AMENDING FLEX TIME: A PROPOSAL

by

Jonathan Thompson

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Capstone Project Facilitator: Kelly Killorn-Moravec
Content Expert: Carrie Duba
Peer Reviewer: John Faryan
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Those of us in education, as in every profession, are perpetually attempting to perfect our craft. We are always asking ourselves how we can better a school, a classroom, a lesson, and even the educational experience of a single child. However, in our never-ending pursuit of academic success, we sometimes miss the mark. Sometimes, we focus entirely on the acquisition of knowledge at the expense of everything else. We are constantly working with our students to efficiently construct knowledge, and yet, we too often forget about the rest of the person. A human being is so much more than a biological mass of collected information. We are social creatures. We are in constant motion in this world of ours, and do not hoard the information we learn. Instead, we disseminate our collected knowledge among everyone we meet. How we do that is by utilizing our social and emotional competencies. If we can imagine knowledge as automobiles streaming between the cities of human beings, then the highways upon which those automobiles travel are our social and emotional competencies. If we, as educators and believers in any form of public education, are to prepare our students to move about this world effectively and contribute positively to the market, we must focus on both their automobiles of knowledge as well as their highways of social and emotional competency.

My current employer, a high school in Minnesota, currently offers a program to all students known as Flex Time. As defined by school administration, this program is: “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.” The stated purposes of this hour are: a place
for College and Career Readiness to exist, a time for academic support, and an avenue to meet students’ need to develop social-emotional competencies. Through the past school year, I have come to question how this new idea of Flex Time might be made better, especially in regards to developing social and emotional competencies. 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 the rest of this chapter I detail the specifics of Flex Time, what it looks like, and how it is organized, in an attempt to give a clear picture of this program I am proposing be amended.

**Flex Time**

In the Fall of 2018, I started as a Social Studies teacher at a Minnesota high school. At the time, the school was abuzz with a grand new experiment, Flex Time. This was something that the administration had been planning throughout the previous school year, and it seemed to be anyone’s guess as to how successful it might be. The original idea of school staff and administration, as outlined in the definition previously stated, was to give students a period in the middle of every day to meet their individual needs, whatever that might mean for them. A concise although not entirely descriptive definition might be to equate Flex Time with *unstructured time* or *recess*.

The ultimate structure of Flex Time is such that it is largely unstructured. The only piece of Flex Time which is entirely structured is College and Career Readiness (CCR). This is essentially a mini-class on being prepared for life after high school. It covers a very wide range of topics across all four high school grade levels including: study strategies, researching colleges, finding a career, applying for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, and various life skills. CCR is held every Tuesday for half of Flex Time, and is the only part that is required to
attend. Otherwise, students may seek out any offering during Flex Time which strikes their interest. The offerings generally fall into four categories: lunch, unstructured space, sporting activities, and staff offerings.

**Lunch**

Lunch is simply gathering food and finding a place to eat. Food can be brought from home or purchased from the cafeteria or from one of the food carts located around the building. Once students have their food in hand, they may bring it nearly anywhere in the building to eat. Certain locations and classrooms do not allow food, but these are clearly marked (typically locations containing computers or chemicals, e.g. the media center and science labs). When walking about the building during Flex, students are found in every corner eating lunch. They may be in the cafeteria, on stairs, in classrooms, in the halls, outside, every possible location that is not explicitly marked as a No Food Zone. Most students use this freedom to eat lunch with friends in a more private setting than offered by a place such as the cafeteria. However, for other students the freedom and possible privacy is more than a luxury, it is an important coping mechanism. I know one student who has a fair amount of anxiety about eating in public. This student has several medical challenges and is not able to chew food normally. Without Flex, this student would need to eat in the cafeteria, with everyone, and in front of everyone. But with Flex, this student finds great comfort in sitting with two or three close friends on a set of stairs they have chosen. No one stares, and no one makes fun. It is hard to measure the impact such a simple opportunity may have on an adolescent. It certainly means a lot to this student.

**Unstructured space**

Unstructured spaces are found all over the building. In these spaces students are encouraged to do whatever it is they want, as long as they are being respectful of the space and
of each other. Typically, students will use these spaces to eat lunch, do homework, read, play games, or *hang out*. Depending on the weather and school schedule, the expansive school grounds may be included in these spaces. Within the school building, several spaces were reconstructed in preparation for the implementation of Flex. Certain hallways were cleared of lockers and lined with bar-style counters and stools. In addition, certain classrooms, at the choice of the teachers involved, were converted into *flexible spaces*. These rooms abandon the traditional rows of desks in favor of couches and restaurant-style booths. Throughout the Flex hour, students can be seen moving about the school and utilizing all these spaces. Once lunch has been eaten, some students do homework in these spaces. Others play games, do puzzles, read books, or watch movies. However, easily the most popular activity is to simply *hang out*. Students often spend the entire hour sitting with and talking to their friends. Some take this a step farther by talking with friends while roaming the school, walking the halls for nearly the entire hour. Whatever students choose to do, the choice remains theirs. In these unstructured spaces, students have the liberty to engage however they wish, and they take full advantage of it.

**Sports activities**

Sports activities are varied depending on the weather and time of year. Typically, the indoor basketball courts are open for those who wish to play a quick half-court game, or the ever-popular Lightning, also called Basketball Knockout. Additionally, other activities may be offered depending on the weather and availability of needed equipment including: dodgeball, tennis, volleyball, and badminton. Flex has also been used to stage periodic tournaments open to the entire school, and even the faculty. The 2018-19 school year saw one particularly competitive basketball tournament in which students and faculty played across several days’ worth of Flex Time.
Staff offerings

The last option is staff offerings. Each teacher is scheduled one day per week during which they are to create some type of activity for students to participate in during Flex Time. This amounts to about a dozen different activities created by the staff which are offered each day all over the school. Teachers will usually host these activities in their classrooms, and have the freedom to create anything they think the students will benefit from. Teachers have created such offerings as: mindfulness, knitting, board games, video games, trivia, movies, political roundtables, karaoke, and the list changes constantly. I offered a video game competition in my room every Wednesday, which had a fervent following of at least fifteen students every week.

Challenges

Flex Time immediately opens a lot of unique challenges. Most apparent, safety, security, and cleanliness. Since the entire student body of over 1,300 individuals has the freedom to go nearly everywhere in the building at the same time, the opportunity for something to go very, very wrong is obvious. For the safety of everyone, all students must be supervised by a school staff member at all times. To assist with this need, every licensed teacher and educational assistant is given a supervision for one-half of a Flex hour, once a week, somewhere in the building. For the 2018-19 school year, my supervision was the first half of Thursday Flex in the gymnasium. Every Thursday, for half an hour, I watched students play basketball. I made sure they were respecting the equipment, respecting each other, and maintained a certain level of crowd control. All over the school, every minute of Flex, other staff members were doing the same thing within their assigned spaces. Some were in the cafeteria, some in classrooms, others walking the halls. Anywhere that a student had access, for their own safety they were always within earshot of a school staff member.
Security is the second apparent concern of Flex Time. While seniors, many of whom are adults and nearly all of whom can drive, have the option to leave school grounds during Flex, the other students do not have that luxury. The sheer chaos involved in supervising hundreds of students sprawling across school grounds and beyond keeps the school building on lockdown during Flex. 9th – 11th graders are not allowed to leave the building on a typical school day, with the exception of certain designated outside spaces that are supervised. To police this policy, staff is placed at every exit to the building. They are tasked with checking student IDs to ensure that only seniors are leaving the building, and that no one enters who is not a student or staff member.

Finally, cleanliness is a major concern. Since students can carry their lunch anywhere, there is ample opportunity for food to be skittering down the halls and trash to be left in classrooms. Before Flex Time begins each day, maintenance staff anticipates the need for strategically placed garbage, recycling, and compost bins. These bins are rolled out and placed all over the school in hallways and large spaces. This opportunity coupled with the constant presence of school staff mitigates most mess on the part of students. However, before Flex was implemented there was still the concern over utensils. Students cannot carry their traditional lunch trays and utensils all over the school. The solution, compostable trays and utensils. Students now use cardboard lunch trays and plant-based plastic utensils, all of which can be composted. Every day, this saves the school from spending the otherwise-required manpower to gather trays, clean spaces and utensils, and perpetually police students in bringing their trays back.

