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## Teaching Primary Aged Students Impacted By Trauma Through Interactive Read Alouds

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TEACHING PRIMARY AGED STUDENTS IMPACTED BY TRAUMA THROUGH  
INTERACTIVE READ ALOUDS

By

Amelia Wykes

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

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

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Primary Advisor: **Julianne Scullen**

Content Expert: Danyelle Fisher and Maggie Kiley

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

As teachers, we strive to create an engaging environment that students can learn and be successful in, but for students affected by trauma, a safe environment is necessary to address their basic needs. Oftentimes, students affected by trauma may need additional support and resources before they are ready to learn. I have learned that when books are read out loud in classrooms, students can make meaningful connections and learn important lessons and skills. Reading aloud to students helps provide teachers a starting point in recognizing student trauma and creates significant teaching opportunities. This line of thinking guided my research question: *How can read-alouds support the learning of primary aged students who have been affected by early childhood trauma?*

### Overview

Throughout Chapter One, I will provide a rationale for this research study and describe the importance of this topic. I will also explain how this research may be of use to other educators. Finally, I provide examples of my personal experiences that led me to research this topic. Those personal experiences include growing up with books, my first year as a teacher, and teaching at an International School in Japan.

### Rationale

My experiences as a first-year teacher in an urban elementary school heavily influenced this project. I saw many examples of students who had no perceived control

over their emotional impulses and had never been taught skills to cope with them. I also taught students who had been affected by early childhood trauma, and felt like I lacked resources to help support these students. Teachers are dealing with a diverse range of students in their classrooms, students come from multiple backgrounds, which can include poverty, homelessness, and other different high-stress circumstances (Center of Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2019). According to the CDC (2019), 1 in 6 adults have experienced some type of Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs). In Minnesota, teachers are often teaching students who are immigrants or children of immigrants due to Minnesota's high immigrant population. Many of these students will come into school affected by early childhood trauma because of some of the Family and Community risk factors associated with immigration and being new to a community (CDC, 2019). As a former Kindergarten teacher, I am aware that students often enter schools without attending a preschool or an early childhood program, without these skills students affected by early childhood trauma may not know how to regulate their own emotions. I think it is also important to mention here that while students may come from a background of trauma, it does not mean that they have no social-emotional skills. However, it could mean they need to refine those skills. Due to social-emotional needs of students entering school, as a teacher, I have struggled to find resources to support these students. In the next section, I will share my project goals that were inspired by my first few years as a teacher.

### **Project Goals**

Through my research, I hope to discover how books can help support the social-emotional skills of students affected by trauma. As an educator, I know it is critical that schools provide teachers with social-emotional training and curriculum, the CDC

(2019), mentions that one prevention of ACEs is to teach SEL skills. I also know this is not a reality in every school due to factors that will be later discussed in Chapter Two. I think it is important to clarify that I do not think books are the only solution to this problem, but I know they are a common resource that teachers can access in their classroom or school library. My goal is to provide primary grade teachers (K-2), with a set of lesson plans for teaching SEL skills through read alouds that can help guide them in the direction to support the students in their class.

### **Growing Up With Books**

I was fortunate to grow up in a household where books were highly valued. My mother was a fourth-grade teacher at the elementary school where I attended, and she loved to read and share her excitement of books with me. She would take me to bookstores, and we took weekly trips to the library to check out books and go to author talks. I never took books for granted and realized at an early age the power that books can have. As I have gotten older, I realize that books can teach us important lessons and impact us in different ways at different points in our lives. I have vivid memories of books that I loved as a child or books that made me question or think deeper about different topics. My mother's love of books left an impression on me and has fueled my own love of books. Now as a teacher, I try to share and pass on that love to my students.

### **My First Year Teaching**

Before graduating, I student-taught at the Kindergarten level in a first-ring suburb. I then got my first job teaching Kindergarten in a charter school in Northeast Minneapolis. The demographics of my class were much different than where I had done my student teaching. My Kindergarten class included mostly Somali students, some of



whom were immigrants or children of immigrants. Many were living in poverty and high-stress environments. With these factors present in their lives, many of my students had difficulty controlling and recognizing their emotions; some had intense outbursts or became unresponsive and would isolate themselves.

As an example, I had twins in my class who had gone through numerous hardships, and their parents were no longer consistently taking care of them. They had been severely neglected; they had been found in their house alone, without food, trying to take care of their one-year old brother. They were very dependent on each other and would have frequent outbursts in class, especially when they had to go home. Some days they would spend the entire day staring at a wall and not talking to anyone. As a new teacher at a charter school, I felt like I did not have the resources to teach these students with such high needs properly. At the time, I relied heavily on the counselor at my school, as I had no social-emotional curriculum and little experience in teaching in that area. The best that I was able to do for them was to give them consistency and show them love and compassion.

One way I could do this was through books. My favorite part of the day was reading out loud to my class and revisiting old books that I knew as a child. When something came up in my classroom, such as a friendship problem, a behavior problem, or when I needed to regain my class's attention, I grabbed a book. Books comforted me as a child and I hoped that my excitement for reading out loud came across to my students. I noticed right away that when I read out loud to my students, they almost instantly became immersed in whatever story I was reading. For a moment, my students were transformed to whatever setting the book took place in, and I could see that it

provided a moment of release for them. I could use read alouds and story time as a way to connect to my students. As a new teacher, I reached for books that were accessible to me in my classroom. I had a small library of children's books and not all of them related to a SEL skill that I wanted to teach. I picked familiar titles and authors such as Frog and Toad, Eric Carle, and The Kissing Hand. Although those books may not have explicitly taught SEL skills, many times, these children's books taught lessons or showed relationships that I could refer back to when speaking with students. As I have gained teaching experience, I still go back to familiar books and I have also found new books that help teach SEL skills. I have also learned different read aloud methods, like interactive read aloud strategies to effectively teach SEL skills to students. In Chapter Two, I will go more in depth about the use of interactive read alouds in a classroom.

### **Teaching Internationally**

The following section details my teaching experience after my first year of teaching and how I was introduced to new SEL curricula as well as how I continued to use read-alouds as a tool for teaching SEL. After I taught in Minneapolis, the school I worked for closed and I knew I needed to find a school that would allow more support for my students and me. I decided not to take another full-time job until I knew what I was looking for in a school. I spent a year long-term subbing in two different schools: another urban charter school and then a district school. I learned a lot in both of these schools and I specifically looked at how SEL was incorporated into their curriculums. Unfortunately, what I learned was that neither school had a highly successful way of teaching Social-Emotional skills. They both used the same curriculum which was heavily scripted. The script felt unnatural for me as a teacher which probably translated to my students. I

still found myself using books and creating my own mini lessons on whatever I needed to address in my class.

