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Amending Flex Time: A Proposal

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AMENDING FLEX TIME: A PROPOSAL

by

Jonathan Thompson

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

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

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PROJECT SUMMARY

This project is a proposal to my school's staff and administration to amend a current program known as Flex Time. This program is defined by the school as a one-hour period in the middle of the school day in which students individually have the option to engage in any number of pursuits they may choose including: eating lunch, relaxing, doing homework, receiving academic support, engaging in physical activities or games, or participating in activities or presentations put on by school staff. A more concise if not entirely accurate description of Flex would be to equate it to a *recess*. One of the purposes of this program is to create a space in which students can develop their social and emotional competencies. Which led me to the creation of this project. I wanted to know how we, as a school, could better ensure that these competencies were given opportunity to develop. More precisely, *how can Flex Time be constructed to ensure that it is best assisting all students in developing their individual social and emotional competencies?* In pursuing this question, my research led me to the creation of five amendments to Flex. The amendments, taken together, address all five of the accepted social and emotional competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

I am presenting these amendments to my school administration first, which is a group of only five people including principal and vice-principals. I will then be presenting to all administration and licensed staff, a group of nearly two hundred people. The presentation itself consists of two parts: a full-color, professionally-designed booklet which functions as an informational handout and a visually-appealing slideshow presentation. The first presentation is scheduled to be shorter, only fifteen to twenty minutes. My presentation is designed to be easily modified to accommodate such time restrictions. The second will be the full sixty-minute

presentation. Currently, there are no other scheduled presentations, however, the current level of interest by my administration signifies that another may be marked on the calendar soon.

The five amendments which I am proposing to Flex are: Flex Board, Quiet Room, Human Library, Scavenger Hunt, and Direct Instruction. Each of these amendments directly addresses at least one social and emotional competency. In the top-right of each page of the booklet it is clearly marked which competencies are being addressed by that particular amendment. Some, such as the Quiet Room and Human Library, only address a single competency. While others, such as the Flex Board and Direct Instruction, have the capacity to address every competency. The particulars of each amendment are concisely described in the booklet and presentation. Although, of course, greater detail and rationale is expounded in my capstone paper and oral presentation.

Once these amendments are implemented, the third and final part of my project can be utilized, a menu of Flex changes. This full-color, professionally-designed flyer is meant to be handed out to all students (approximately 1,300 individuals) to inform them on the new Flex offerings. It is designed not to fully inform students on the rationale behind these changes, but, rather, to encourage them to engage with these new Flex offerings.

The initial feedback I have received on my research-backed Flex amendments is extremely positive. My school community is committed to our kids, and they are very open to this opportunity to better serve their needs. I am looking forward to many presentations and explanations on these proposed changes, and, ultimately, to their full implementation. I am thrilled that this project will have a significantly positive impact on my school, my community, and my students.