**Effectiveness**

It was immediately apparent to me that students loved Flex Time, but for many different reasons. For some, it was a relaxing respite in the middle of the day. To others, it was a time to
catch up on work. And yet others thought of it as a time to work hard and burn off any excess energy. Whatever the reason, no student I spoke with stated a single negative thing about Flex Time in general. Most did complain about the requirements to attend CCR. But this was a minor complaint within a much larger consensus that Flex Time was one of the best parts of the school day.

This dialogue with students began my thinking on the future effectiveness of Flex Time. This is something my students love, and it is something I have an integral part in creating, so how can we build on the successes so far? I initially sought to understand what my administration saw as the point of Flex Time. The consensus of responses I received were three purposes: a place for CCR to exist, a time for academic support, and an avenue to meet students’ need to develop social-emotional competencies. The first two purposes are being accomplished. I know CCR exists because I teach a 9th grade CCR class every Tuesday. The class has had its own challenges of implementing and consistently teaching a unified curriculum to each grade level. However, it is evolving and concerted effort is being placed into its betterment. And I know students are actively seeking and receiving academic support because I have students in my room during Flex making up tests and asking questions regularly. This practice is not unique and is echoed across dozens of classrooms every school day. As a school, it was relatively easy for us to understand and construct those spaces. However, how can Flex Time be constructed to ensure that it is best assisting all students in developing their individual social and emotional competencies? I did not know the answer to that question. As a school we tried to construct Flex Time with the goal of developing individual social emotional competency, but none of us were entirely sure what needed to be constructed or placed within that hour to accomplish that goal.
This brings me to the purpose of this project. This is a proposal to amend the current structure and/or offerings of Flex Time at my local high school in order to ensure that this program is best assisting students in developing their individual social and emotional competencies. This project identifies the core social and emotional competencies that students must develop to construct their own *highways* between people. I then propose additions or amendments, based on current research, to give opportunities to students to develop in these areas. If we, as educators, focus entirely on those *automobiles* of information, we are missing the mark. Students are complete people and must be educated completely. Someone who is highly knowledgeable but is not equipped to share and use that knowledge in their own lives, is not productive, only full of facts. Within Flex Time my school has created the ideal opportunity to build up and exercise the social and emotional competencies of the entire student body at the same time. It is a spectacular opportunity, and one which we must ensure is properly constructed to allow for the fullest success.

**Summary**

Flex Time was certainly a brand-new challenge for school administration, teachers, staff, and students this past year. When it began, no one really knew what to expect, but we dived in. Together, we created CCR along with the four offerings of lunch, unstructured space, sporting activities, and staff offerings. We faced the challenges of safety, security, and cleanliness, and have come out on the other side. As the year ends and planning for the next year begins, I am asking if we can do even better next year. How can we use Flex Time as the perfect social emotional complement to our academic pursuits? *How can Flex Time be constructed to ensure that it is best assisting all students in developing their individual social and emotional competencies?*
This project covers the beginnings of social and emotional competency research as well as currently accepted definitions. It outlines the five social and emotional competencies and practical methods on developing and exercising each. Ultimately, I am proposing five specific amendments to Flex Time. Each of these amendments are thoughtfully composed to address the development of specific social and emotional competencies. These amendments will be presented to my school administration before the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year.

Lastly, I reflect on this process of discover, research, and creation. It was a process which involved much time, effort, and rumination. However, I believe this project will greatly benefit my school, and any school that wishes to pursue such a bold endeavor as instituting Flex Time.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Much has been written, and continues to be written on the development of social and emotional competencies. This ongoing conversation has been occurring for over twenty-five years. Unfortunately, in all this time there has never been a unifying consensus on what social and emotional competency actually means. As in all the soft sciences, research into education is open to much debate and interpretation. This cacophony of voices always occurs for a simple reason, the variables involved. There are thousands, if not millions, of variables impacting the life of a single student. Cutting through all that data and arriving at a simple, unifying theory on almost anything is seemingly exceptional within education, and in all the soft sciences. However, to answer the question, how can Flex Time be constructed to ensure that it is best assisting all students in developing their individual social and emotional competencies? will require a certain level of agreement or unification of theory. In an attempt to find that agreement or compromise, I explored the beginnings of social and emotional competency theories, then quickly traced forward to currently accepted definitions. I then explored at length the five social and emotional competencies in order to bring these definitions and skills into attempts at social and emotional education and ultimately Flex Time.

Social and Emotional Competency, Beginnings and Debates

Current theories on social and emotional competency could likely trace their origins back to the mid-20th century. However, the conversation truly hit mainstream academia in 1995 with the publishing of Daniel Goleman’s (1995) sensational book Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ. In his book, Goleman (1995) argued that besides the usual concept of
intelligence and how we gauge it, high IQ or high standardized test scores, there is another type of intelligence, emotional intelligence. He defined this intelligence as:

Abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one’s mood and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope. (Goleman, 1995, p. 34)

Additionally, this other intelligence, Goleman (1995) argued, is an even better predictor of success in life. He stated that IQ may only contribute towards 20 percent of a person’s success, while the rest is “other forces” including emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995, p. 34). He claimed that the world is full of very intelligent people, in terms of IQ, who are actually the employees of less than intelligent people. The reason these employers were able to be successful while those with a higher IQ were not, is that the employers were more emotionally intelligent.

The validity of these incredible claims might be argued. However, it is clear from the vast amount of literature written following the publication of Goleman’s (1995) Emotional Intelligence that academia has, at the very least, accepted this concept as one entirely worth exploring and pursuing.

Two years later, in 1997, Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Frey, Greenberg, Haynes, Kessler, Schwab-Stone, and Shriver (1997) built on Goleman’s work and laid down their own definition of the broader social and emotional competence:

The ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of one’s life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development. It includes self-awareness, control of impulsivity, working cooperatively, and caring about oneself and others. (Elias et al., 1997, p. 2)
Almost immediately, then, the concept of emotional intelligence was recognized and carried into a broader conversation of social interactions. That the social and emotional world were inextricably connected and entwined. How a person feels will be reflected in how they interact with people, and how people interact will impact how a person feels.

This conversation has continued with numerous definitions being presented over the past twenty years. In a 2015 paper, Monnier (2015) analyzed at length the many competing definitions and theories of social and emotional competency before proposing that the field be cleaned-up. She identified six over-arching attributes which she considered a starting point for this effort:

Attributes that allow the awareness of one’s inner state, attributes that allow the control/management of one’s inner state, attributes that improve one’s wellbeing, attributes that identify the state of others, attributes that allow the control/management of others’ inner state and attributes that improve social interactions. (Monnier, 2015, p. 74)

Nonetheless, there currently does not appear to be any concerted effort by the academic community to consolidate or clean-up the current theories or definitions of social and emotional competency. On the contrary, there are numerous new definitions and sub-categories being proposed each year. The field is actually expanding and diversifying rather than consolidating and unifying. Much of this expansion is due to the lack of agreement on the nature and definition of intelligence itself, despite a century of research into this concept. Now that researchers have introduced an even less-understood phenomenon, emotion, into the conversation, a certain level of chaos is destined to follow for some time.

**Social and Emotional Competency, Accepted Definitions**
For the purpose of this project, a unified and agreed upon definition of social and emotional competency is necessary. To build a proposal to amend Flex Time to address specific social and emotional competencies is only possible with such unification. While there is considerable debate within academia on the nature of social and emotional intelligences and competencies, without such unification there will be no cohesiveness to this proposal. It would become a scattering of well-meaning ideas instead of a unified plan of action.

This project uses the widely-accepted definition of social and emotional competency as utilized by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL),

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)

This definition is accepted widely, and shares enough intersections with other definitions to be acceptable for the use of this project. Notice, again, that this definition has nothing to do with traditional intelligence or what might be referred to as book learning. Rather, this definition describes a set of competencies which, if mastered, allows an individual to foster healthy and productive connections with other people. To come back to an earlier analogy, these competencies are highways built between people. The car traveling those highways is the knowledge which people exchange. Traditional intelligence allows for the quick assimilation and application of this knowledge, much like the speed of a car. However, everything breaks down without the highway. If an individual has a fast car (is intelligent) and has a whole fleet of cars to share (is knowledgeable) but has no highway system, that person is doomed to a life of solitude and mediocrity. This is the argument of those (like CASEL) who propose social and emotional competency education, that if someone is not capable of interacting and building relationships...
with other people their success in a modern world is highly improbable. Building from this
definition, CASEL (2019) has identified five core social and emotional competencies which
must be developed if a person is to be considered socially and emotionally intelligent or
competent: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and
responsible decision-making.