After my second year of teaching, I decided to go in a different direction and take a considerable jump and teach internationally. I started teaching First Grade at a private, all-girls school in Japan. One of my first worries was that I did not know how many books would be in my classroom. I packed a few dozen of my favorite books with me and hoped that I would have a good classroom library. Luckily, my classroom had a well-stocked library and extensive access to books. This was the first classroom I was excited by; there were books that I recognized and loved as a child and books that were newly published. I was excited to introduce these books to my students, but I also was excited to read them to find books that I could use as mini lessons for teaching SEL.

The demographics of this class were much different than my first year of teaching. I was now teaching at an international school so my students were from all around the world, most of whom had grown up or spent a few years living in Japan. My students in Japan were very different from my students in Minnesota. They tend to be quieter, more reserved students. Most of them had gone to preschool, Kindergarten, and had a tutoring or an afterschool program. I think it is important to clarify that just because these students have presumably received some exposure to social-emotional learning, it does not mean that all students with behavior problems or early childhood trauma have refined those skills or coping mechanisms. It's also important to mention here that cultural standards and expectations can have an impact on how students present their emotions and behaviors. I still received students that were affected by early childhood trauma and had difficulty managing their emotions, although they presented differently

than the twins in my first year of teaching. One of my students was watching her parents have consistent conflicts at home and found herself in the middle of their negative communication style. It took me a lot longer to realize she was struggling at home than it did with my twins from my first year of teaching. She held herself to very high standards, which as a teacher I was happy about until I realized it was causing her anxiety and hindering her ability to actually reach her full potential.

Right away, I realized how different it was to teach in Japan and how their cultural norms affected the way students presented behaviors and emotions. This created a huge learning curve for me again. I was now in a school that had a SEL program, yet once again, I found myself reaching and searching for familiar books to support my new class.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I have provided a rationale for this research, as well as provided my professional background information on what led me to this research question. Through my own experiences of dealing with early childhood trauma, in a Kindergarten and First Grade classroom, it has led me to believe in the importance of books and reading out loud to primary aged students. My aim is to provide a set of lesson plans that use read-alouds to address specific SEL skills that can support students who are affected by trauma.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

Chapter One discussed the idea of using books as a way to incorporate Social Emotional Learning in a classroom of students who have experienced trauma. Frustrations with existing SEL curriculums were discussed as well as the lack of resources and training that some teachers experience. These issues led me to my research question: *How can read-alouds support the learning of primary-aged students who have been affected by early childhood trauma?*

The following literature review describes information about child trauma, SEL, and interactive read alouds. In the first section, the meaning of child trauma and child traumatic stress is discussed, as well as how traumatic stress impacts the learning of students. The next section discusses early intervention programs that are implemented to support students with trauma. The history of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and examples of specific programs implemented in schools today will be explained. This section will also convey the influence that these programs have on student learning, specifically for students affected by trauma. The final section will discuss the use of interactive read alouds in a classroom and outline the ways different interactive read-aloud strategies can be implemented into Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs.

#### Child Trauma

When children are exposed to a frightening, dangerous, or life-threatening situation, it is defined as a traumatic event. “Approximately two-thirds of youth in the

United States are exposed to at least one traumatic event throughout childhood” (Copeland, Keeler, Angold, Costello, [2007](#)). Traumatic events can reduce feelings of control, damage connections with others, and instill a feeling of helplessness. Traumatic events can be defined in many ways but are usually defined and centered around acts of violence (Sitler, 2009). Violence can include anything from living in poverty, serious injury, physical and emotional violence, and more. The CDC uses the term Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs) to describe a potentially traumatic event that occurs in childhood. ACEs are categorized into three groups: abuse, neglect, and household challenges (Felitti et al., 1998). It is common for a child to develop child traumatic stress, mental illness, chronic health problems, and substance misuse as an adult if exposed to one or more ACEs in their life (Felitti et al., 1998).

Children who have experienced a traumatic event, who have grown up in other adverse circumstances, are likely to show a delay with social-emotional skills that are needed for self-regulation (Barr, 2018). These skills are important when entering school, and without these skills, they can hinder a child’s learning experience. Barr (2018) goes on to explain that one of the main concerns for children who have experienced childhood trauma is the effects trauma has on their neural development, specifically their development of the “executive function” (EF). EF includes three main components:

- “Inhibitory control - the capacity to inhibit or regulate strong emotional or impulsive behavioral responses voluntarily;
- Cognitive flexibility - the ability to think about different ideas at the same time or to switch quickly between ideas or thoughts;

- Working memory - the ability to hold new information in the mind, process it, and store it as a learned memory” (Barr, 2018, p. 40).

Without these different components, children are unable to control their behaviors.

Wenz-Gross, Yoo, Upshur, and Gambino (2018) describe EF as a set of cognitive control skills necessary for planning, controlling behavior, and problem-solving. These skills have been shown to have positive impacts on literacy, vocabulary, and math skills in preschool students who show stronger EF. Students who show poorer EF have been linked to behavior problems and ADHD (as cited in Wenz-Gross et al., 2018). Lawson, Caringi, Gottfried, Bride, and Hydon (2019) explain that trauma-informed teachers must understand how adverse experiences may have undesirable effects throughout that person’s life. Sitler (2009) begins to describe how children that have been affected by trauma may present certain behaviors in a classroom, including acting out verbally or physically, showing little interest in activities, or becoming easily distracted (Sitler, 2009). It is important to note that not all children exhibiting these behaviors have experienced trauma, and not all children who have experienced trauma will have these behaviors. However, teachers need to be aware of some of the behaviors related to trauma (Sitler, 2009). For teachers to have awareness and understanding of students affected by trauma, it is essential to look at Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1987). Maslow describes a human’s most basic needs as physical, followed by safety and security, and then emotional needs. If any of these basic needs are unmet, it is unlikely that a child could focus on learning. For example, if you are hungry, your physical need is not being met, and you will be unable to focus on other less essential needs. For a child who has

experienced trauma, their basic needs have likely been compromised on one or more levels, making learning difficult (Maslow, 1987).

