who live in lower socio-economic situations, as well as children who are minorities, come to kindergarten lacking the ability to understand others and take others' needs and views into account, therefore furthering their focus on self and their development. (kids matter website, need citation). This leads children to struggle with peer relationship development due to their parallel play and struggle to effectively communicate with peers in a social play setting.

Influence of Social Skills Instruction

Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, Bandura, and Zimbardo (2000) created a longitudinal study based on children's prosocial foundations. They found that there is a strong correlation between children's positive prosocial behaviors in kindergarten and their continued academic and social success through the eighth grade. They used peer assessments, self assessments, and teacher assessments four times a year as the basis of their study.

For years, many teachers have felt that prosocial behaviors are linked to academic success, but have not had the support of academic standards to be able to teach these skills freely. With the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act, an act signed by President Obama in 2015 that gives much of the educational power and decisions back to states (U.S. DOE, 2015), social skills instruction was adopted by the U.S. Department of Education. The importance of

social emotional learning has been recognized by our lawmakers for its importance in a well rounded education. “Social-emotional competencies can be linked to greater well-being and better school performance, where the failure to achieve competence in these areas led to a variety of personal, social, and academic difficulties” (Durlak, et al., 2011, p. 4).

Researchers have found that, there are positive results of teaching social behaviors. Students who have productive personal and social development are less likely to develop aggressiveness, depression, or violent behaviors (Poulou, 2005). This is also supported by Van Veisor (2009), who discusses the contribution of prosocial behaviors to psychological health of students, the school, and society at large.

Schools and teachers have a significant burden to continually teach, reinforce, and support social-emotional skills. Teachers want well-rounded students who have good psychological health. Unfortunately, many students lack social-emotional competencies and become less connected to school as they progress from elementary to middle to high school, and this lack of connection negatively affects their academic performance, behavior, and health (Blum & Libbey, 2004).

Peer relationships are formed from an early age. Students who have limited prosocial behaviors and show aggression are generally regarded by their peers as someone they do not want to play with. In their study, Peer Acceptance and Social Adjustment in Preschool and Kindergarten, Johnson, Ironsmith, Snow, and Poteat (2000) found that four year olds base their acceptance of a peer on their aggression and their prosocial skills as compared to three year olds, who base their opinions of peers solely on the peers level of aggression. They also found that once a child’s perception of a peer was made, it was difficult and time consuming to change that child’s perception of a peer (Johnson, et al., 2000).

The study by Johnson, et al. (2000) showed the need for early social skills instruction and intervention in order to help children develop their prosocial skills early enough that they can form positive peer relationships. They also suggested that the development of peer relationships is essential in fostering a positive classroom environment, and that children are able to learn better when they are among friends (Johnson, et al., 2000).

Prosocial behaviors increase productive classroom climate and positive interactions within that environment. This happens through peer relationships and teacher-student relationships. Teachers play an important role in modeling prosocial behaviors. According to Greenberg and Jennings (2009), a teacher who understands a student's emotions and motivations behind behaviors can effectively respond to student's individual needs. Secondly, the authors noted that a teacher with social emotional competence demonstrates better classroom management skills by being more proactive, using their emotions to promote enthusiasm for learning and to guide and manage behaviors.

General Social-Emotional Wellbeing

Social emotional learning has long term impacts on students. Durlak et al. (2011) credited strong SEL skills with giving students opportunities to contribute to class, school, and community and experience the satisfaction, sense of belonging, and enhanced motivation that comes from such involvement. One could argue that SEL skills helps make students into well rounded individuals.

Durlak et al. (2011) discussed SEL skills as a means for students to combat substance use, interpersonal violence, bullying and school failure. Therefore, the development of these skills at an early age has a lifelong impact on the students as they move forward. There may be high school students who lack executive functioning skills, including social skills that leave them

vulnerable to misunderstandings and problems at school. Students who lack SEL skills may drop out of school due to struggles with depression and anxiety making it difficult for them to participate in their classes.

Social emotional learning is a proactive approach to combating mental health issues. A study done by the National Center For Mental Health (2008) found that more than half of all lifetime cases of mental disorders begin by age 14, and three-quarters by age 24. They also indicate that teaching social emotional learning meets children's needs prior to the development of mental health issues, and that school should also allocate resources to support children and adolescents who have mental health needs.

The ability to develop and maintain relationships and to connect with a community also have bases rooted in SEL. It is important for students to be academically and emotionally well-rounded and able to be a part of society at large when they leave high school. According to CASEL (2003), SEL included handling emotions in relationships effectively; establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships based on cooperation; negotiating solutions to conflict; seeking help when needed. All of these are foundational skills to building and maintaining relationships with peers and with other members of the community.