Self-awareness

The ancient phrase “Know thyself!” has been dissected and attributed to numerous
authors, philosophers, and cultures over the past two millennia (Howes & Wilkins, 1918).
Whether this is profound wisdom or whether this is actually “silly advice” is a question for the
philosophers and high-minded in this world (Naynay, 2018). In the world of psychology and
education, especially the education of social and emotional competencies, this phrase has unique
application. CASEL (2019) defined self-awareness as it relates to social and emotional
competencies as:

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)

This ability is the social and emotional equivalent of *knowing thyself*. Quite simply, if a
person is angry, recognizing that they are angry. If a person is depressed, recognizing that they
are depressed. If they are happy, recognizing their happiness. Once this recognition occurs, this
emotion can then be linked to behavior. “I am depressed, when I am depressed I sleep too much
and accomplish little.” The simple act of understanding an emotional state and how it impacts
behavior, as an outside observer, was argued by CASEL (2019) to grant that individual
considerable power over that emotional state. Psychologists will often refer to this type of thinking as *meta-cognition*, which is the “Awareness or analysis of one’s own learning or thinking processes” (Metacognition, n.d.). Or more simply, thinking about thinking. Understanding what is happening within one’s own brain. Goleman (1995) did not care for this word, and instead used the familiar term “self-awareness.” His argument was the same as CASEL (2019), that being aware and reflective on one’s emotional state allows the individual to not get carried away by their emotion. (Goleman, 1995, p. 46-47)

In 2016, researchers from Rutgers University compared the level of emotional awareness in youths (ages 7 – 16) to occurrences of symptoms of depression and anxiety. They found that a low level of emotional awareness corresponded to occurred symptoms of depression and anxiety over a one-year period (Kranzler et al., 2016). This research suggested that simply being aware of an emotional state as it occurs may give opportunity to shift that state into a more productive direction. This seems to confirm the arguments of the theorists, that awareness of emotions as they appear lends itself towards a more productive emotional direction.

Beyond knowing emotions, is knowing limitations and opportunities for growth. Knowing not just how one feels, but what one is capable of and what is yet undiscovered. In her ground-breaking 2008 book *Mindset: The new psychology of success*, Carol Dweck argued that having a certain mindset or thought pattern in this area is a predictor success. She argued that many, if not most, people have what she coined a “fixed mindset.” They are convinced they are capable of certain things, not capable of other things, and feel pressured to meet those expectations. She used herself as an example. She was labeled intelligent as a young child, and has for years since been out to prove herself. To underperform in a certain area is unintelligent, and not who she is. She was dealt a certain hand in life, and she has been compelled to live up to
it. She claimed that many think this way. They are given a certain level of intelligence, a certain personality, and a certain moral character which they must live up to, or be failures. On the contrary, other people have what she called a “growth mindset.” These people have the belief that their basic qualities can be cultivated through effort and persistence. People with this mindset do not believe, she argued, that anyone can be anything. Rather, that a person’s true potential is unknown, and it is impossible to see what a person is capable of until after years of effort (Dweck, 2008, p. 6-7).

In a highly-cited study by Broda, Yun, Schneider, Yeager, Walton, and Diemer (2018), a correlation was found between a growth mindset and academic success. The study involved 7,686 first-year college students, one of the largest studies of its type. These students were randomly chosen and given an online growth mindset intervention. Over the course of the Fall and Spring semesters, it was found that those who had experienced the growth mindset intervention consistently earned a higher GPA than the control group (Broda, et al., 2018).

Self-awareness is the first social and emotional competency. Possibly, for obvious reasons. If a person is not aware of their own emotional state, they cannot possibly relate that state to another person. Once someone understands who they are, how they feel, what they are capable of, and the limitless capabilities that they have yet to master, only then are they prepared to begin moving about this world, interacting, and exchanging with those they meet.

**Self-management**

If self-awareness is knowing an emotional state, then self-management is what to do once knowing. “I recognize that I am angry, what should I do now that I know that?” Clearly, these two competencies build upon one another. A person cannot self-manage unless they are self-
aware. Alternatively, if a person is self-aware, but does not self-manage, their awareness is at best half-effective. CASEL (2019) defined self-management as:

- 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)

Shakespeare wrote in *Hamlet*, act 3, scene 2, “Give me that man that is not passion’s slave and I will wear him in my heart’s core – ay, in my heart of heart…” Clearly, the ability to manage one’s own emotions, one’s own passions, has been considered a strength and a virtue for much of human history. The ability to not surrender to anger, to lust, to despair, or even to elation, but to keep what some call an *even keel*. To recognize emotion for what it is, and to not allow it to slow anything down or lead to a place of irrationality. This is a powerful skill which many struggle to master each day, but learning to manage life’s highs and lows is certainly a worthwhile pursuit. This is not to say one should eliminate the highs and lows of life. Such peaks and valleys are an irreplaceable part of the human experience. However, these places of swelling or constricting emotion must be managed and regulated in a healthy and appropriate manner.

Possibly the three most impactful emotional states which adolescents may have the hardest time in regulating are anger, anxiety, and depression.

**Anger**

Anger, rage, wrath, fury, whatever it is called, it is explosive and destructive. This is the emotion that causes adolescents to punch holes into walls, fling desks across a room, or strike a classmate. It is empowering, strengthening, energizing, and terrifying. It is this emotion that many people are afraid of when they see it in others. Like all strong emotion, it is unpredictable, and as such must be managed. Unlike the other two emotional states, when anger runs unchecked
it will be forcefully managed by outside authorities. Sometimes to the extreme of being physically restrained and sequestered by peace officers.

Anger management is an entire industry unto itself. There are 12-step programs to explore, books to read, and speakers to listen to. For most people, anger rarely reaches a point at which it can explode out of control. However, for nearly everyone such a spout of anger will happen at some point in their lives, and it is important to know how to regulate it. For the sake of brevity, the recommendations of the American Psychological Association (APA) are presented: relaxation, cognitive restructuring, problem solving, better communication, humor, and environmental changes. (“Controlling anger”, n.d.) The list is simple, straightforward, and research-backed.

Relaxation techniques are likely the first line of defense for most people when anger strikes. The APA recommends for people to close their eyes, bring to mind relaxing imagery, focus on breathing deeply from the diaphragm, and allowing the body’s muscles to relax. Methods such as meditation, mindfulness, yoga, and breathing exercises are all popular and all can be helpful. The APA suggests, if possible, finding a quiet and private location free from distractions to practice these techniques. There are many more relaxation techniques which can be explored and practiced, but as in most things the most important factor is to actually practice it. When anger strikes, relax, and breathe out the anger (“Controlling anger”, n.d.).

Cognitive restructuring is more complex. Put simply, it is changing how one thinks. When a person becomes angry, they often think in an overly dramatic and irrational manner. This drama can broadcast itself in cursing, swearing, or using otherwise hurtful language. A recommendation is to take this language before it comes out and thinking it through very literally. “Is my spouse or friend literally always being an expletive?” Of course not, that is an
impossibility. Realizing that irrationality can empower an individual to choose more constructive language. Logic defeats anger. The more cold, logical, and rational an individual can be in that moment, the more the anger will lose its power. There is a fallacy that getting angry and blowing off steam will make a person feel better. However, this is simply not true. In fact, since considerable harm can be done in a fit of rage, the opposite is true ("Controlling anger", n.d.).

Goleman stated that anger is the most seductive of emotions in that it gives an energizing rush, all while providing a justifying, self-righteous monologue in the mind. (Goleman, 1995, p.59) The simple act of reminding oneself that this is not true, it is irrational, and it is non-productive can bring the mind back to a place of logic and reason ("Controlling anger", n.d.).