BOOKLET

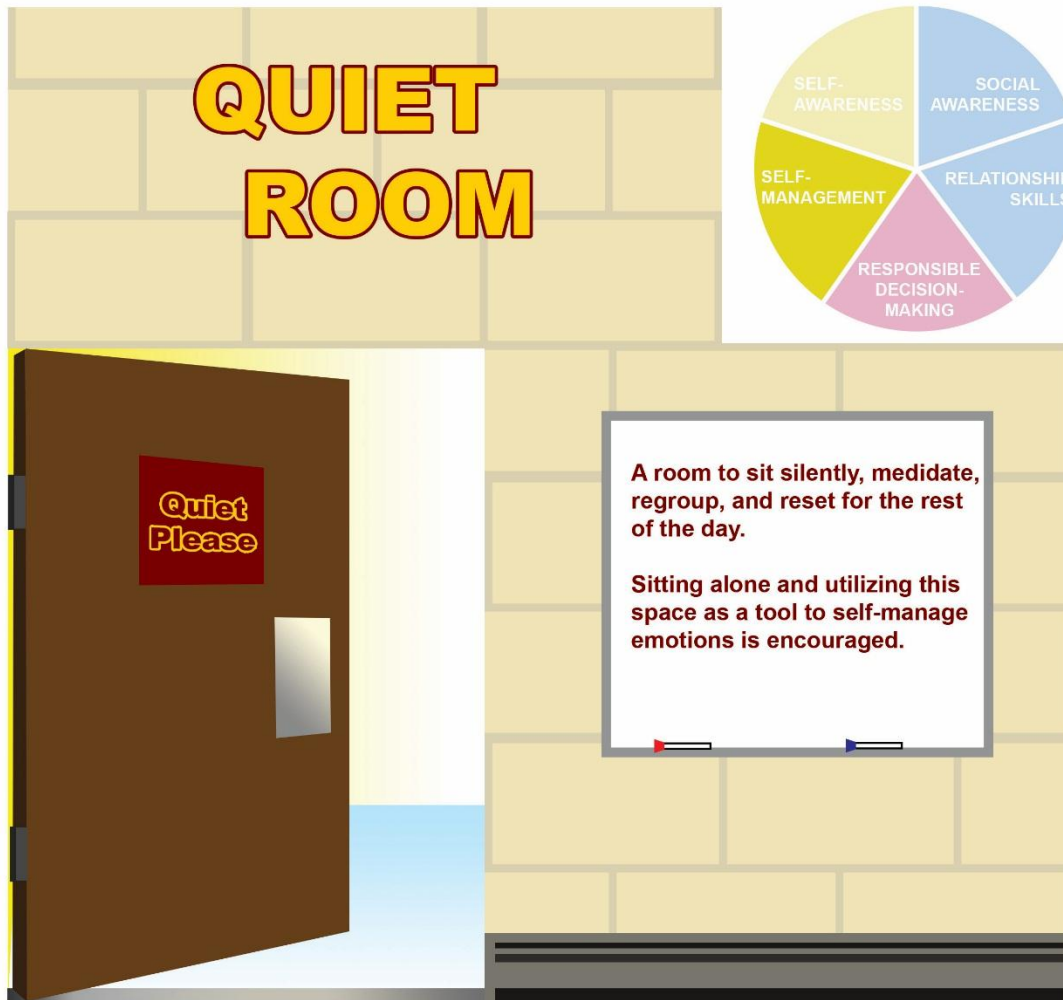
SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES



SELF-AWARENESS	SELF-MANAGEMENT	RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING	SOCIAL AWARENESS	RELATIONSHIP SKILLS
<p>The ability to accurately recognize one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one’s strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a “growth mindset.” (CASEL, 2019)</p>	<p>The ability to successfully regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals. (CASEL, 2019)</p>	<p>The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others. (CASEL, 2019)</p>	<p>The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports. (CASEL, 2019)</p>	<p>The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed. (CASEL, 2019)</p>

	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
INTERESTS					
AUDITORIUM					
GYMNASIUM					
EXTRAS					

Many students are not well-informed on the many offerings of Flex Time. Including a Flex Board which is updated weekly with each day’s Flex options will increase awareness and has the potential to significantly increase involvement as a result. It is suggested that the board be placed in a heavily trafficed intersection to maximize student exposure.

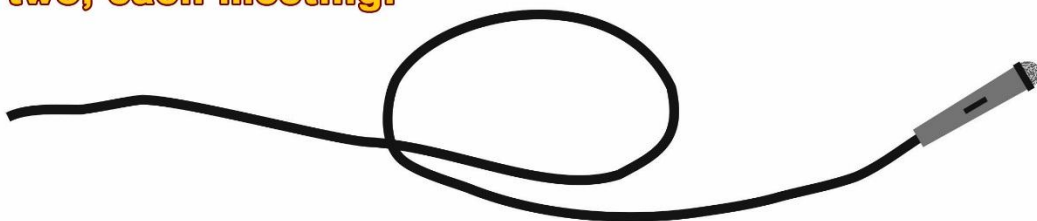


This room will be open and supervised during Flex and meant as a resource to those who need time alone to manage their emotional state. The room will be organized utilizing either cubicles or high-backed furniture to create small spaces for student privacy. The room can include dimmed lights, relaxing scents, and soft sounds. Such an atmosphere will promote relaxation and calm in preparation of the remainder of the school day.