Educators worldwide have students coming into their classrooms that have been affected by trauma, have experienced a traumatic event, and need help learning how to cope with their own emotions. Most educators do not have the training to be able to assess and address students' trauma symptoms correctly. Without the training and knowledge, students can unintentionally be neglected, which may have adverse effects on other students and adults in a school. This can lead to secondary traumatic stress (STS) (Lawson et al., 2019). There is a need for programs that can help guide teachers to help students in their classrooms handle their emotions and teach them social-emotional skills. This is one reason I have chosen to create a curriculum to teach these skills as my project. The next section will describe the history of how SEL has taken form in schools.

### **Social Emotional Learning**

The first part of this section will discuss the history of SEL to fully understand the importance that SEL has on a student's education. This section will also look at the Collaborative for the Advancement of Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and the organization that they have built. The second part of this section will provide the influence that successfully implemented SEL skills have on student learning, specifically regarding students affected by trauma. Social-emotional learning (SEL) develops self-awareness and understanding to control one's interpersonal skills necessary for school, work, and life success (*Committee for Children, 2020*). Schools that implement a successful SEL program teach specific skills like self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (Elias et al., 2004). If



students can grasp an understanding and control in these areas, it will help them be more successful learners (Elias et al., 2004). In reality, not all children coming into kindergarten have the tools to manage these skills and need support in order to control their own emotions.

It is essential to understand the history of SEL and how the current curriculums and teachings of SEL have come to be in schools today. Daniel Goleman published a worldwide bestselling book titled *Emotional Intelligence* (1995), which created a starting point for the emergent field of SEL. Goleman's work on emotional intelligence then led to the creation of CASEL, originally known as the Collaborative for the Advancement of Social and Emotional Learning (Elias & Moceris, 2012). CASEL was founded in 1994 by Daniel Goleman and a group of educators and researchers interested in advancing social and emotional learning in education. The organization also provides information and research about evidence-based, high-quality SEL practices (CASEL, 2019). Building on Goleman's research, CASEL went on to identify a core set of social and emotional skills that are imperative for different life tasks. These five skills are commonly known as "the CASEL five" (Elias & Moceris, 2012):

1. *Self-Awareness*: being able to recognize one's personal emotions, thoughts, and values and how all of those pieces influence behavior. Self-awareness also includes being able to assess one's own strengths as well as limitations.
2. *Self-Management*: is The ability to set personal goals as well as self-motivate. Self management also includes regulating one's own emotions and behaviors.

3. *Social Awareness*: Social awareness is one's ability to show empathy to others, respecting differences in others, and understanding ethical and social norms.
4. *Relationship Skills*: Relationship skills include one's ability to establish and maintain healthy relationships with others. It also includes being able to communicate effectively and work well with others through cooperation, listening, and making appropriate choices.
5. *Responsible decision making and problem solving*: Responsible decision making includes one's ability to make appropriate and ethical choices regarding personal behavior." (Elias & Moceris, 2012)

These five skills are especially relevant as children begin to spend time with adults outside the home and to socialize with peers. Social and emotional skills play a role in determining how well-equipped children will be to meet the demands of the classroom. CASEL has been a leader in SEL since 1994 and continues to serve as one of the largest organizations that work to promote SEL for students from Pre-K through high school. CASEL also continues to work in the advancement of SEL and growing the community of scientists and educators dedicated to this work (CASEL, 2019).

### **Policy Changes**

The response to the importance and implementation of social and emotional skills in schools is mixed (Elias et al., 1997). There are beliefs that schools should not teach social and emotional skills because these issues are considered private and should be addressed and handled at home. To some, a school is where students should be learning about core curricula like math, reading, and writing. There is also a belief that many

teachers already have the innate ability to teach students social-emotional skills and that teachers are already doing this while providing a core curriculum. Thus, why would teachers need more explicit guidelines or curricula to teach SEL skills? (Elias et al., 1997). Carlson (2019) argues that a forced SEL program could provide resentment in teachers who don't believe in the program, which could take away teacher's autonomy and hinder the natural ability to connect with students. A common frustration among teachers is that there is not enough time to teach SEL because of the pressure to focus on core curriculum like reading and math. Over the last few decades, educational policy changes have impacted standards and what is expected of teachers and students. It is important to understand why teachers have this pressure and how these policies have affected SEL implementation in classrooms.

### ***No Child Left Behind***

The No Child Left Behind Act was in effect from 2002–2015, which was replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act. Originally NCLB was intended to up the rigor in academics, which would make the U.S. more competitive internationally and attract highly qualified teachers (Klein, 2015). NCLB's goal was to create an even playing field for all students by using high standards among all students and establishing measurable goals. Carlson (2019) reminds us that initially, NCLB was widespread among parents after its enactment. In a Gallup poll, 57% of participants agreed that the federal government's local schooling involvement was a positive choice (Carlson, 2019). Part of NCLB assessed students through standardized testing to make sure that students were meeting standards and holding schools accountable if students were not meeting standards (Carlson, 2019). Schools gave statewide reading and math tests every year in

grades 3-8 and once in high school, and the scores had to be reported publicly by schools on their adequate yearly progress (AYP) report. If students (including special education, ELL, and minority students) were not reaching state standards after three years, the school was in jeopardy of being shut down, turned into a charter school, or provided another turnaround strategy (Klein, 2013). This spurred change in curriculum, implementing the Common Core Standardized tests, the consequences schools could face, increased pressure on teachers, and affected educator behaviors and anxiety levels. This, in turn, affected students' behaviors, anxiety, and feelings about school (Whitney & Candelaria, 2017). Many teachers eventually pushed back against NCLB, stating that test scores were a poor measure of a teacher's ability and quality. Another criticism was noted in that the focus on testing for reading and math took away time for other subjects like art, language, and social studies (Klein, 2015).

### ***Every Student Succeeds***

Following No Child Left Behind was the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed into law in 2015. ESSA gave more control to the state and less involvement from the federal government in areas of testing and teacher quality. States would not have to evaluate teachers based on student outcomes as they did under NCLB. ESSA requires schools to show more than one indicator of school success, rather than solely academic success, which could include an SEL program. Unfortunately, the academic standards are still high, and NCLB's effects still are prevalent in schools today (Klein, 2016).