Though all anger can cloud judgement and become entirely irrational, not all anger is misplaced. Many times, anger is an entirely natural and healthy response to difficulties in life. The key, is to move past the emotion into a place of productivity. If a problem in life is causing anger, then a healthy response is to become a problem solver. If the problem is fixed, a source of anger will be gone. For example, a man in the next seat is tapping his pen on the chair. This constant tapping is causing anger to well up. A rational and constructive solution to the problem is to kindly ask the man to stop tapping. However, not all problems in life have a solution. If this is the case the APA recommends to stop focusing on finding the non-existent solution, but instead to focus on how best to handle and face the problem ("Controlling anger", n.d.).

Good communication can drive to the root of a problem and bring needed rationality to an angry exchange. Usually when a person is angry they find it hard to listen to another person, let alone respond appropriately. However, the simple act of listening carefully to the grievances, concerns, or feelings of another person can move an exchange in a more productive direction. Additionally, it is important to be honest. What is the cause of this anger? Once that question is
answered it must be communicated to the other person. Often, angry people begin name-calling.

But instead of labeling someone as a jailer, for example, it is more productive to find the root feeling behind that anger. Possibly it is a feeling of limited freedom in movement or activities. Communicating that feeling is far more productive than a tirade of name-calling, and will work towards dissipating anger (“Controlling anger”, n.d.).

Humor is extremely powerful. Causing laughter to enter a heated situation can immediately relax it, and move it into an area of productivity. The APA recommends bringing silly humor into the mind when angry alone. However, communication is key when using humor in a group. Bursting out laughing in the middle of a heated exchange without explanation may only escalate the anger in the opposing party. Keep the humor silly and uplifting, not sarcastic or harsh. Such humor can do far more harm than good when communicated, and can manifest itself into another form of angry expression. Finally, do not laugh off problems. Rather, use laughter to bring the mind to a constructive place. (“Controlling anger”, n.d.)

The last suggestion from the APA on managing anger is to change the environment. Often people are faced with problems and situations which they have no control over, but bring up anger. For instance, a roommate’s bedroom is messy, traffic is always bad in the morning, or fights always happen when speaking with a spouse after work. The environment in these situations can be changed to avoid the anger. The door to the room can be closed, a different route can be taken to work, and a rule of 15 minutes of silence after work can be implemented. These solutions are not avoiding problem-solving, these problems cannot be solved by the individual. Rather, anger is being avoided, which is the point (“Controlling anger”, n.d.).

Anxiety
Anxiety is a feeling of nervousness, stress, or worry. Occasionally experiencing this emotion is a normal and expected part of life. However, for some anxiety will become pervasive and persist as an ongoing condition, even occasionally materializing into so-called panic attacks. It is recommended that if anxiety begins to interfere with other parts of life, manifests itself physically (such as hyperventilating or experiencing heart palpitations), or seems to have no logical source to seek medical help as these might be signs of a clinical condition (Maddock, n.d.). For most people, however, anxiety is a daily, but short-lived experience. Learning to manage that experience is integral to moving about this world. Stressors are everywhere. Homework, family, career, sports, and tests, life is full of things that, for a moment, can cause anxiety. Learning how to allow that anxiety to roll off an individual and move on with the day is a key skill, and one worth exploring. Some management strategies are reiterated from the previously stated anger management strategies, and as such are not discussed at length. To assist in managing any level of anxiety, the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA) suggested controlling one’s thoughts, balanced diet, enough sleep, daily exercise, relaxation, and getting help. (“Tips to Manage”, n.d.)

Controlling thoughts may be the most difficult management strategy for anxiety. However, changing the way one is thinking when anxiety hits is the only way to move past that moment. When an individual is anxious, they may easily spiral into a thought pattern of doom or perfection. The doom thought pattern is the “the world is ending” mindset. “If I fail this test, the world will end. If I don’t make this touchdown, the world will end. If I am rejected by a love interest, the world will end.” Of course, none of these statements are true. Shifting thinking into a more logical and literal sphere can manage the anxiety of doom. The anxiety of perfection is created by the need for absolute (and ultimately impossible) perfection. Such individuals may
often miss deadlines because the created product is never good enough to show or turn in. Again, shifting thinking can manage this anxiety. Learning that things can be *good enough*. Learning that perfection is not attainable and allowing anxiety over it is not constructive or helpful ("Tips to Manage", n.d.).

Diet, sleep, and exercise come up often in mental health literature. So much so that the link between physical health and mental health may be common knowledge. People need to get enough sleep, they need a balanced diet, and they need daily rigorous exercise. Much could be written on this topic. However, such an effort would ultimately detract from the focus of this project. It is simply stated then that on average adolescents are recommended over eight hours of sleep a night, a very diverse and nutrient-rich diet with limited access to sugar and caffeine, and daily rigorous exercise of at least sixty minutes. Such a lifestyle will positively impact their mental health including the management of anxiety ("Tips to Manage", n.d.).

Relaxation has already been discussed as a strategy to help manage anger. However, these same strategies can be applied to managing anxiety. The positive impact of taking a *mental break* when being overwhelmed with anxious thoughts cannot be overstated ("Tips to Manage", n.d.).

The last suggestion which the ADAA offered for managing anxiety is to seek help. This may be in the form of professional clinical help. However, for most this simply means communicating with a friend, colleague, boss, or teacher that these anxious emotions are happening. This will open lines of communication to find solutions and alleviate anxiety ("Tips to Manage", n.d.).

**Depression**
Often, depression is equated with sadness, and since every person has experienced some degree of sadness, it is an issue often dismissed. While it is true that a person in a depressive episode may feel sadness, it is not necessarily true that they can simply make themselves happy. For most individuals, according to the National Institute of Mental Health (2019), these depressive episodes only last hours or days and are characterized by a depressed or mournful mood, loss of interest or pleasure in daily activities, problems sleeping, loss of appetite, little energy, difficulty concentrating, and loss of self-worth. However, there are millions of individuals in the U.S. who experience episodes lasting over two weeks. Such an episode may require medical treatment and may result in a diagnosis of clinical depression, which requires ongoing mental health treatment. In the U.S. in 2017 an estimated 17.3 million individuals suffered such a major depressive episode. This number represents 7.1% of the U.S. adult population (Major Depression, 2019). Every adolescent at some point in their lives will deal with a depressive episode, to some level of severity. It is a key skill to learn how to manage such an episode. Much of managing depression will be echoed from managing anger and anxiety. In an effort to not repeat anything unnecessarily, such repetitious points will be quickly mentioned. Smith, Robinson, and Segal (2019) recommend, when a depressive episode strikes, to stay connected, get moving, eat healthy, get sunlight, challenge negative thinking, and do things that feel good. (Smith, Robinson, & Segal, 2019)

Smith, Robinson, and Segal’s (2019) first five points have already been covered to some degree within managing anger and managing anxiety: reaching out to people, having human connections, staying active, eating healthy and nutritious food, getting outside and feeling the sunlight, and overcoming non-productive thoughts with logic. Such simple things, that seem to
be part of the mainstream advice on how to manage a depressive state. The only point which has not been covered thus far is for an individual to force themselves to do things which feel good.

For someone to force themselves to do something even if they know it will not bring joy, may be counter-intuitive. Someone in a depressive state, by definition, does not enjoy those things they once enjoyed. Maybe that was hiking, painting, spending time with friends, or going to museums, it could be any activity, but the individual no longer finds happiness in them. If an individual forces themselves to do these things occasionally even if they do not want to, their mood may gradually lift. People cannot be forced to enjoy something. However, people can force themselves to do or accomplish things they do not want to. That act of accomplishment, of overcoming an obstacle, can bring joy. While depression is not likely to immediately lift after attending a single concert. A habit of forced activity, along with all other efforts already mentioned, will aid in slowly lifting individuals out of a depressive state. It is recommended that individuals who have attempted healthy coping strategies and still find themselves in a depressive state after two weeks seek mental health services (Smith, Robinson, & Segal, 2019).

There is no silver bullet to managing emotional states. For most it is a lifelong journey of introspection and learning. Too many do not develop such strategies or skills until it is too late, and they themselves have been hurt or they have hurt others. It cannot be overstated how learning such skills in adolescence will benefit an individual’s functioning into adulthood. These skills will benefit each individual’s mental health as well as every human relationship they will have.

