

Reflective Peace in the At-Risk Classroom

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Introduction

This thesis is the end result of an endeavor made by a Special Education teacher to initiate a peaceful classroom discourse with a focus on reflective writing in a class of 6:1:1 multiple disorder students and their staff members. The students described within are representative of an ever increasing population of young people born into the turmoil of an ultraviolent and rather increasingly destitute society. With several diagnosed emotional disorders and the misfortune of insufficient self-regulatory coping skills, these students require a higher level of care and a score of behavioral techniques and systems through which they may succeed. Special Education settings are perhaps the hardest classrooms to successfully inspire kids who are products of their own violent environments, but especially in this day and age of hyper-fast, always connected, 21st century shortened attention spans, it is often difficult for students and teachers to reflect enough regarding their peace and success in the classroom. Their staff members, consisting of 3 paraprofessionals with 1:1 assignments, one Associate Teacher 1:1, a classroom aid and the teacher/team leader, represent a snapshot of modern young adults working in the chaotic world of special education.

Purpose

The intent of this project was to design a system to encourage self-reflection in the At-risk classroom. As teachers and staff working with these students, we must first learn and then model the success of self-reflection. We must know ways to properly look within ourselves through reflection and introspection, enabling our pedagogies to grow and evolve, to be at the ready to inspire whichever population of students we work with. The data from this project will represent proof that classroom intervention strategies that focus on peace through self-understanding are vital for the overall success of ED students and the dedicated staff with whom they learn.

Rationale

In our present state of education in the US, there is an overwhelming population of at-risk youth. Whether scorned by poverty, addiction, or poor mental health, thousands of kids, dubbed “special ed” struggle daily to maintain stasis, often throwing academics in the back seat. Their teachers, while trying to deliver content, must address whichever trauma or disability limits each learner. An IEP is a good snapshot of students’ vitals, and for their educators, a working collaboration. Teachers work with mental health professionals, district representatives and administrators to discover pathways to success for a damaged and downtrodden population. In addition to the mental and emotional limitations facing these learners, there is a pervasive air of negativity that permeates so much of our youth’s cultures. TV, movies, video games and modern music perpetuate an affinity for violence, masochism and the rejection of family values. In this day and age, where young people dying from gunfire in classrooms has become run of the mill, bullying is rampant inside our schools and our culture in general is in a state of ultra-violent overdrive, there isn’t a clear and simple way to explain the horrible, damaging effects that modern violence has on our students, especially those who already deal with an Emotional Disturbance. How can these students be expected to learn while they are so consumed by the appalling standards that we have built for them? We have to face the fact that kids are almost completely desensitized to the fact that their worlds are so shaped by negativity and aggression. We have to somehow teach our young people to rise up out of it. We must equip them with the skills of introspection and reflection, in order to examine themselves to more meaningfully and safely exist within their world.

Going off a hunch, I posit that the key to inner-peace is in knowing one’s self. Self-Reflection, regulation and realization are the factors which may determine that knowing. If I inspire these in my students, perhaps I may find a path to peace. This is my rationale. Thank you for listening.

Problem Statement

A typical assumption is that behavior disorder students must have a certain level of routine and strict structure within their school setting because many times when offered a chance to reflect, these unique learners can be plunged into crisis. This often ignites episodes of violence and aggression and creates quite the opposite of what an effective classroom should look like. It is so vitally important to offer a sufficient level of reflective practice and self-awareness to the students in these classrooms. Proper reflection ensures that members of a class are more self-aware and thus better equipped to learn and teach. Through the reflective understanding of emotions, virtues and other facets of human existence we all become empowered to grow. If we don't examine our lives, we are doomed to be existentially stunted. Teachers who don't reflect deeply on their practice are destined either for mediocrity or simply as a disservice to the young people they work with. How then, can we encourage contemplation of the self in ways that are beneficial to those who must learn and to those who must teach? It will be our mission here to find out.