A key component of building social awareness is the development of empathy. In order to begin this development, people need to learn about people, and more importantly place human faces to that learning. A human library is a place in which people are invited to share their life stories and their experiences.

To begin, such a place could be contained in a larger classroom, and staff members can be invited into the space to share. Such an interest can be offered every week with a new speaker, or two, each meeting.





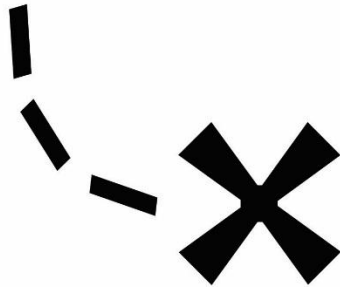
One of the most powerful ways to develop the effective communication and foresight needed in the competencies of social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making is through regular and meaningful human interaction.

A bi-monthly school-wide scavenger hunt is one way to develop these skills. It encourages students to plan ahead and communicate with one another to achieve a common goal, getting the prize at the end.

Students will invariably “cheat” and communicate the locations of found clues to each other. This is expected and actually fulfills the true purpose of the activity, to foster communication, especially between individuals who otherwise might not be in communication.

To begin, students will receive their first clue. This will lead them to a specific location in the school where they will discover another. This process will continue until the final location is found.

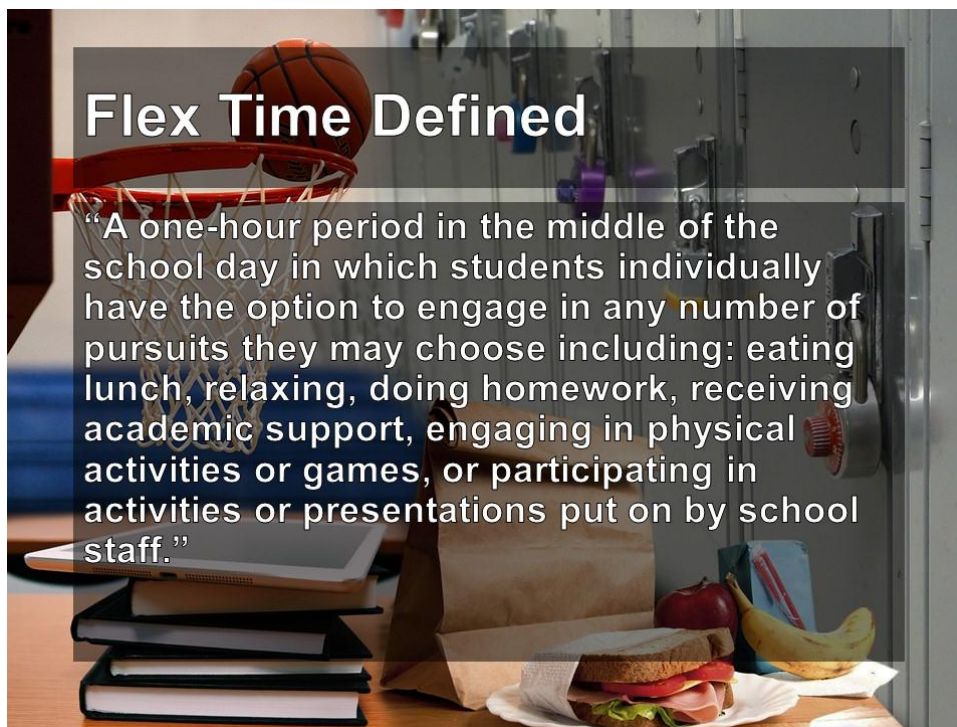
The prize will need to be of some substance to encourage as many students to be involved as possible: options include gift cards, cash, and school memorabilia