Social Awareness

Social awareness can be easily summed up in a single word: empathy. This skill is the ability to be aware of and relate to the feelings of others. Goleman (1995) stated that empathy is
built on self-awareness. If someone is introspective and aware of their own feelings and emotions it is easier to relate to another’s feelings. Put another way, how can an individual understand that someone is heartbroken if they have never recognized that emotion in themselves (Goleman, 1995, p.96)? CASEL (2019) defined social awareness as:

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)

Empathy has become a bit of a buzz-word in modern education. There are books, courses, seminars, and studies on how and why to build empathy into curriculum. There have even been efforts at building virtual reality empathy curriculums. These curriculums allow the student to take a first-person view of being homeless, for example, and report on their feelings of empathy for those who are homeless. Such curriculums are meeting with success though they are not widely available (Herrera, Bailenson, Weisz, Ogle, & Zaki, 2018). One strategy which is recommended by Alexis Ditkowsky (2018) of the Harvard School of Education is, exposure. Across the myriad of empathy curriculum options this is one teaching tool which is absolutely agreed upon, individuals cannot be empathetic towards people of which they have no knowledge (Ditkowsky, 2018).

Most people associate with the same, small group whenever possible. Expanding that group, or stepping outside it will be a fairly rare occurrence. However, when such change occurs it is usually a gradual and natural process which happens as interests or personalities change. Less common, is actively seeking out people who are not within the group, and actively enlarging the social circle. If people are both encouraged to seek out people outside of their usual
social circle and given opportunities to do so, it gives them valuable insight and can build empathy for these people. Empathy for a Christian is hard to develop if an individual has never spoken to a Christian. Empathy for a homosexual is hard to develop if an individual has never spoken to a homosexual. Exposure to many different cultures, walks of life, and ways of living is invaluable in building empathy (Ditkowsky, 2018).

However, the building empathy and understanding of others is not enough. Ditkowsky (2018) stated that people must be encouraged to move beyond empathy and act upon it. Having empathy for someone who is in severe pain with a broken leg does nothing to help that person. Someone needs to call 911, and a doctor needs to set the leg. Without action, empathy is dead. People need to be encouraged and given opportunities to take action upon their empathy.

Without empathy, without social awareness, people are emotionally blind. Without some level of understanding as to the emotional state of another person, an individual’s communication is stunted at best and actually harmful at worst. Building empathy and building the competency of social awareness is something that only happens slowly. It takes years of meaningful exposure to thousands of different kinds of people, with thousands of different emotional perspectives. It is not, as with all social and emotional competencies, something that can be truly mastered. However, the pursuit and the strengthening of understanding allows an individual to work, play, and communicate far more effectively.

**Relationship Skills**

Relationships may be the key component to the human experience. Falling in love, doing a social good, raising children, making a difference, each of these things are often considered some of the best things in life. At their core, each of them is about people and an individual’s
relationships with them. The competency of skillfully navigating these relationships is defined by CASEL (2019) as:

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 these skills is effective and positive communication. An individual cannot fall in love, work on a team, build friendships, solve disagreements, or even resist negative social pressure unless that person is able to effectively communicate in each of those situations. 83 years ago, Dale Carnegie (1936) wrote his record-shattering book *How to Win Friends & Influence People*, and with it he launched a communication revolution. He offered such simple, practical advice as: smile, listen carefully, never say “You’re wrong”, and ask questions (Carnegie, 1936). Since that time, communication has become an entire genre of publication unto itself. The number of books alone numbers in the thousands. Each with their own suggestions, secrets, or hidden wisdom. This section will focus on only two things, but possibly the two most crucial things to all human communication: communicating clearly, and listening closely.

Mastering clear communication is not an easy task. Joel Garfinkle (2019), a professional speaker and executive coach, has authored several books and articles on the subject. He stated that truly clear communication must stay on message, make sense, be repeatable, and be respectful. For those who enjoy talking, or those who are unpracticed at it, it is extremely easy to lose track of the main point of the conversation and switch subjects to tell a story or share an insight. For communication to be truly clear and effective it must stick, stubbornly, to its core
purpose. Otherwise, the message the speaker or author is trying to convey will get lost in the noise. Garfinkle (2019) suggested that the individual wishing to communicate ask themselves, “Does what I am saying make sense?” If a sentence or a conversation is not coming together or making sense to the speaker, it certainly will not make sense to the receiver. If this happens, Garfinkle urges to not be shy in starting a conversation over, trying twice and succeeding is better than failing once. Garfinkle (2019) also recommended embracing repetition. Repeating things cements them into the brain. He suggested asking the listener, “Did that make sense?” or “Did that get across?” and if the answer is “No,” then to simply repeat the point, but possibly phrased slightly differently. Lastly, he stated that clear communication respects its audience. The purpose of the speaker or author should not be to sound eloquent or bring attention to themselves, but it should answer the question “What’s in it for the audience?” Clear communication exists for the sake of the audience, not the communicator (Garfinkle, 2019).

Stephen Covey (1989) very famously stated in his book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, “Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply” (Covey, 1989, p. 251). Listening is a skill which takes considerable intentional effort to improve. However, listening is key to effective communication and building relationships. Covey (1989) coined what he called *empathic listening*. This type of listening goes beyond listening carefully to each word someone is saying, but rather listening to the emotions and intentions behind each of those words. Anyone can pay close attention and absorb all or most of the information which someone is presenting. It takes a great degree of practice and skill to understand the speaker as a person, understand where they are, relate to their struggles or victories, and make an emotional and intellectual connection even before speaking. Covey (1989) used the example of a parent who claims they cannot understand their child. They do
irrational things, and get into trouble. A typical level of listening would hear the arguments and complaints of the child. An empathetic level of listening would go beyond to understand and relate to the emotional place the child is in. Not an easy task, but Covey (1989) argued that truly listening and desiring to know someone’s heart as well as their mind is the key to effective, and empathetic, listening.

Relationship skills are a social emotional competency people typically work on throughout their lives. However, embracing the learning of the skills of clear communication and listening is sure to facilitate every human relationship. Friendships, loves, colleagues, each relationship requires a certain amount of skill to navigate. The earlier someone is given an opportunity to learn and exercise these skills, the greater chance they have at mastering them.

**Responsible Decision-making**

Most people attribute personal failures in their lives to poor decisions. If they had simply made a better choice at some key moment, it would have saved them heartbreak, disappointment, or defeat. CASEL (2019) defined the final social emotional competency of responsible decision-making as:

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 just two words: thinking ahead. If an individual is able to consider the future repercussions of a choice in their entirety, that individual is more likely to make a rational and wise decision. However, if an individual is only thinking of what is, in that moment, fun, exciting, or convenient, the individual is unlikely to make a productive
decision. Psychologists call this ability *episodic future thinking*. Suddendorf and Corballis (2007) stated that episodic future thinking, even beyond being key to individual success, was key to the success of the human species. They found no compelling evidence that any nonhuman species possesses the ability to mentally travel forward in time, predict, and plan. However, human beings are capable of planning and predicting not just days, but decades in advance. This is a cognitive ability which, likely due to its complexity, is fairly late to develop, not appearing in even a simplistic form until age 3 or 4. However, even into adulthood it is an ability which is often neglected. Whether from social pressures or distractions, most individuals can often find it difficult to pause and consider repercussions. However, the necessity to pause, to consider and predict future actions, is ever-important (Suddendorf & Corballis, 2007).

Good decisions cannot be made, problems cannot be solved, and negative consequences cannot be avoided unless individuals think ahead. It is a skill which, for some, does not come naturally. However, it cannot be neglected. The ability to cast one’s mind through time and see things before they happen is an incredible and uniquely human ability. If it is neglected, then poor decisions will be made, and negative consequences will follow. The social and emotional competency of responsible decision-making is possibly even more important in the age of information. The world is changing faster every day. And no one can afford to not think ahead, or to make poor life-decisions.

**Social and Emotional Competency, Summary**

Social emotional competencies are the five critical life-skills which allow individuals 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) These competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship
skills, and responsible decision-making certainly take a lifetime to approach mastery. However, the pursuit of mastery cannot be abandoned. If so, it would be to an individual’s own detriment. These competencies are critical to moving about this world, interacting, communicating, loving, and succeeding.