Definition of Terms

ABC Chart: a behavioral data tracking sheet that chronicles the antecedents, behaviors and consequences that a student experiences throughout a school day

ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorders): includes Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, and Pervasive Developmental Disorders

AT (Associate Teacher): A more highly certified 1:1 staff member who may provide individual instruction for students with more behavioral needs than other students.

BIP (Behavioral Intervention Plan): a plan of positive behavioral interventions in the IEP of a child whose behaviors interfere with his/her learning or that of others; based on data gathered through a functional behavioral assessment.

ED (Emotionally Disturbed): a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree, which adversely affects educational performance: (i) Inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors (ii) Inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers (iii) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances (iv) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression (v) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems

Executive Functioning: the ability to manage or regulate cognitive processes, including initiating, planning, organizing, and following through on a task. Children with executive functioning disorders may struggle with focusing on an activity, completing work on time or at all, organizing themselves and motivation. It can also impact the child's ability to regulate his/her emotions.

FBA (Functional Behavioral Assessment): an assessment of a student's behavior. An FBA is used when developing positive behavioral interventions for a child with a disability.

IEP (Individualized Education Program): the document developed at an IEP meeting that describes the child's special education program and sets the standard by which special education services are determined appropriate for a child with a disability.

ODD (Oppositional Defiant Disorder): a disability characterized by a persistent pattern of tantrums, arguing, and angry or disruptive behavior toward teachers, parents and other authority figures

OHI (Other Health Impairment): having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that-- (i) Is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome; and (ii) adversely affects a child's educational performance.

Paraprofessional: individual who provides direct support to a child, teacher, or other school professional and who works only under the direct supervision of qualified personnel. Not required to be highly certified and/or trained.

Summary of Project Intentions

1. Using data driven by FBAs and ABC tracking charts, we will assess and address current emotional intelligences of anonymous students in a 6:1:1 ED classroom.
2. In conjunction with the students' BIP plans we will begin a 4 week project to incorporate a supplemental behavior curriculum that focuses on peace through reflection and the understanding of the negative effects of violence while learning coping skills that may prevent it.
3. Using self-reflective journal prompts, role-playing activities and English Language Arts inspired lesson ideas that promote peace, we will begin to document their potential effectiveness by tracking behavioral data and surveying students.
4. At the same time, we will work to offer self-reflective experiences for the anonymous staff that work with the students, in the attempts to create a compendium of best practice strategies and reflection techniques.
5. We will then reassess emotional intelligences, track behavior, and follow the data to uncover which strategies work and how.
6. Finally, we will reassemble our Reflective Peace curriculum for maximum effectiveness and future applications within this specialized setting.

Chapter 2 Review of Relevant Literature and Background

The Confines of Violence

For educators everywhere, regardless of teaching in General or Special Ed. classrooms, there is a real threat of sudden violence in school. Regardless of the presence of metal detectors, cameras, and sentries, there is always the chance for things to go awry, thanks to the exaggerated, hyper-violent reality we have built for ourselves and our children. Even on a smaller scale: What Nelson (2000) refers to as “lesser forms of violence- rudeness, name calling, harassment, intimidation, racism, sexism”, still run rampant in all of our modern schools to some degree. As security measures that may or may not be effective become the focal point, especially in the ED classroom, academics often take the back seat. Even with measures in place, there are always students with violent proclivities, as Lawrence Baines points out when he writes, “Part of the difficulty in controlling the spread of violence in schools is that most teachers and administrators do not particularly care to admit that some students have the potential for violent behavior” (Baines, 1995). What’s more is that often times, teachers don’t know about these tendencies until it’s too late. Baines states: Because of the rise in the mainstreaming of special needs students and the concomitant legal pressure to maintain privacy for all students, some teachers are not informed of the students in a class who may require special handling” (Baines, 1995). But why are these students so prone to fits of violence?