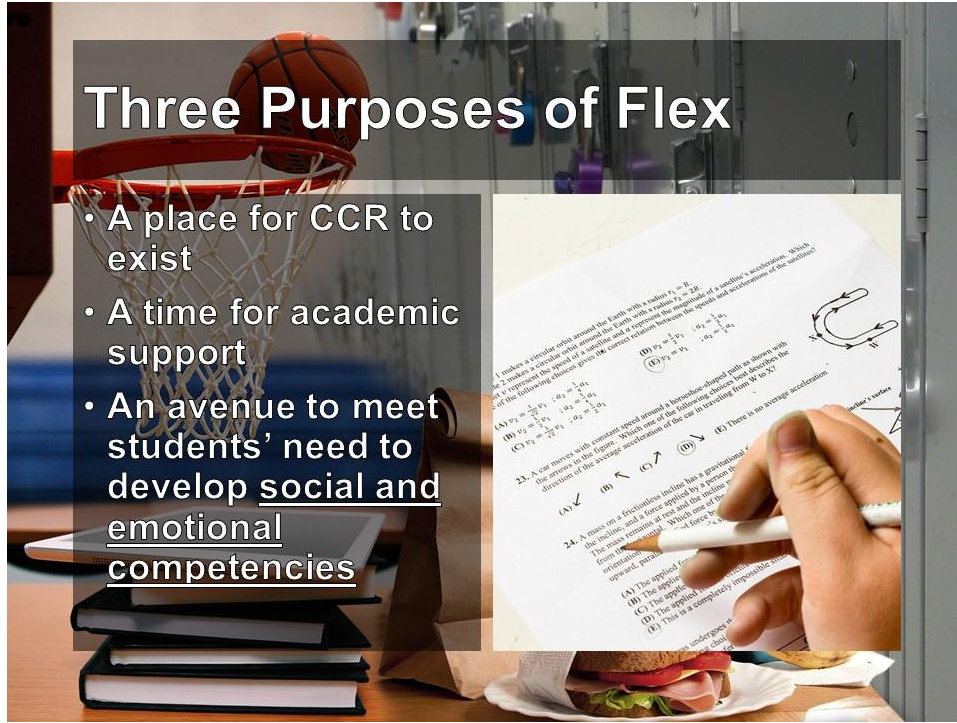


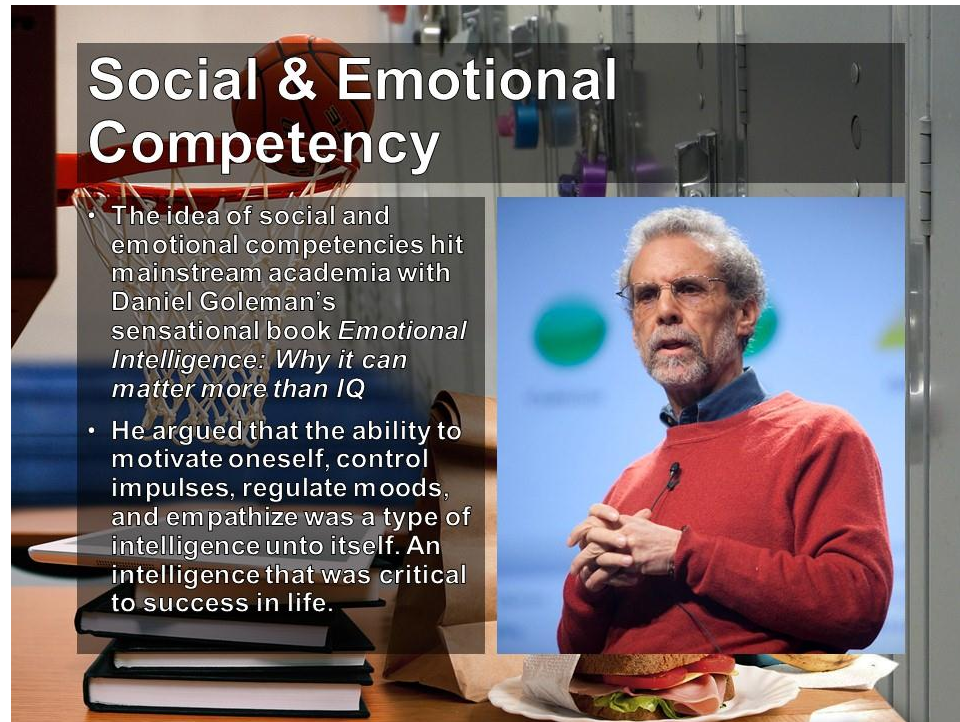


College and Career Readiness and the daily movie showings in the auditorium offer a perfect opportunity to instruct directly in social and emotional competencies. Since CCR is meant to guide students into life post-graduation, occasional lessons on competencies is certainly appropriate. It is not recommended to eliminate movies which are meant as pure entertainment. But instead, to alternate between movies which include some level of instruction on competencies with those that entertain.