**Social and Emotional Learning**

Social and emotional learning is engaging in the education of social and emotional competencies. At this point, all available educational resources utilize direct instruction as the primary means of social and emotional learning. For example, CASEL (2019) offers its own version of social and emotional competency curriculum. This curriculum covers much of what this chapter has already detailed. It explains each of the different competencies and instructs students in practical methods of developing them (CASEL, 2019). However, there is no current published attempt at integrating social emotional learning into something such as Flex Time. Taking each of these competencies and amending Flex so that it can best assist students in developing each one, is a unique challenge, and one that does not appear to have been attempted before.

**Summary**

Since Goleman (1995) first published his book *Emotional Intelligence*, there has been simultaneous and broad acceptance of his theories, yet branching arguments. Acceptance, that this idea of an alternate emotional and social intelligence was real and important. Argumentation in exactly how to define this new type of intelligence. For the purposes of this project a unifying and current definition of social and emotional competency was used, and the five key social and emotional competencies were covered: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Each of these competencies were explored
at great length as these skills must be understood before they can be applied to any attempt at social and emotional learning. In chapter 3, I detail my project and how I apply all five of these competencies to amendments and additions to Flex Time. My goal was to answer the question: how can Flex Time be constructed to ensure that it is best assisting all students in developing their individual social and emotional competencies? By applying all the skills involved in each competency I was able to craft thoughtful and intentional additions to Flex Time to answer this question.
CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

When Flex Time was implemented in September of 2018, no one knew how successful it would be or how beloved it would become. After only one year, Flex has ingrained itself into the fabric of this high school, and won the hearts of both students and educators. It is a break in the middle of the day, it is a chance to seek academic help and support, and it is a space for College and Career Readiness (CCR) to exist, but could it be even more? How could Flex Time be constructed to ensure that it is best assisting all students in developing their individual social and emotional competencies? This chapter outlines an effort to accomplish just such a betterment of Flex. The project consists of five amendments or additions to Flex, a lengthy presentation to school administration, and a menu of Flex changes to distribute to students. Each of these suggested changes would not require considerable investment on the part of the school, they are designed to be easily implemented with maximum impact.

The five additions to Flex will be presented to administration in the form of a professionally designed booklet (See Appendix A). Each page highlights one of the five additions of: Flex board, quiet room, human library, scavenger hunt, and direct instruction. The design of each page is modern, stylized, and colorful. The title page of this booklet contains information on social and emotional competencies in general. Each subsequent page contains concise information on the specifics of each addition, as well as the rationale behind it. Paired with this booklet, is a presentation detailing the specifics of social and emotional competencies, how to develop them, why to develop them, and each of the additions to Flex recommended (See Appendix B). This presentation is constructed in a modular fashion so that it can easily be adapted to the audience. Depending on the individual or group, I may have six or sixty minutes
to give my proposal, and I must be able to adapt accordingly. Lastly, I created a menu of Flex changes, a professionally designed flyer which details each of the changes to Flex, if adopted, and how students can locate them (See Appendix C). This flyer is meant to be handed out to students during the first week of the new school year.

**Flex Board**

The first addition that I am recommending to Flex is advertisement. Currently, if a student wishes to know what activities are available to them on a particular day, they have two options. They can look at a large Excel spreadsheet which was posted online, or they can ask around. Most students will talk to their peers or simply follow a friend to a certain activity. This procedure inevitably leads to many, if not most, students being unaware of half of the available activities. Every day of the week, as many as a dozen different activities are put on by school staff. However, these activities are generally poorly attended, in part due to the fact that those who may be interested do not know of their existence. The entire 2018-2019 school year I hosted video game tournaments in my room on Wednesdays during Flex. It was well attended, with at least fifteen students being present every week. One would expect that by January of 2019 any student who may be interested in such an activity would be aware of it. However, in May of 2019 I was still having students drop in to my room on Wednesdays and exclaim that they had no idea this interest was available. My experience is not unique. Colleagues have shared similar conversations with students. This situation is one which we must do our best to prevent. Each of the already-existing interests are crafted to encourage student interaction, creativity, critical thinking, or even the development of social and emotional competence. However, these efforts are wasted if students are not aware of them. We must go above and beyond in making sure that
every single Flex offering is known to every student. Otherwise, any further additions to Flex will simply suffer the same fate as existing interest offerings, they will be forgotten.

To heighten awareness of all activities and interests offered during flex, including those currently offered and those I am recommending, I propose the installation of a *Flex Board*. This board should be highly visible at one of the busiest hallway intersections in the school building and graphically display every activity, interest, and offering, for each day of the week. Currently there is no physical, highly visible display which informs the student body of Flex offerings. Having such a board provides this needed information and ensures that all students, regardless of technology or peer limitations, can take advantage of offerings which encourage the development of social and emotional competencies. An insightful 1997 study found that hikers who were exposed to such bulletin board messages were far more knowledgeable on safe hiking practices. However, the study also suggests that such information should be concise and quickly read by those on the move (Cole, Hammond, & McCool, 1997). Such a study of people on the move being exposed to board messages is a perfect parallel to the use of a Flex Board by students who are moving through school halls.

At the moment, if a student does not have access to technology (possibly for disciplinary reasons) or has few friends or peer connections, that student has few opportunities to be informed on Flex. This student, who arguably is most in need of the various Flex offerings, is now much less likely to become involved in these offerings. I recommend for this board to be placed at the hallway intersection to the immediate north of the administrative offices. This location is likely the busiest intersection within the school building and is now only occupied by a large school banner. Such a display of school pride could be equally accomplished by a banner above the proposed board reading “school name” Flex Board. The board itself would be displayed as a
AMENDING FLEX TIME

Monday through Friday calendar with five columns, each column dedicated to a day. Within each column there will be a list of each Flex offering as well as descriptions of each and locations. I would consider it to be most practical if the board is a standard four-foot by eight-foot whiteboard encased in a sliding glass display. Such a design would allow for changes to be made to the board daily, if necessary, and protect it from any graffiti. Such a board is a small and fairly inexpensive addition to Flex Time. However, the potential impact of ensuring more students are finding offerings to assist in their social and emotional development by including a highly visible method of advertising Flex offerings should not be dismissed.

**Quiet Room**

In encouraging the development of the social and emotional competency of self-management, many educators instruct students in relaxation, meditation, or mindfulness techniques. The purpose of these techniques is to help the student move from a place of high anxiety, anger, or stress, and “reset.” To focus on the present moment and regain emotional control. Often, students will be instructed to find a place away from distractions when they feel overwhelmed. A quiet place to reign in out-of-control emotions and be sheltered from overwhelming stimuli (“Controlling anger”, n.d.; Smith, Robinson, & Segal, 2019; “Tips to manage”, n.d.). Unfortunately, there is a problem with that advice. For almost the entire student body, such a place does not exist. For the vast majority of the student body that is not receiving any amount of special education services, there is no option. And for most of the remaining students, the only option might be the office of a counselor or case manager. In fact, unless a student seeks out special accommodations the only location in which they would be able to be alone and undisturbed for even a few minutes is a bathroom stall. When thinking about the
stimuli overload that is the typical roar and rush of Flex, I propose that the creation of a safe, quiet, and private place in which students can reset for the next half of the school day is needed.

My proposal is the creation of a Quiet Room. This room would not need to be open and staffed for the entire school day. It may only be needed during the hour of Flex. However, during that hour there is certainly demand for such a room. Many students have expressed to me a desire for quiet or privacy during Flex, but are unable to find it for more than a few minutes. Many students sit in quiet corners of the school hallways or in classrooms that are empty save for a single teacher. However, this is only momentary privacy. People are constantly walking the halls and coming in and out of classrooms. A Quiet Room, to fulfill its function, must be silent, private, and calming. It will require a staff member to supervise and enforce a very strict “soft whispering only” policy, much like a library. It is not a place to hang out and talk, but to sit quietly and reset. I recommend that lights be dimmed and a calming scent such as lavender be in the air. Such efforts create an atmosphere of serenity and minimize the distractions of harsh lights or odors. This statement is supported by a 2018 study on lavender use before sleep in which it was found that the scent of lavender led to increased levels of relaxation and more beneficial sleep (Surya & Zuriati, 2018). Most importantly, the quiet room must be a place of privacy. It is a place where students who desire to be alone for a few minutes to an hour may have that time. To facilitate this, I propose this room be fitted with some form of cubicle system. This system may be formal cubicles such as those used in corporate offices, or it may be an informal system created by using high-backed furniture such as restaurant booths. Whatever system is most cost-effective will be sufficient. The only deciding factor in designing this space is to ensure that a student can walk in and be sure of privacy and calm. For the safety of all
students, active supervision by school staff will be required. However, this supervision can be discreet and respectful of student needs.