R. Baird Shuman blames our aggressive culture and policies when he writes: “America’s youth receive all sorts of subliminal messages suggesting to them that violence is a viable means of problem solving... when the official American response to crises is force, a message is broadcast to our citizenry that force is an acceptable way to deal with problems” (Shuman, 1995). It seems that no matter where they go, they are bombarded by images of violent masculinity. Helen Hatchell points out “It also appears

that although pedagogical practices do not condone violence, they retain violence in an unquestioned, unchallengeable position in classroom discourses” (Hatchell, 2006). Many teachers tip-toe around the issue and ineffectually pander to their own insecurities, but violence must be addressed because of its level of involvement with our youth.

It utterly consumes our students. “Representations of male violence in newspapers, magazines, movies, and television dominate adolescent consciousness because of popular media’s marked advantage in terms of cultural penetrance. By the time boys are 18, they are likely to have seen on the television screens alone an average of 26,000 murders and untold numbers of physical and weapon-related violence, rapes, automobile crashes and explosions” (Brozo, 2002). There is no denying that teachers must be prepared and always anticipating how violence can manifest itself, and what to do to minimize damage to our students.

Even if we “want no reminders that man’s inhumanity to man is part of our being, our lexicon, our history. Perhaps we don’t want writers to remind us that we aren’t out of the woods (and may never be), and certainly not with the children around” (Brezicki, 2012). The truth is that “Real teaching is about growth, and that real growth (especially in the classroom can be uncomfortable” (Brezicki, 2012). Great teachers have the tenacity to make kids ask questions of themselves, which can be a hugely uncomfortable event. But as Brezicki stipulates: “ Challenging writing is neither safe nor politically correct, and ultimately we do our students a disservice if we don’t introduce them to it and professionally guide them through lives and characters that more truly confront us with our own” (Brezicki, 2012). We must never sanitize our curriculum or tip-toe around real-life, but the truths we reveal with our students must be accompanied by positive character education, especially in environments more prone to violence (urban and special education settings). We must become proactive in the quest to create peace in any volatile classroom.

Preserving Peace

There are several things we can do to teach anti-violence through our curriculums. To begin, we must be diverse and worldly with our content. “The English teacher can expose students to the literature of different cultures and races. Through discussions, students can be led to appreciate the humanity that the peoples of different nationalities, religions, classes, cultures, and even sexes and socioeconomic groups share” (Coghlan, 2000). Cooperative learning experiences, cultural awareness activities and human empathy lessons should be regularly injected into a curriculum for emotionally disturbed students. Coghlan suggests the use of a “Peace Contract” (2000) to further incorporate the ideals of conflict management. These concepts will be tested later in our project, but for now rest assured that they are of vital importance.

Barbara Stanford asserts that “combining conflict management and English content can help young people develop more effective cognitive skills they can apply both in their own lives and in school” (Stanford, 1995). She suggests starting with a unit on Aesop’s Fables to lay the foundation of positive behavior laden pedagogy, and to also use role playing, character examinations, and connections to current events to study conflict management. Using these strategies can greatly improve a classroom’s potential for peace and offer the essential behavioral teaching piece that this population so desperately needs. The key is to offer dynamic curriculum that addresses each student’s emotional needs while not shying away from the uncomfortable, often unpredictable nature of self-discovery and lessons in human empathy.

The At-Risk Journal

“The best person I know is myself.” — Jeff Kinney, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*

I would like you to conduct an experiment with me for a moment... I want you to close your eyes and think back to a time in your life when you dreaded writing. It could have been as a child in class, a teenager with homework, or just last week as you surmounted whichever mountain that higher education put in your path. There is some moment in absolutely everybody's life where writing becomes the bane of one's existence and/or a plague sent from the bottom most reaches of Hell to destroy one's life and punish one's soul. And yet if we know how to use it, it can be so much fun and quite a rewarding experience. It is the opinion of this author that writing can become a terrible labor and an awful chore when assigned and scrutinized, and since school is an old and wise institution, we are still hammering our students with writing expectations and intense examinations. Writing is seldom seen as the rewarding, cathartic experience that it should be; and this is often where we fail our kids. There can be no denying that our lives are more fulfilling and better maintained with healthy reflection and inner-knowing. In a sea of possible avenues through which humans can reflect and reveal important self-truths, being able to write is quite possibly the most simple yet most complex and often infuriating thing we can do. The key is to make writing fun and rewarding. For our students, we must teach the rules of writing, but focus more on providing journal opportunities to write that are not graded. As Gary Hopkins, editor-in-chief of *Education World* points out: “Kids love to write if they feel safe with it” (Hopkins, 2010). Jenny Schuessler et al says “When reflective thinking is paired with journaling as a learning activity, students develop self-analysis and an increased awareness of their environment” (Schuessler, 2012). This “awareness” is critical to the success of our learners.