There is overwhelming evidence that supports the idea that SEL has an important impact on a student's learning overall. Social-emotional skills are an essential contributor to school readiness, and students who show competence in these areas have

fewer behavioral problems, which can lead to academic gains (Wenz-Gross et al., 2018). Research shows that the best time to teach social-emotional skills is in early childhood, specifically ages 3 to 7, while children are still developing these self-regulating skills (Wenz-Gross et al., 2018). We must understand which SEL programs are being implemented in schools today and what makes them successful or not. Barr (2018) argues that good intentions are not enough when it comes to teaching social and emotional skills in a classroom. He goes on to say that effective forms of SEL can only be implemented by teachers who have had the necessary training, consultation, and support. Anyon (2016) writes that in schools, the combination of principal's support and teacher's perception of an intervention program as important is necessary for the success in the adaptation of that intervention. Many SEL curricula are available for use today. However, the curricula that are used in a classroom are usually chosen and purchased by the school, and teachers typically have no involvement in the curricula choice. Teachers also often have limited resources in their classroom and may have never been trained in the curricula that were purchased by the school (Honest & Hunter, 2014).

### **Social Emotional Learning in Schools Today**

According to Elias & Moceris (2012), in 2003 CASEL examined over 200 different prevention and positive youth programs and rated their instructional practices, their support structure, the link of the SEL curriculum and instruction at the school, family and community engagement level, and outcome data. CASEL identified 22 of these programs as highly sufficient across the areas that were examined. Some of the existing SEL programs include Responsive Classroom, Second Step, 4Rs program, Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS), and TIES, some of which have been

widely implemented in the U.S. and U.K. There are many other SEL programs, so for this project, many more commonly used programs will be reviewed. The first section will examine the Responsive Classroom program followed by the Second Step.

### ***Responsive Classroom***

As cited in Anyon (2016), Responsive Classroom (RC) is a professional development intervention program that centers around supporting a teacher's abilities to manage behavioral problems by using student-centered, developmentally appropriate strategies. RC is widely used across the U.S. and some of its classroom practices and strategies are familiar to many teachers. One of these practices is morning meetings, where students come together in the morning and greet each other. Logical consequences are also a common practice used for student behavior and teacher language, including reinforcing statements of positive behavior. CASEL has praised RC as one of the most well-designed, evidence-based SEL programs (Anyon, 2016). The Responsive Classrooms website (2020) highlights the importance of empowering teachers and giving them the skills to create high-quality inclusive classrooms. A section mentions that one of the determining factors of this program's success is whether or not there is support and coaching from principals when implementing the program (Responsive Classroom, 2020).

Anyon (2016) conducted a study with a group of teachers at a school who were implementing the RC program. The school sent two teachers to an RC training, and those teachers provided training for the rest of the school specifically focused on morning meetings, logical consequences, and teacher language. In this study, the teacher feedback was mixed on their opinions of RC. Many teachers felt positive about morning meetings,

as this was a time they could connect with their students and build their relationships. One of the frustrations teachers had with RC was that they felt it could not address the high end of their students' social and emotional needs. Other teachers felt that logical consequences were too unpredictable for teachers and students and they needed a more stable discipline plan with firm consequences (Anyon, 2016).

### ***Second Step***

Second Step is another well-known SEL curriculum that focuses on building communities by using a holistic approach (Second Step, 2020). Second Step offers programs from preschool to middle school students. Second Step provides teachers with materials, including suggested lesson scripts and lesson materials. The sequence of these lessons are predetermined and often build on each other and are different for each grade. Second Step uses four different types of lessons, including skills for learning, empathy, management of emotions, and problem-solving skills. (Frey, Hirschstein, & Guzzo, 2000).

A study by Moy and Hazen (2018), evaluated the effects the Second Step curriculum had on students. The effects were looked at in over 40 studies; these studies found that most of the time, students were able to recall information of the content taught in the Second Step curriculum, but no significant change on the antisocial or prosocial levels of students (Moy & Hazen, 2018). Another study by Wenz-Gross et al., (2018) examined Kindergarten readiness skills by reviewing the Second Step Early Learning curriculum's effects on the executive function (EF) and social emotional skills. A total of 972 preschool students were studied from 63 different classrooms. The study focused on a set of executive functioning tasks and two social emotional tasks that are included in

the Second Step Early Learning curriculum. In this study, they found that students who participated in the Second Step Early Learning curriculum showed greater growth in their EF skills and less growth in social emotional skills. The study states that increasing EF skills in preschool students is directly linked to improvements in pre-academic skills and on-task behavior (Wenz-Gross et al., 2018). In both studies, the results were mixed about the effectiveness of Second Step on students' social skills, but both studies showed an increase in EF with the students who were participating in the curriculum.

### ***Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)***

PATHS is a program designed for prekindergarten through sixth grade. PATHS is designed to help with conflict resolution, emotional regulation, responsible decision making, and emotional regulation (CASEL, 2020). PATHS has designed scripted lessons, activities that are sometimes linked to academics, and family handouts. According to the PATHS website (2020), the program is able to adapt to any schedule, increase academic performance, and increase emotional well-being. Greenburg et al., (1995) conducted a study in four schools: two that implemented the PATHS program and two that were control groups. This study found that there was an improvement in children's understanding of emotions as well as the ability to use effective vocabulary related to emotions. There was no evidence that children were able to recognize their own feelings or understand how one can manage their own feelings (Greenburg et al., 1995). Another study looked at teacher's perceptions of the implementation of PATHS in one school. Overall, the teachers thought positively about PATHS and felt their students could verbalize their emotions and feelings better than they could without the program. Teachers in this study thought it was important that the curriculum was implemented at



the beginning of the school year and that the training was an essential step in the successful implementation of PATHS (Honess & Hunter, 2014).

Social Emotional Learning is an integral part of a primary aged student's education. Children must learn these skills in order for them to be successful in their academic and personal lives (Elias et al., 2004). Today many different SEL curriculums focus on Title 1 needs. A common frustration among teachers is the lack of time and resources to teach these skills, as well as the pressure to teach high academic standards (Anyon, 2016). The No Child Left Behind Act is an example of how policy changes have tried to increase academic standards which creates a conflict between teaching core curricula like reading and math and teaching SEL (Klein, 2015). Due to the need for both SEL and academic standards, educators and researchers have started to look at ways of merging the two areas. The next section will look at what interactive read alouds are as well as how SEL and literacy can be merged.