PRESENTATION

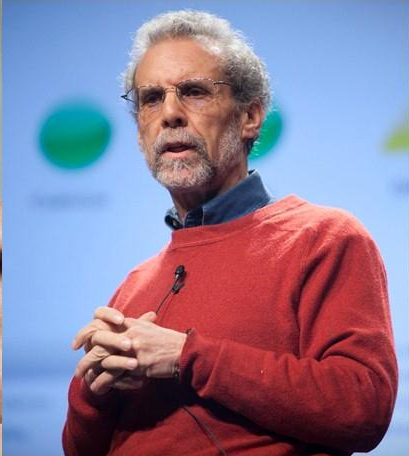






Social & Emotional Competency

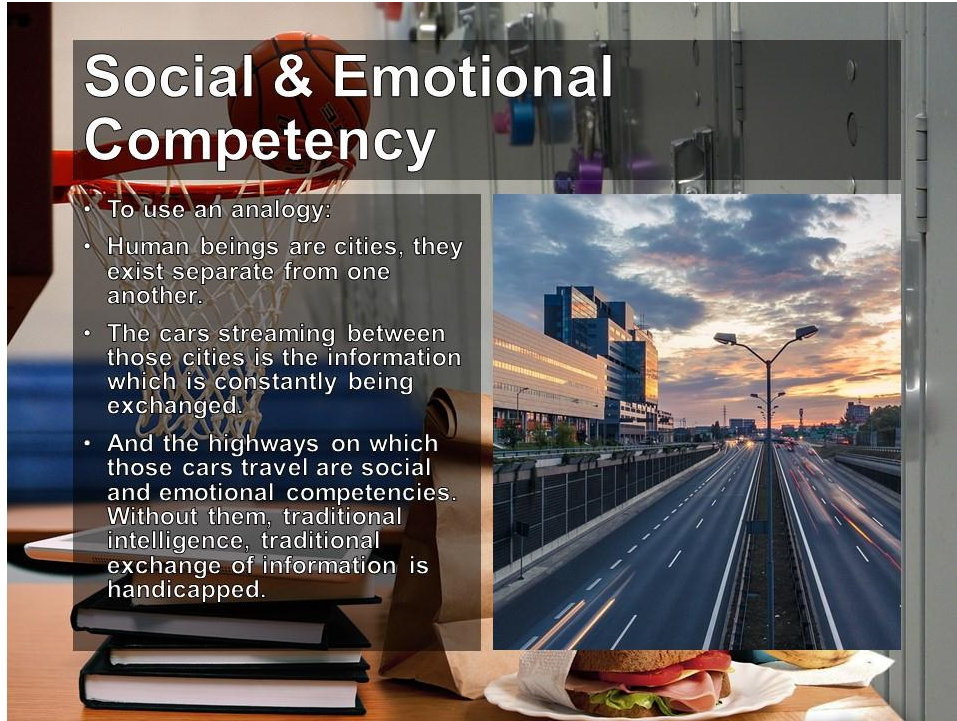
- The idea of social and emotional competencies hit mainstream academia with Daniel Goleman's sensational book *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*
- He argued that the ability to motivate oneself, control impulses, regulate moods, and empathize was a type of intelligence unto itself. An intelligence that was critical to success in life.