Summary

This chapter discussed the key components of social skills and their importance. This includes social skills acquisition, the importance of early childhood education, and how social skills affect peer relationships. The chapter also explored the importance of social skills to education and the impact that social skills have on children's academic performance.

Chapter three provides a detailed explanation of the project and explores the rationale behind this project. I will inquire into the theoretical framework my project is based upon and

look at the key components of the curriculum.

In chapter four I will reflect upon the process of developing the curriculum and the impacts it will have on my classroom and beyond. It will also focus on the implementation and the limitations of the project. Finally, it will reflect my learning as I experienced the capstone process.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed explanation of the project developed based on personal experiences and research driven by the question: *How does teaching explicit social skills in the area of body awareness and communication impact prosocial behaviors in a kindergarten classroom?* The number of children who were lacking social skills when they entered kindergarten impacted the learning community. As a former special education teacher, social skills and prosocial behaviors are essential to student success and a passion area of this researcher. This project was created to impact the students in my classroom and help them attain and build their social skills. This project has the potential to impact students in their K-12 learning as well as life past K-12.

In this chapter I discuss the rationale for this project and how it was created. I discuss the research that supports my curriculum design model and outline that key parts of my curriculum. The curriculum will be a year long curriculum with one to two lessons a week, focusing on social emotional development, communication, problem resolution, and empathy.

Curriculum Model

The curriculum has a year-long focus on identifying social skills, teaching social skills and providing both structured and unstructured opportunities to practice and transfer specific

skills. It spirals and touches upon many different skills and continually provides more support for students.

The format for my curriculum is based on the Understanding by Design (UbD) process created by Wiggins and McTighe (2011). This framework has two main components. The first is to focus on teaching and assessing understanding and to learn to transfer information. Secondly UbD focuses on an efficient way to plan and meet specific needs of students by planning backwards.

Wiggins and McTighe (2011) emphasize the importance of focusing on skill transfer and the ability of students to autonomously transfer and make sense of what they are learning. The goal of UbD is for students to be able to learn a skill and transfer it between settings and situations seamlessly. In order to accomplish that, teachers must be coaches who focus on ensuring that learning is happening. Teachers do this by regularly reviewing curriculum and providing engaging lessons and redesigning and adjusting curriculum to meet the needs of students.

The first step in the design process is to identify the desired outcome(s). For this project, the desired outcome is student's ability to learn and practice social skills in the areas of communication and body awareness. The second step is designing and giving an assessment to measure children's social skills. The third part of UbD will be designing lessons to meet the specific needs of the students. This process is cyclical and will continue to evolve as children's learn and needs change.

As part of the curriculum I included a pre-assessment skills checklist that teachers will assess quarterly with the students in their class. This will provide a formative assessment so teachers are able to spiral back or refocus on important skills that students are lacking.

Setting and Participants

This curriculum project takes place in a rural school district in a northern midwest state. The school district is a Title 1 district, with over 35% of students receiving free or reduced lunch. This past year, 57.5% of students who took the state required achievement test, MCA Math met or exceeded expectations and 62.1% of students met or exceeded expectations in reading. The curriculum is designed for students in kindergarten and the average kindergarten class size is 20-24 students. There are three kindergarten classes that will be using the curriculum. The classes are a homogenous mix of genders. The classes are primarily made up of white students, with a handful of minority students within each classroom. The school is made up of students from lower socioeconomic class as well as middle class, the schools district is spread out over a large area, some students bus up to an hour each way, and some students walk to school.

The school has a twelve to one ratio of staff to students and the teacher staff is about eighteen to one. The teaching staff has varying opinions about teaching SEL as well as vast teaching styles and differences among teachers. Due to the vast differences in experiences and teaching styles, behaviors are not always a primary focus for staff.

Currently social emotional learning is supported through the school-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). There is a schoolwide focus on positive behaviors and providing supports for students who are not able to successfully follow those schoolwide rules. The school is in year five of PBIS, there has been a group of eight teachers who have been on the core implementation team. In order to move forward with PBIS, schools need 80% of their staff to buy in. In the beginning of implementation, there was a buy in of 80% as we have had retiring staff. The buy in has increased from recent hires and younger staff. Each year our

school does a yearly staff development in PBiS and teachers also have a curriculum based on our school rules that the implementation team created.

I provided K-1 staff with professional development including the curriculum, a powerpoint presentation, and access to books referenced in the curriculum. Staff will also have access to other optional resources needed to fully implement the curriculum.