### **Interactive Read Alouds**

Reading aloud to students is a long-standing practice used by teachers to connect students to books and reading. Teachers use reading aloud to communicate different lessons and instructional purposes. Interactive read alouds involve the audience taking on an active role before, during, and after the story using different instructional conversations and activities. During interactive read alouds, teachers build on their own ideas and student's ideas to deepen their understanding of a book. Read alouds are shown to improve students' reading skills and their interest in reading and writing (Lennox, 2013). The first part of this section will discuss the use of interactive read alouds in a

classroom and how to conduct a successful interactive read aloud. The second part of this section will provide examples of how literacy and SEL have been merged.

Research studies have shown that reading aloud to children promotes literacy development primarily from the language and social interaction surrounding the words from a book (Martinez & Teale, 1989). In a survey conducted by Martinez & Teale (1989), it was found that reading aloud among kindergarten teachers was almost universally a daily practice. During an interactive storybook reading, children are able to engage with others, themselves, and the text. If students are engaged and interacting, then they will be able to internalize the information learned in the read aloud. In order to encourage engagement from students, teachers use instructional conversations for students to interact with the learning material. What makes interactive storybook readings different from normal instructional conversations is that the conversation is ongoing rather than conducted at the end of a lesson (Barrentine, 1996).

A criticism of interactive storybook reading is that it can be too much conversation and cause disruption in the flow of a story, which could take away from the experience and enjoyment of reading a children's book (Barrentine, 1996). Despite this argument, there are many ways that interactive read alouds can be beneficial to student's literacy learning. It is important to look at how interactive read alouds can be conducted in a classroom and what their impact is on students.

It can be difficult to conduct an instructional conversation between teacher and student as they will not always be natural or come easily. Barrentine (1996) provides important information to remember when conducting an interactive read aloud that can help make the instructional aspect be as natural as possible.

1. *Read the book multiple times before reading in front of the class:*  
Children's books that may seem simplistic at first glance will have a complex underlying message or meaning. It's important to consider the characters, vocabulary, plot, and images when pre-reading a book to understand why the author included everything.
2. *Consider your student's reading goals:* Keep in mind the reading strategies you want your students to focus on and how they relate to this text.
3. *Identify where students can make predictions:* When students are able to make predictions, they are given the opportunity to think critically about the story and figure out what may happen for themselves.
4. *Anticipate where students will need background knowledge:* Stories will sometimes include information that not all students are familiar with or have experienced. It's important to anticipate where these moments are in a text and to decide when to address them.
5. *Decide how you will phrase questions and anticipate student responses:*  
Another important thing to remember is that there is a range in student responses and what they will be able to offer insights on. Oftentimes what is predicted by an adult is not what a young student will predict.
6. *Be flexible with your plans:* Many times a discussion will take a turn that a teacher has not predicted. In order for a successful interactive read aloud it is necessary to be flexible with plans.
7. *After reading, create opportunities for students to discuss:* After reading, students naturally want to discuss the story. This type of sharing will

increase the personalization or shared meaning of the story. This is also a time when teachers can create activities to encourage meaningful interaction with the story. (Barrentine, 1996).

According to Barrentine (1996), these are essential components that make interactive read alouds beneficial to students. Along with these components, teachers' own reading style can directly impact how a student will interpret a text and can influence their own reading style. It is important to use this information and be aware of the effect read alouds have on children's literacy learning (Martinez & Teale, 1989). The next section will look at Culturally Responsive literature.

### **Culturally Responsive Literature**

One step that was not mentioned in the interactive reading component list was book choice. Picture books are educational tools, and a picture book's content is vital to the learning experience of a child (Koss, 2015). It is crucial that whenever a teacher reads aloud to a classroom of students, the book is carefully selected and that the book represents diverse cultures in a relevant and positive way.

In 2014, less than 50% of students that were enrolled in public schools were White. Each year the population of African American, Latinx, Native American, and Asian American students increases (as cited in Glass, 2019). Despite the growing population of students of color, there is a lack of diversity displayed in children's books, and characters of color appear much less frequently than White characters or those of European descent.

In a book analysis by Koss (2015), a total of 455 children's books published in 2012 were analyzed. When looking at ethnicity, the primary ethnicity was indicated when a specific culture or cultures were predominantly represented. A secondary representation

was when a character of a different culture was represented that was different from the culture of the main character. The majority of the books analyzed featured White characters (45%) and secondary cultures (21%), followed by Black characters (primarily 9%, secondarily 17%). There was a huge lack of representation from other cultures, as only 5% of books had characters primarily representing, Asian, Latino, Native American, and Middle Eastern cultures. It is important to note that Koss found the majority of the books were found to be culturally neutral, which means that they offer no insight about that culture or cultural practice, but rather the culture or cultures were only used for descriptive purposes. For the representation of gender in these books, male and female representation was fairly evenly distributed but females were more likely to be depicted in a stereotypical gender role. When looking at books that represented disability it was clear that physical disabilities were the largest group represented (43%), with some books representing characters with glasses or using a wheelchair. Cognitive disabilities were only found in two books with a character that had dementia and another with a learning disability. No characters in any of the books analyzed were found with any emotional disabilities (Koss, 2015, p. 35).

Selecting culturally relevant literature can be overwhelming. Wan (2006) suggests that when teachers choose multicultural literature, they should choose texts from various themes relevant to all human beings' experiences no matter their culture. These themes can include: family traditions, celebrations, holidays, religious ceremonies, and emotions that people experience. Teachers can first select a theme and then choose several books from different cultures based on that theme. For example, a teacher selecting books depicting major holidays could choose books on Chinese New Year, Kwanzaa,

Hanukkah, Ramadan, Deepavali, etc. Using a theme can be a successful way to share culturally responsive literature and center discussions around different holidays and ways of celebration. (Wan, 2006).

### **The Importance of Culturally Responsive Literature**

Teachers need to be aware of the diversities represented in children's books, and more importantly, when they are not being represented. The lack of culturally diverse books means that educators need to seek out and use quality books that include diverse settings, characters, and situations. Studies have shown that the use of multicultural literature and culturally relevant literacy practices can affirm students' identity, increase engagement levels, and improve literacy skills (as cited in Glass, 2019). Rudine Sims Bishop (1990) created the mirrors and windows metaphor which has impacted the way we consider culturally relevant literature. Books can be windows into another world that students can explore and learn from or they can be mirrors where students can see their reflection, as part of a larger human experience that reaffirms a student's identity and builds their confidence. If there are multiple windows and mirrors, students are able to connect and engage with the characters and experiences which will allow them to become more accepting of themselves and learn about other people who are different from them (Bishop, 1990).