Speaking of “awareness”, as teachers, we have to be aware of our practice and how we can improve it, so of course journal writing is imperative. Effie N. Christie, of the Institute for Women in Educational Leadership writes, “By re-defining their own educational mission through the lens of reflective practice, the teachers were able to unravel their outer shells, disengage themselves from stereotyped inhibitions, and emerge from a self-imposed malaise into an environment of classroom renewal” (Christie, 2007). It is so important to fight the “malaise” in our pedagogies, so we must examine and reevaluate ourselves constantly.

Mary Roche writes “In self-study one moves seamlessly between the world of actor and spectator in a dialectic between oneself and one’s practice” (Roche, 2011). This dialectic is the vital link between teacher and student success, both between teachers and students, and the dialectic of the individual that enables them to become self-aware. How then do we create a bevy of these moments for our students and ourselves within our classrooms? Let us first ponder what we can do for our students.

Student Reflection

Schools should be responsible for enabling students to acquire the learned tools that will serve them in their lives. This was once seen as simply information regarding history, science, math and language. Modern schools and educational philosophies see a marriage between classical knowledge and emotional intelligence. Janet Pickard Kremenitzer describes this when she writes, “A current interest in education is the growing awareness that the development of social and emotional skills in children is critical for the foundation of academic knowledge achievement in the classroom” (Kremenitzer, 2005). She also suggests that there are four “branches” of emotional intelligence: “(1) the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; (2) the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they help you to think better; (3) the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and (4) the ability to reflect on, manage, and regulate emotions to promote emotional and

intellectual growth” (Kremenitzer, 2005). While she cites these four branches as facilitating a reflective journal, there are clear applications to student reflection. Most importantly, “One of the chief objectives of reflecting upon what we do is the hope that we can alter anything that is not working and make it better next time” (Kremenitzer, 2005). This is the ultimate argument for student reflection as a means of delivering behavior intervention curriculum. A student journal driven by skill-building, that promotes pro-social growth, meaningful inner connections, and replacement tools for aggression is absolutely necessary in the efforts to promote peace. Using strategies from Arnold P. Goldstein’s *Skillstreaming*, the student journals will work greatly to teach important social skills and reflective strategies for dealing with emotions.

Of course there is the obvious need for journal writing in any classroom. While reading new literatures and exploring new concepts, students should be able to freely express their attitudes and feelings regarding the material. As Gary Hopkins points out, “When reading something, many kids are not going to come out (in a classroom discussion) and say how they feel about what they are reading. In a journal, they know what is theirs and that they can freely express themselves. You can learn quite a bit about the quieter kids through reading their journals” (Hopkins, 2010).

These experiences can take many different shapes, driven by several positive intentions. In fact, Alvyda Liuloliene cites five different types of journals used in education as “1: A reflective journal – reflection on action 2: A speculation about effects journal- reflection for action 3: A double entry journal – writing quotations from text and responding to them. 4: A metacognitive journal – discussing one’s own thinking and learning. 5: A synthesis journal – application in a practical setting of what was learned and done.” (Liouliene, 2009). These are merely the journal applications for content specific purposes. For my particular project, I will be relying heavily on metacognitive journaling, streamlined with a social skills- intervention program.

Liouliene goes on to cite the work of Peery when she writes:

Angela B. Peery adds a free writing journal in which a person writes in a stream of consciousness style in response to a prompt or other stimulus. The author also supplies this list of journal types with a collaborative journal in which different people make their own entries. The latter type is especially useful for the development of a positive classroom atmosphere and collaborative work with the emphasis on learner's autonomy, responsibility and self-directed studies (Liouliene, 2009).