Social & Emotional Competency

Since that time, SEC has come to be defined as:

“The ability to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.” (CASEL, 2019)



Social & Emotional Competency

- To use an analogy:
- Human beings are cities, they exist separate from one another.
- The cars streaming between those cities is the information which is constantly being exchanged.
- And the highways on which those cars travel are social and emotional competencies. Without them, traditional intelligence, traditional exchange of information is handicapped.



The 5 Competencies

The 5 Competencies

SELF-AWARENESS

SOCIAL AWARENESS

SELF-MANAGEMENT

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS


RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

SEC has been divided in to 5 separate but equally impactful competencies.

Self-awareness

- The ability to accurately recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a "growth mindset." (CASEL, 2019)
- Put simply, to know yourself.

Self-management




- The ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals. (CASEL, 2019)
- Now that you know you are angry, sad, or upset, what should you do about it?

Social-awareness



- The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports. (CASEL, 2019)
- The cornerstone of social awareness is empathy.

Relationship Skills



- The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed. (CASEL, 2019)
- The driving force behind relationship skills is effective and positive communication.

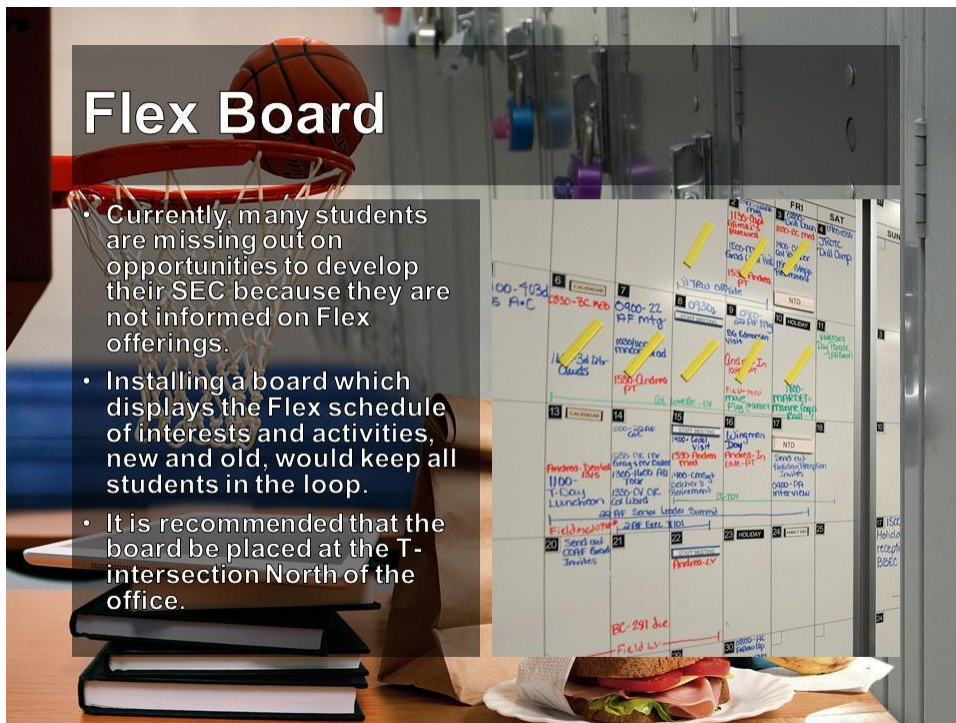
Responsible Decision-making



- The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others. (CASEL, 2019)
- This competency can be summed up in two words, thinking ahead.



Amending Flex: 5 Proposals



Flex Board

- Currently, many students are missing out on opportunities to develop their SEC because they are not informed on Flex offerings.
- Installing a board which displays the Flex schedule of interests and activities, new and old, would keep all students in the loop.
- It is recommended that the board be placed at the T-intersection North of the office.