Interactive Read Alouds can be useful in creating discussion and dialogue in a classroom but only if teachers are choosing culturally relevant books that allow the opportunity for discussion (Wan, 2006). If teachers are only choosing books that represent White characters, or characters of color that are secondary, laughable, or negative, children can learn a powerful lesson that they are devalued. For students affected by trauma, culturally relevant books can provide opportunities for these students

to find mirrors that will reaffirm their identity. Books can be a powerful educational tool and if used correctly, students may interact with characters that are like themselves (Bishop, 1990). The next section will look at how literacy can be implemented in a SEL program.

### **Literacy and Social Emotional Learning**

This section will provide information about why SEL and literacy can be effectively merged as well as how early literacy skills and emotional regulation share common cognitive processes. The end of the section will provide examples of how literacy can be implemented in a SEL program.

One problem with SEL today is that even though teachers recognize its importance, they do not have time to teach these skills as they are under pressure to meet academic standards. Daunic et al., (2013), explains that because of this common problem, researchers are starting to merge SEL with academic curricula, especially in reading and literacy times. There are successful outcomes of merging SEL with literacy such as, increased attention, motivation and reductions in disruptive behaviors. One reason for these outcomes is due to the fact that the same EF skills related to SEL and emotional regulation are also involved in the comprehension of written and oral language. Self regulation and reading comprehension have four shared cognitive processes related to EF: “emotional control, working memory, internalization of self directed speech, and problem solving.” (as cited in Daunic et al., 2013, p. 44). When children strengthen their background knowledge, receptive and expressive vocabulary as well as their understanding of related concepts they strengthen their self talk skills which is a critical skill in emotional regulation (Daunic et al., 2013).

In primary grades, a majority of the time in school is focused on literacy/language arts, which includes phonics and phonemic awareness. In a study conducted by Fisher and Frey (2019), elementary teachers reported that they use different academic strategies such as using literature and picture books to teach SEL skills. Primary grade teachers are also promoting language and communication skills which are important when teaching SEL. Daunic et al. (2013) are involved in the creation of the Social Emotional Learning Foundation (SELF) program for at-risk students to address emotional or behavioral problems. SELF combines social emotional learning, by using the CASEL 5 competencies, with early literacy skills. Each lesson is introduced with a carefully chosen storybook that is carefully selected based on the developmental appropriateness, cultural and ethnic diversity, story structure, and social emotional vocabulary. The lessons are designed for the book to be read twice, once with minimal conversation and the second time using the interactive storybook reading strategies of dialogic reading. The program was piloted in two schools and data indicated that when using this program, integrating literacy and SEL instruction could improve positive social and academic development in students (Daunic et al., 2013). The final section will be a summary of Chapter Two.

### **Summary**

Chapter two included information on children who have been affected by trauma and how going through a traumatic event affects the development of executive functioning (EF) without which will hinder a child's ability to control their own emotions. The second section of this literature review revealed the history of SEL, policy changes that affected SEL implementation, and provided examples of different SEL curricula used in schools today. In the final section, information about the use of



interactive read alouds was discussed, as well as the importance of using culturally relevant literature in a classroom. Finally, the use of literacy merged with SEL was discussed.

There is plenty of information regarding the impact that SEL has on student success both academically and socially. While all students can benefit from SEL instruction, students who have experienced a traumatic event are likely to come to school needing extra support in these areas. Frequently, teachers are unsure of or do not have the training on how to assess and address students' trauma symptoms, which can worsen the primary students' symptoms as well as cause Secondary Traumatic Stress in other individuals in the classroom. While there is evidence that teaching SEL is important, there are many reasons as to why it is not prioritized among educators because of policy changes, lack of resources, and lack of training on specific SEL curricula. Interactive read alouds are shown to improve engagement and dialogue in a classroom and using culturally relevant literature can show students mirrors and windows into their own lives, which can affirm their identity and build confidence.

This review points to a possible link between teaching early literacy skills and SEL, which could be an opportunity for teachers to cross the hurdles of teaching students that are affected by trauma. This literature review sought to answer the question, *How can Read-Alouds support the learning of primary aged students who have been affected by early childhood trauma?* In completing my project, I will develop a set of interactive read aloud lessons that will be used for K-2 students. In Chapter Three, I will discuss the particular curriculum writing method used. I will then discuss the rationale for my project as well as the intended audience and setting.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Project Description

#### Introduction

As a teacher, I have become increasingly aware of the importance of teaching SEL skills to students affected by trauma. Kindergarten and primary aged students are especially in need of learning these skills as this is an important time developmentally where students are still learning about and how to use these skills. In Chapter One, I discussed my experiences teaching in an urban environment with very little support or training to guide me in supporting my students who had been affected by trauma. As someone who has always felt connected to books, I reached for stories to provide lessons about different social-emotional skills that I knew my students needed to learn about. I noticed that during read aloud time, I could engage in natural conversations with my students about the books we read and the lessons the books taught.

In Chapter Two, it was discussed that teachers are left without time or training to effectively teach these SEL skills to their students due to policy changes and increased emphasis on math and literacy. Chapter Two also reviewed different SEL curricula in schools today and how the curricula's success or failure was determined by teacher buy-in, principal support, and teachers' training programs. The importance of culturally relevant literature in a classroom was discussed and how, by seeing characters and stories like themselves, books can affirm a student's identity and build confidence. The link between literacy, reading comprehension skills and emotional regulation was explored. Finally, the use of interactive read alouds was discussed and how to use them.

Chapter Three will address my topic question: *How can Read-Alouds support the learning of primary aged students who have been affected by early childhood trauma.*

My capstone project is a curriculum based on the idea that teaching SEL skills integrated with culturally relevant literature can increase student engagement, motivation, and feelings of inclusion, which are important for students who have experienced trauma (Daunic et al., 2013). My project goal is to implement a set of interactive read aloud lessons that will introduce key social emotional learning skills in Kindergarten and primary aged classrooms. The first section of Chapter Three will be the project overview, followed by the framework which includes the reason for which curriculum development was chosen and why. Then the project description will be discussed with details about the intended audience and setting for the project. Finally, the timeline for the project completion will be reviewed.

### **Project Overview**

For this capstone project, a unit of whole class interactive read aloud lessons for Kindergarten through second grade has been created. These lessons focus on two of the five CASEL competencies: self-awareness and self-management.