Timeline

My timeline for creation and completion of my project was from September 2018-December 2018. The drafting of the project began in September 2018, and was finalized in October of 2018, complete with 26 lessons and supplemental materials. The thesis portion of the capstone project was completed in November of 2018. The implementation of the curriculum in my classroom fully started in September 2019.

Summary

In this chapter I discussed the evidence for using UbD. This chapter also delves into the outline of the curriculum I have created. Lastly the chapter identifies my setting and the participants involved.

In the next chapter there will be a conclusion for the capstone project. First the effectiveness of using UbD for my framework is assessed. Secondly the researcher explores what they have learned through the development process and ideas for the future as the project implementation moves forward. A few pieces of the curriculum are examined and ideas for implementation are shared.

Chapter 4

Reflection

Introduction

Nine years ago when I began teaching I had no idea where my journey would take me. My vast experiences with students have led me to learn more about social emotional learning helping me come to the conclusion that behaviors need to be explicitly taught. Students need to be explicitly taught how to interact with one another and build healthy relationships with their peers.

As I looked at research on Social Emotional Learning and the impacts it has on a child's education the decision to focus my project on that topic was reinforced. This research led me to the question of *How does teaching explicit social skills in the area of body awareness and communication impact prosocial behaviors in a kindergarten classroom?* The research in chapter two lead me to develop my curriculum for kindergartners which focuses on student centered learning and hands-on opportunities to practice new skills in a safe environment.

As I worked through the capstone process as a researcher, I was astounded by the amount of research available in the field of Social Emotional Learning. It was surprising how much research has been done, but how minimally schools and states are encouraging social emotional learning. Most states do not have social emotional learning standards included in their state standards.

Literature Review

According to CASEL (2003), SEL includes handling emotions in relationships effectively; establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships based on cooperation; negotiating solutions to conflict; and seeking help when needed. All of these are foundational skills to building and maintaining relationships with peers and with other members

of the community. This curriculum builds students' foundational social skills, including maintaining relationships and learning conflict negotiation. It also helps children understand the importance of asking for help when it is needed.

Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, Bandura, and Zimbardo (2000) created a longitudinal study based on children's prosocial foundations. They found that there is a strong correlation between children's positive prosocial behaviors in kindergarten and their continued academic and social success through the eighth grade. This is foundational to my project, as it proves why social emotional learning is important. It will impact the students' success, not just in kindergarten, but throughout the rest of their schooling and beyond.

Description of Project

In chapter two, the research provided strong evidence that there is a substantial relationship between implementation of a social-emotional learning curriculum and the growth of positive prosocial behaviors within the classroom. My project is in the form of pdf or paper components with 26 half page lessons. These lessons are meant to be done once a week and they take fifteen to twenty minutes at a time. They are designed as full-class kindergarten lessons.

The curriculum segmented into six units; each unit consists of multiple lessons. The unit titles and topics include: Emotions, Friendship, Self-Management, Kindness, Conflict Resolution, and Respect/Bullying.

Implications and Limitations of the Project

There are many implications to this project. The implementation hinges upon teachers understanding the importance of social emotional learning. It will fall upon the researcher to help teachers understand the importance of social emotional learning and the long term impacts it can have.

The curriculum was designed to have little to no prep for most lessons with the idea that teachers will be able to fit in a lesson during the week by using a small window of time. With this as an asset, teachers should be able to use the curriculum without feeling the need to prepare lessons far in advance to acquire materials.

It was difficult to find a logical progression for the project as there is no set framework for social emotional learning. I also used many supplemental books in the lessons. If a teacher does not have access to these books or to youtube to show these books it will make many of the lessons difficult to complete.

Another limitation is the scope of the curriculum. There are many additional lessons that could be included in the curriculum, but due to teachers' time constraints, I was unsure if they would have enough time set aside to be able to teach these other lessons. Also, it is difficult to give students an authentic venue to practice social skills, which is why it is important that teachers set up their classroom to be an inclusive classroom.

Impact

This project has greatly impacted how I think about the importance of social skills instruction in early childhood. I knew social skills were important but did not realize the long term impact that social skills instruction would have on a students future; thus I have strengthened my resolve to always find them time to instill social skills into my everyday lessons. The impact on my current students and future students will help them succeed in their first years of schooling and beyond.

Conclusion

The completion of my capstone project has been a challenging endeavor. I have grown as an educator through my practice in reflection, understanding, and research. This project has helped me understand some of my strengths and weaknesses when it comes to designing a curriculum. I am thankful for the background knowledge and passion I feel for social emotional learning. As I move forward, I am hopeful to help other teachers find a way to be as involved in social emotional learning.

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