The extent of the current demand for such a space is unknown. As such, the use of the space will need to be monitored. Just as important, is keeping track of students who wish to use the space but cannot due to a lack of room. Policy regarding the Quiet Room will need to be an evolving process. Additions such as time limits, food restrictions, technology restrictions, or a no sleeping policy will need to be introduced as the demand for the space is more fully understood. However, such unknowns should not discourage from the creation of the Quiet Room. This space is clearly one which is missing from the current Flex offerings and has the possibility to assist students in self-management.

**Human Library**

Empathy is at the core of the social and emotional competency of social awareness. In order to develop empathy an individual needs to be able to place themselves in someone else’s position, or to imagine themselves living such a life. A person cannot express empathy toward someone they know nothing about. Exposure to many different people, cultures, and ways of moving about this world enlarges a person’s experience, and gives them the tools to express empathy towards many different people (Ditkowsky, 2018). To promote this gaining of experience, I am proposing a new Flex offering addition, the Human Library. This addition, to begin, would be offered once a week. If demand is sufficient, there may be resources to expand the offering to multiple days. I recommend that the offering be placed in a location which offers room for a large audience in order to impact as many students as possible. To begin, a larger classroom may be most prudent.
The premise of this offering is very simple. A person, most likely a school staff member to begin with but guests may be invited over time, will sit in front of students and tell them their lived experiences and life’s story. Unlike a typical library which is full of books, a human library is full of people. People from all over the world and every walk of life. Students have the chance to hear the stories of parents, ex-felons, priests, ex-drug addicts, immigrants, scientists, activists, machinists, CEOs, and politicians. People who they may have walked past every day, but felt no empathy for. In learning the life stories of these people, students will be given the tools to start developing empathy. Often, students are taught the norms and practices of other cultures and ways of life. However, they are never able to place a human life to this education. This Flex offering places a human face and name to cultures they may already be aware of, and many they may not. Such exposure will give them tools to develop empathy and encourage the development of social awareness (Ditkowsky, 2018).

**Scavenger Hunt**

One of the most effective ways to simultaneously develop the social and emotional competencies of social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making is through on-going human interaction. When people are interacting, they are constantly listening and communicating. By strengthening and practicing the skills of listening closely and communicating clearly, the social and emotional competency of relationship skills will be developed (Covey, 1989; Garfinkle, 2019). As they communicate, more will be learned about each individual and opportunities to develop empathy and social awareness will appear (Ditkowsky, 2018). Lastly, as these people participate in activities and make social mistakes, the ability to understand consequences and develop episodic future thinking will emerge (Suddendort & Corballis, 2007). This interaction is most effectively accomplished when
individuals are in a group and working towards a common goal. Such teams of people are required to communicate, listen, learn, and think ahead to achieve their goal. Unfortunately, the majority of the student population are in no way exposed to such a team-based activity during Flex. There are opportunities, such as participating in an organized sport. However, only a minority of students participate. I am proposing the creation of a bi-monthly school-wide scavenger hunt. Such a Flex offering would encourage many students who do not currently participate in any organized, team-based activity to join their friends in the hunt. Since the creation of the offering requires quite a lot of preparation, and completing it should require multiple days of Flex, a new hunt would only begin on the first school day of every other month, equaling four to five hunts per school year.

Once the hunt begins, any student or group of students would be given a sheet with the first clue written on it. An example of a clue might be, “No window am I, but black trees over blue sky.” This clue would lead the team to a specific location within the school building (in this case my classroom, one wall of which has a depiction of trees silhouetted over a blue sky). Once solved, the team would approach the staff member who is tasked with supervising that space during Flex. That staff member would confirm that they solved the clue, sign their paper, and give them a new clue to write down. This does limit the spaces available to those which are only supervised by one staff member, and would require a warning on the sheet that not all spaces are available on all days, and to plan ahead. However, the number of spaces in the school which fit that description are enormous (every single classroom for example). Each clue will be completed in the same fashion. The number of clues is not fixed, however, it is expected that the entire hunt take several days. To prevent any unfair advantage and promote interaction within Flex, the hunt
will be enforced as a Flex-only activity. Once a team reaches the final clue, that staff member ensures that each clue and staff signature on their sheet is authentic, and announces a winner.

The purpose of the hunt is not to create a fun or challenging activity, though it certainly will be, but to increase the amount of interaction within the student population, especially between people who otherwise would never interact. This increased interaction regarding finding clues and planning ahead will assist in the development of social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Students from all different peer groups will be looking into every dark corner of the school in an effort to solve clues. This will force them to interact with many different, even reclusive, people in asking for help. It is true that the likelihood of the entire school solving a clue almost immediately after one person solves it is very high. However, it is important to remember that this offering’s primary purpose is to increase interaction and communication. In that light, the eventuality of everyone sharing clues fulfills that purpose. To heavily encourage involvement and thus human interaction, I propose that the prize for this hunt be substantial. It is my opinion that a minimum prize of $100 be awarded to those who complete the hunt first. Lastly, another option as to the format of the hunt would be a QR code hunt in which students are given clues and search for QR codes posted in hidden places. This option was not outlined originally as the low-tech option allows all students, regardless of their technology options, to participate.

**Direct Instruction**

Schools which currently employ some form of social and emotional competency curriculum almost entirely utilize direct instruction, they offer a social and emotional competency class. Such a class offers the advantage of being able to address every single social and emotional competency: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship
skills, and responsible decision-making. However, there is no need to create a new Flex-only class. Within Flex there is already much opportunity to engage in social and emotional learning. Every Tuesday, the entire student body participates in College and Career Readiness. Being socially and emotionally competent certainly qualifies as an important part of being ready for the post-secondary world. CCR teachers could easily and appropriately incorporate lessons on social and emotional competencies.

Another opportunity for direct instruction is the school auditorium. Every day during Flex a movie is shown for the benefit of students who wish to have a relaxing hour. These movies, currently, are almost entirely shown for entertainment purposes. However, this space could be equally utilized for instruction as well as entertainment. I propose alternating between movies for entertainment and movies for social and emotional instruction. These instructional movies do not need to be dry and humorless documentaries. On the contrary, students must be compelled to see them, they must be fun to watch. Hollywood produces movies often that may help students build empathy or become more emotionally self-aware. The intentional building of a library of such movies will be required for social and emotional instruction to be successful.

**Timeline and Results**

I will be presenting my proposal of five amendments to Flex to school administration before the start of the 2019-2020 school year. Due to the nature of finding available space in the school for the flex board, quiet room, and human library, in addition to procuring furniture for the quiet room, my expectation is for full implementation to not take effect until the second semester of the school year. After implementation, I will be relying on daily, ongoing conversations with students and staff as to the project’s effectiveness in assisting students in developing their individual social and emotional competencies. In comparing my notes between
the first semester, before full implementation, and the second semester, after full implementation, I will be able to note a marked change, or not.

Summary

Each of the five proposed amendments to Flex Time of: Flex Board, Quiet Room, Human Library, Scavenger Hunt, and Direct Instruction will be presented to school administration. The presentation details the specifics of the five social and emotional competencies, their importance, options on developing them, as well as each of the five amendments. Paired with this presentation is a professionally designed booklet, each page of which is dedicated to one of the amendments. By using the booklet and presentation together I will be able to detail how each of these amendments can assist students in developing their individual social and emotional competencies. Once implemented, these additions to Flex will be outlined on a professionally designed menu which will be handed to students on their first week of school. The subsequent and final chapter to this project reflects on the creation of this project and answers the question: *how can Flex Time be constructed to ensure that it is best assisting all students in developing their individual social and emotional competencies?*
Reflection/Conclusion

When I began this project, I had a simple goal in mind, I wanted to make Flex Time better. I knew that my students loved Flex. I knew that my administration had a lofty goal of wanting Flex to help students in developing their social and emotional competencies. What I did not know was how to best construct Flex to ensure that it is best assisting all students in developing their individual social and emotional competencies. My attempt to answer this question has led me on a path of discovery, learning, and contribution. I discovered through my research an entirely new way of looking at human interaction and intelligence. I have learned far more than I expected on how to better meet the needs of my students. I answered the question: how can Flex Time be constructed to ensure that it is best assisting all students in developing their individual social and emotional competencies? Moreover, I believe I have been given the opportunity to contribute to the betterment of my own school, and subsequently the development of my students. This contribution will be brought to my administration soon, and I am excited to see my proposals in effect.