The lessons all involve reading a book using interactive reading strategies. In Chapter Two, it was discussed that an interactive read aloud includes discussions that happen before, during, and after a book is read. Before reading to a class, teachers need to pick certain places in a book that students can make predictions, observations and have to engage in discussions. The discussions allow students to be more involved in the book and support students' early literacy skills as well as promote student engagement. The goal of this curriculum project is to include SEL skills that could help support students

affected by trauma through the use of an interactive read aloud lesson. Two books must focus on the same SEL skill for students to practice the skills being taught and to interact with them in two different books (Daunic et al., 2013). The next section will describe the framework and rationale of this project.

### **Framework and Rationale**

The lessons designed for this curriculum incorporate SEL skills in a literacy lesson. The framework that best supports this project is the Backwards Design framework which is based on the work from Wiggins and McTighe (2011). The central idea of the backwards design framework begins by identifying the desired outcomes of a curriculum. It is essential in backwards design that teachers are able to visualize what the desired learning outcome is and what it looks like when students understand the learning targets. There is a three-step planning phase included in backwards design starting with identifying the desired results. The first stage is where teachers determine the learning goals and how students will understand the goals and objectives. The second stage, determining acceptable evidence, requires educators to determine which measures will be used to show how students made meaning of the goals of the lesson. In the last stage, planning learning experiences and instruction, activities and experiences are aligned with stages one and two to meet individual student needs (Wiggins and McTighe, 2011).

This framework was helpful when designing these lessons that integrate SEL with literacy because the learning targets center around each SEL skill the students are focusing on. The backwards design framework has been discussed as well as the reasoning as why that framework was chosen. The next section will include a project description.

## **The Project**

This project is a curriculum that focuses on teaching SEL skills to primary age students, specifically self-awareness and self-management, integrated with literacy by using interactive read alouds as the main strategy. Three sub skills will be focused on self-awareness and two were chosen under self-management, there are a total of 10 lessons. These skills were chosen to best support students affected by trauma. The three subskills under self-awareness are: identifying emotions, recognizing strengths, self-confidence. The two subskills under self-management are: impulse control and stress management (CASEL, 2020). Each skill has two lessons that support the learning of that skill. Each lesson centers around a culturally relevant text that supports the SEL skill that is being focused on.

Each whole class lesson will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete, ideally, this would be implemented during a classroom read aloud time or literacy time. Each week, 2 lessons of the same SEL skill will be implemented to reinforce the learning of each skill.

## **Setting and Participants**

The primary audience for these lessons are Kindergarten through second grade level students and teachers. The lessons will ideally be implemented by the classroom teacher but could also be implemented by a school social worker or counselor. The reason this audience was chosen is that this curriculum involves children's books, and many well written children's books will offer lessons about social emotional learning to children in Kindergarten and primary grade levels. The other reason that these lessons are designed for Kindergarten and primary grade students is because this is a crucial time in a child's

life to develop and learn about different social emotional skills like: impulse control, self awareness, self management, and stress management. All children at this age will benefit from learning about these skills as well as students who have been affected by trauma.

Therefore, the lessons will be implemented in a whole class setting.

The intended setting will be in any classroom where teachers want to teach these specific skills to their students but may struggle to find time or resources to effectively do so. The lessons can also be used for any teacher that wants to integrate SEL with literacy. The next section will discuss the timeline for this project.

### **Timeline**

This capstone project started in June of 2020. Planning, research, and writing of Chapters One, Two, and Three took place in the summer of 2020. The designing of lesson plans, collecting culturally relevant books and materials will take place in the spring of 2021 as well as writing the actual lesson plans. The actual implementation of the lessons will be in the school year of 2021-2022. Ideally, these lessons will be designed to complete in the first few months of school to introduce these skills to students as soon as possible but could be implemented whenever a teacher needs to teach these specific SEL skills. The timeline of the project has been discussed; the last section will include a summary of Chapter Three.

### **Summary**

My research question is: *How can read-alouds support the learning of primary aged students who have been affected by early childhood trauma.* My project is a set of lesson plans that integrate SEL with literacy by using culturally relevant books in an interactive read aloud lesson. These lessons will be taught in a whole class setting. Two

of the five CASEL competencies were chosen with students affected by trauma in mind, self-awareness, and self-management. Each lesson covers one of the subskills under self-awareness or self-management. Research shows that students need to see themselves reflected in books in order to be engaged and invested in their learning (Bishop, 1990). Each book was chosen with culturally relevant characters, settings, and storylines in mind. The long-term goal of these lessons is to introduce self-awareness and self-management skills to students affected by trauma in order to support them in a classroom setting. The other long-term goal is to help teachers integrate SEL into a literacy program. The effectiveness of these lessons can be measured based on observations of how students are using the skills being taught during the whole class lesson. Teachers can also give feedback on the effectiveness of teaching these lessons. This project will be completed in the spring of 2021. Chapter four will include a conclusion and reflection on the capstone project.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Conclusion

#### Introduction

Books have always held an important role throughout my life and as a teacher. For me, they have been a tool in teaching students important lessons and skills. I was lucky to have exposure to a wide variety of books, and saw people like myself reflected in stories. My mother was a teacher and always used books as a way to start conversations with me or to introduce me to new concepts. During my first year of teaching, I worked with a class where many of my students had been affected by early childhood trauma. I was at a loss for how to support these students everyday, and the tool that I reached for the most was books. I found that all of my students, even when they were having a difficult day, would become immersed in stories during read aloud time. As I have grown as a teacher, I have learned new strategies and been exposed to different Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curricula to support students who have been affected by trauma. However, I continue to use books as a starting point for teaching SEL skills. This led me to my research question: *How can read-alouds support the learning of primary aged students who have been affected by early childhood trauma?*

In chapter four, I will reflect on my research process. First, I will identify key research findings during my literature review that were important in the development of my project. I will then go on to identify learning outcomes, as well as possible limitations and implications. Finally, I will discuss possible future research as well as the benefits this project has on the teaching profession.



## Major Learnings from Literature Review

There were three critical areas that were most influential in my literature review that helped shape my capstone project. Those areas were the research around students affected by trauma, the definition of SEL and existing SEL curricula, and the discussion of integrating literacy and SEL.