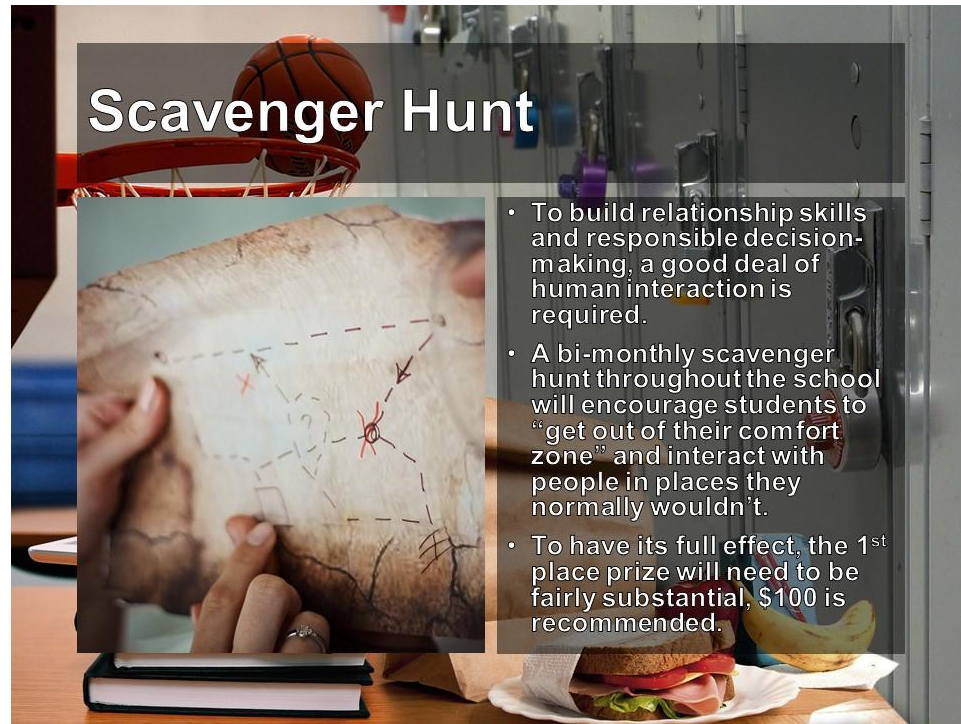


Quiet Room

- Finding a quiet and private place to breathe, meditate, and reset is an often-recommended self-management strategy.
- A quiet room is a place where students can sit in private cubicles, with the lights dimmed, and surrounded by silence. It is the ideal place to reset for the rest of the day.

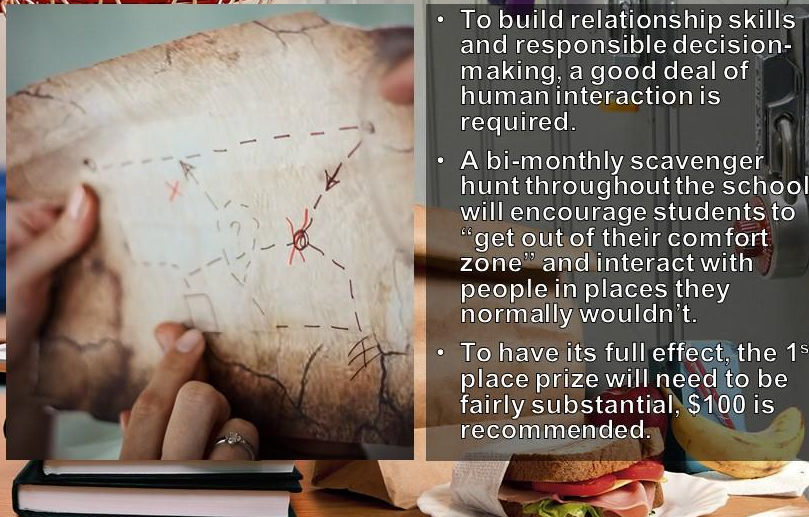
Human Library

- A typical library is a place to go and read stories. A human library is a place to go and hear people tell their stories.
- The key to Social-awareness is empathy. The most effective way of beginning to develop this empathy is to hear and learn about the lives of others.
- Each week, a new speaker would stop by, share their stories, and answer questions.