Research and Learning

When I sat down to begin my research for the first time, I knew nearly nothing about social and emotional competencies. I knew the words, and I knew they had something to do with how well a person interacts with others. However, little did I know of the rabbit-hole I was about to fall into. I discovered immediately that this world was far larger and more contentious than I had imagined. Larger, in that there were dozens of books and hundreds of papers on the subject. Clearly, this was a part of the educational world that I needed to learn as much about as possible. Contentious, in that none of these researchers and professionals seemed to agree. In fact, simply
trying to find a definition for social and emotional competency took an entire day of research. I found dozens of different definitions. Some were very narrow and precise. Others were broad and seemed to describe an array of intelligences and competencies. Finally, I saw two common threads. The first, was that nearly everyone was citing an author named Daniel Goleman. The second, was that most efforts at studying social and emotional curriculum were citing the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL).

Goleman (1995) wrote an incredible book titled *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. This book was clearly a lynchpin in social and emotional competency thinking. I found almost nothing on the topic before Goleman wrote his book in 1995. After, nearly every author cites him. Goleman (1995) had a profound impact on my profession, and on this paper. He is cited throughout the second chapter, and his ideas can be heard echoing through the literature to 2019. It was his idea that, aside from traditional intelligence, there was another type of intelligence which included motivating oneself, controlling impulses, regulating moods, and empathizing with people. He argued that this intelligence was even more critical to success than traditional intelligence. This is an idea that resonates with most people, it certainly did with me. I, as most people have, have met individuals who do not seem to be especially gifted in any traditional sense of the word. However, these people are incredibly successful. The only answer to this is that they are good with people. They are good talkers, negotiators, empathizers, and hold control of their own emotions and impulses. This is the secret to their success, and this concept is what Goleman (1995) illuminated.

CASEL was the second common thread I found. Most of the available studies on social and emotional competency curriculum I found were either done in cooperation with CASEL, using CASEL’s curriculum, or referencing CASEL in some way. They appeared, and are in fact,
a sort of *gold standard* in the world of social and emotional competency. Their resources pull heavily from the work of Goleman, but build off it with the latest research, broadening his definitions into a whole new spectrum of intelligence. They define five different social and emotional competencies, each of which I explored in chapter two. I investigated how best to help students develop these competencies with the ultimate goal of using that information to inform my amendments to Flex. Each competency is distinct and requires development in different areas. Clearly, my amendments would need to be broad and numerous to be impactful.

**Answering the Question**

Ultimately, there is not one answer to the question, *how can Flex Time be constructed to ensure that it is best assisting all students in developing their individual social and emotional competencies?* There are many answers, and I proposed many changes to Flex. However, this is a question which will not “go gentle into that good night” as Dylan Thomas wrote in 1952. This will be a question which myself and my entire school’s staff will need to keep returning to and re-evaluating. We will need to stay abreast of the latest research and resist the complacency of *good enough*. It is true that if all my proposals are adopted Flex will be better assisting students in their development, for today. Nevertheless, as educators we must be ever-striving and ever-learning. Just because Flex is as good as it can be today, does not mean that statement will still be true tomorrow.

I initially wanted to include as many as a dozen different proposed amendments to Flex. This would ensure that I could address all five social and emotional competencies and that I was impacting as much of the student body as possible. However, the impracticality of such a proposal soon became apparent. If I bring twelve different proposals before my school administration the possibility of all twelve being implemented is minimal. Change happens
incrementally. This is true for many reasons, but chief among them in this case is the fact that my proposals would cost a certain amount of time and money. The more proposals I included, the less likely the school would be willing to pay for them all. This realization made me step back and rethink exactly how I was going to answer my project question. To answer it effectively I needed to address all five of the competencies and impact as many students as possible. This thinking forced me to hone in on just five proposed amendments. It seemed appropriate and possibly poetic to me to balance the five competencies with five amendments. The amendments I proposed were: Flex Board, Quiet Room, Human Library, Scavenger Hunt, and Direct Instruction.

All five of the amendments are intentionally designed to address at least one of the five competencies, and to be accessible to every single student. Between the five amendments every competency is addressed at least once. If all the amendments are adopted, Flex will absolutely be assisting students in developing the full spectrum of social and emotional competencies. Moreover, that development opportunity is available to every single student. No proposal requires any level of skill, athleticism, knowledge, or popularity to be involved. Because the very nature of these amendments is social, even if a student is an English language learner or has a cognitive or physical disability, this student can partner with a friend and be equally involved. Such partnership and communication is encouraged and even required to be fully engaged in every amendment.

**Moving Forward**

I am very pleased with the changes to Flex I have had the opportunity to recommend. I am confident that each of them will positively impact my students. Right now, academia is slated heavily towards traditional intelligence, but my students need more than that. They need their
social and emotional needs met as well. If my amendments are fully adopted, my school will have moved significantly in that positive direction.

I will be presenting my proposals to my school administration before the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year. Once adopted, these Flex amendments will make significant changes to how Flex operates and will take time to be fully implemented. The entire school will need to accept the changes, and work together to make them a reality. Each of the changes requires a staff member to head it up. This means that several of my colleagues will need to volunteer to run one of the new interests being created or supervise a new space. The amendments will also require on-going monitoring and tweaking of policies. The Flex Board will need to be updated every week. The Quiet Room will need to be supervised and may require the enforcement of additional rules such as “No food allowed.” The Human Library will require a staff member to invite guests and run it every week. The scavenger hunt will need to be set up and prepped every other month, in addition to having the cooperation of the entire staff during the hunt. And finally, Direct Instruction requires the cooperation of all CCR teachers as well as those running the auditorium. All this cooperation is no easy feat. It will be a challenge to coordinate such changes. However, my colleagues are devoted to our kids, and I am certain that these amendments are things all of us can create together. Moreover, once all five of the amendments are implemented, they will benefit the entire student body. Every student will have a greater opportunity to develop their individual social and emotional competencies.

Summary

I have learned much through this process of research and creation. I am very excited about sharing my discoveries and proposing my amendments to Flex, but I am even more excited at the possibility of enriching the educational experience of my students. I discovered a new
world in my research for this project. A world that offers a richer, more meaningful, and more impactful education for students. An education that looks beyond the cars of knowledge to the highways of social and emotional competence. I have learned that to neglect these highways is to neglect a part of the person, and so to not be the impactful and effective educator I can be. By proposing five new amendments to Flex, I answered the question: how can Flex Time be constructed to ensure that it is best assisting all students in developing their individual social and emotional competencies? In creating my five amendments to Flex, I considered this new learning, and applied it. I am confident that these amendments will help my kids, and that opportunity is something I am excited about more than anything else. Recently, a colleague asked me why I wanted to finish this project. A year ago, before I had started, I would have stated that I wanted to earn my Master’s degree. That is still true, but it is not the answer I gave, possibly to my surprise. I said I wanted to help my kids, this project will help them, and they deserve every bit of help I can possibly give them.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Booklet

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL 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)

- **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)

- **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)

- **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)

- **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)
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 trafficked 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 room to sit silently, meditate, regroup, and reset for the rest of the day.

Sitting alone and utilizing this space as a tool to self-manage emotions is encouraged.
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.
SCAVENGER HUNT

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.
APPENDIX B

Amending Flex Time

Flex Time Defined

“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.”
Three Purposes of Flex

- A place for CCR to exist
- A time for academic support
- An avenue to meet students’ need to develop social and emotional competencies

Social & Emotional Competency
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.

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

SEC has been divided into 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

- 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!

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

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

**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.

**New Movies**
More variety, more excitement, more movies! Drop in
the auditorium and see what’s showing today.