The research I drew from the most when finding information about students affected by trauma was from Donald A. Barr and his article, *When Trauma Hinders Learning* (2018). Barr explains that one of the main concerns for children that have experienced childhood trauma is the effects trauma has on their neural development, specifically their development of the “executive function” (EF). EF is a set of cognitive control skills that are necessary for planning, controlling behavior, and problem solving (Barr, 2018). This information led my research into looking at Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1987). Maslow discussed basic needs, such as physical and safety, which have to be met in order for a person to be able to learn and think creatively. This research was important to my capstone project and helped me discuss the link between students affected by trauma and how their learning was being negatively impacted. In the next section I reviewed literature that defined what SEL was, policy changes involving SEL and what SEL programs and curriculum are commonly used in schools today

The section on SEL was influential for my capstone project because it provided a framework for what SEL skills I would later focus on in my capstone project. A huge part of my research came from the Collaborative for the Advancement of Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). I examined the core sets of SEL skills that CASEL identifies as the “CASEL five” which are: self awareness, self management, social

awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making and problem solving. (CASEL, 2019). This was important in my research because I used two of these skills, self awareness and self management, as my learning outcomes in my curriculum. Each CASEL five skill has a set of sub skills which I also incorporated into my curriculum. I also discussed the policy changes around SEL, which helped me to explain why many teachers struggle to find time to teach SEL during the school day.

During my research, it was important to highlight why teaching SEL is so important for students, especially students who have been affected by trauma. A study that helped me link back to the EF skills in students affected by trauma was conducted by Wenz-Gross et al., (2018). In this study they examined how one SEL curriculum positively impacted Kindergarten students' EF skills. The study states that increasing EF skills in preschool students is directly linked to improvements in pre-academic skills and on-task behavior (Wenz-Gross et al., 2018).

Additionally, this capstone looked at how read alouds and literacy can be linked with SEL. Throughout my research, I found examples where teachers felt as if they did not have time to teach important SEL skills. There was also research that reported elementary teachers use different academic strategies, such as using literature and picture books to teach SEL skills (Fisher and Frey, 2019). One specific literacy practice I researched was the use of interactive read alouds that included culturally relevant books, which were used when developing my capstone project.

An article that helped me see a curriculum that already connected literacy and SEL was by Daunic et al. (2013). They were involved in the creation of the Social Emotional Learning Foundation (SELF), which combines SEL and early literacy skills.

They found that when integrating SEL and early literacy skills, it could improve positive social and academic development in students (Daunic et al. 2013). In the next section, I will discuss possible implications that my project could have on teachers and students.

### **Implications**

My project has the potential to allow teachers the time to teach SEL skills during an already existing read aloud time or literacy time. It will also provide resources to teach meaningful SEL skills through read alouds to support students affected by trauma. I believe that if students have these fundamental SEL skills, they will be more successful in their emotional learning as well as academic learning in the classroom. With the use of interactive read alouds and using culturally relevant texts, students will have the ability to see themselves in books and reflect on their own experiences and emotions. Through my experiences as a first year teacher, I would have appreciated guidance on what books to use and how to use books in a more effective way when trying to teach a specific SEL lesson or skill.

Another possible implication of my project would be to encourage the belief that teaching SEL is an essential part of learning for students. SEL should be included into daily classroom lessons and taught explicitly to all students. In my experience, schools that do not provide a SEL curriculum or training for teachers often react to student behaviors, instead of trying to be proactive by teaching skills that would be beneficial to students in coping with trauma, relationships, and developing healthy emotions. In the next sections, I will look at possible limitations of my project.

## **Limitations**

A potential limitation for this project could be that the SEL skills included in this project do not cover all five CASEL competencies that should be implemented at the beginning of the year. I chose two of five sub skills to focus on instead of covering all five CASEL competencies in order to provide more than one lesson on each topic. This is a starting point for teachers to be able to introduce the first two competencies that I believe would best support students affected by trauma. Teachers should continue to incorporate SEL skills into read aloud lessons throughout the whole year in order to best support their students.

Another potential limitation could be teachers willingness to use the interactive read aloud strategies, as well as access to each picture book. Teachers will need to take time to read the picture book before conducting the lesson, and make notes of where to stop and discuss with students. Also in each lesson, teachers need to create vocabulary cards for each book with the written or a picture definition of each word that will be displayed for students throughout the read aloud. The books that were selected in my lessons were books that are thought to be fairly common. I did not want the books to be difficult to access, but it was also essential that the books were culturally relevant and included diverse groups of people and cultures. Along with this, another potential limitation could be the amount of flexible literacy time that a teacher has during each day to teach these lessons. In my experience, I was able to include read alouds that I selected in my day to day teaching but this is not the case for every teacher. The next section discusses possible future projects.

## **Future Projects**

There are a few potential future projects that I would like to research. First, I would like to expand on my knowledge of students affected by trauma and best practices on how to work with these students. I think books are a really amazing way of connecting with students, but I know they are not the answer to every problem in a classroom. I would like to learn different types of teaching strategies that would best support students affected by trauma.

One way I could develop this project further would be to create lessons for each CASEL competency and subskills. Currently, my project is only for the beginning of the year with a total of 10 lessons, but it could be expanded to be used throughout a whole school year. Another way to develop this project would be to expand on the grade levels that this project is intended for. I currently work with first grade students, and K-2 is the age group I feel the most comfortable teaching. However, all students should have access to SEL lessons.

## **Communicating Results**

My capstone project is designed as an introduction to teach SEL skills to K-2 students through interactive read alouds. I plan to share my research with the first grade team at my current school. My first goal is to advocate for the need to teach SEL skills more than we currently do to all of our students. My current school does not have any expectations for teaching SEL, and it's important that we change that. I hope that my coworkers will be open-minded about this discussion and excited to use my lessons in some of their teaching practices. I think if these lessons were implemented in our school,

all students would be able to better communicate their emotions and understand what they are feeling.

### **Summary**

In chapter four, I reflected on my research process while completing my research project. During my research, I investigated the question: *How can read-alouds support the learning of primary aged students who have been affected by early childhood trauma?*

Throughout my experience as a teacher, I have seen students who have been affected by trauma struggle in classrooms. Their basic needs were not being met, and some of their behaviors affected the learning of other students in the classroom. These experiences have led me to continue to try to find resources to better support these students. I hope that this research and the lessons I have created will help schools take a small step in supporting teachers in teaching SEL, as well as introducing students to a few of the core SEL skills. There are many barriers that make teaching SEL difficult in a classroom. Therefore, my hope as an educator is that my research and lessons will support teachers while inspiring them to advocate for their students' SEL needs.

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