Scavenger Hunt

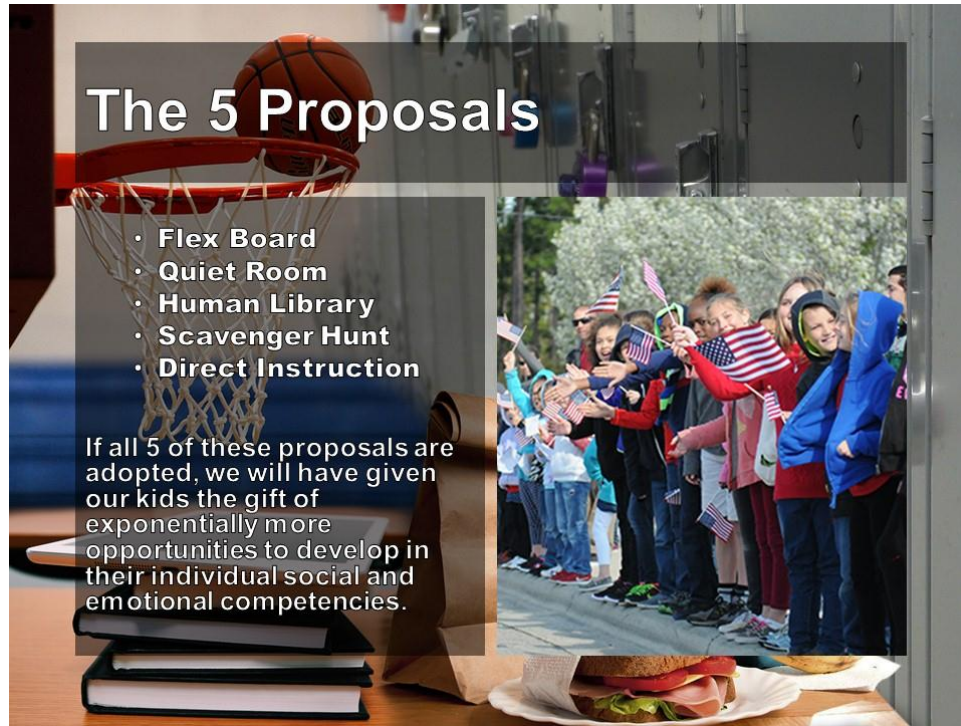
- To build relationship skills and responsible decision-making, a good deal of human interaction is required.
- A bi-monthly scavenger hunt throughout the school will encourage students to “get out of their comfort zone” and interact with people in places they normally wouldn't.
- To have its full effect, the 1st place prize will need to be fairly substantial. \$100 is recommended.



Direct Instruction

- CCR and the daily movie in the auditorium are perfect opportunities for direct instruction.
- The purpose of CCR is to prepare students for life after high school. Giving instruction on SEC certainly fulfills that purpose.
- Alternating the purpose of the daily movie with a movie for entertainment and a movie for SEC instruction would expose a very wide audience to SEC learning while still retaining the fun of movies.





The 5 Proposals

- Flex Board
- Quiet Room
- Human Library
- Scavenger Hunt
- Direct Instruction

If all 5 of these proposals are adopted, we will have given our kids the gift of exponentially more opportunities to develop in their individual social and emotional competencies.

FLYER

HEY, RAIDERS!!!



WHAT'S NEW IN FLEX?

Flex Board

The best place to look for all Flex-related information. Updated constantly, check it out every day to never miss anything!

T-Intersection

Quiet Room

Need a calm and private place to reset before finishing the day? Stop by and be prepared to decompress.

D-104

Human Library

Hear the life stories of incredible people. Different guests every week. Check the Flex Board to learn about this week's guest.

H-115

Scavenger Hunt

Begins every other month. Search the entire school for clues. The first student, or group, to finish wins several prizes! Pick up your first clue in the school office.

Schoolwide!

New Movies

More variety, more excitement, more movies! Drop in the auditorium and see what's showing today.

Auditorium