Stream-of-consciousness experiences can be amazingly cathartic and may reveal genuine truths about the writer. The collaborative effort Peery mentions suggests to me the importance of classroom journals or log books. For this reason, my project should also include a classroom reflection log.

Such a book would invite students to record observations, reflections, feelings and gripes about the class with no fear of being scorned for having an opinion. It would also build upon skills of self-regulation that empower our students. As Chris Campbell states, "Self-regulation increases student motivation and engagement by enabling students to customize and take control of their own learning through conscious knowledge of effective strategies and choices" (Campbell, 2009). A journal, especially one that offers a variety of character developing questions and self-awareness encouraging exercises, would allow members of the class to freely explore their own opinions and concerns, engaging little moments of actualized epiphany come empowerment for themselves.

While utilizing self-reflecting journals, students and teachers alike would engage in two processes. As Campbell states:

There are two main processes in self-reflection. The first one is self-evaluation and it refers to comparisons of self-observed performances against some standard, such as one's prior

performance, someone else's performance or even an absolute standard. The second phase involves feelings of self- satisfaction and positive affect regarding one's performance. Motivation is enhanced with increased self- satisfaction (Campbell, 2009).

The first phase happens immediately as students enter concerns and reflections into the classroom journal. The second phase occurs as the students witness the teacher taking into account their considerations and using that information to tailor the class time for maximum success. The second phase is the one that keeps students invested in the process, the payoff if you will.

Ultimately, however, these meaningful interactions within the class log serve an immediate need, but if students are to succeed long after they leave school, they must be taught the necessary skills of reflection and expression. This is not always easy, as there are state and national standards within the classroom that often put life skills in the backseat. I think many teachers subscribe to a classical, didactic pedagogy and, as Mary Roche states, "instead of acknowledging the child as a knower, didactic pedagogies seem to objectify the child as a commodity to which discrete packets of knowledge are delivered and then assessed through standardized examinations to see how much of the knowledge has stuck" (Roche 2011). We never want to make our thinking, feeling students feel like a commodity, but unfortunately, many teachers are stuck to this mentality, thanks to a flawed and ever changing teacher evaluation system. Year after year, teachers are forced to talk at their students, making learning a one way street that strips their students of power and ownership.

Many teachers have the skill, just not the license to do what's best for the student. Complacency and adherence to archaic and generic designs for learning often keep teachers held at bay from that which students may truly need to be unlocked. Kremenitzer writes: "Teachers sometimes can become complacent in their practice and unknowingly fall into patterns or habits that they might not be aware of

that could be less than optimal” (Kremenitzer, 2005). And so many teachers fall victim to this career malaise.

The only way to truly work optimally for our students is to consistently evolve through professional, reflective practices. With the expansiveness of academic contents, the demands of state regulated curriculums and the day-to-day grind of being a teacher, either in a general or special education environment, it may not always be easy to locate opportunities to grow and reflect. How can we use reflection as a means of breaking free from the patterns and habits that so limit us?

Teacher Reflection

Coinciding with the four branches of Emotional Intelligence, as stated by Kremenitzer, Scanlan and co (2001), we can cite four main themes to consider in teacher reflection. They are “making connections, developmental aspects, influence of context on reflection, and influence of emotions on reflection” (Scanlan, 2002). Teachers should use these guidelines for reflection as a starting point to begin to consider all of the things that are relevant to us as educators and especially those of us in the trenches of special education. Each of the themes is important to the well roundedness of a journaling experience, but the first and fourth themes, making connections and influence of emotions respectively, are in my opinion the two themes we will mostly focus on as students and staff. We will encompass a range of items including connecting past experience to content (a novice reflection), to connecting the students’ experiences and emotions driving behavior (a developing reflection), to connecting content to engage the regulation of emotions for everyone involved (a master reflection).

In a special education setting, the measure of success requires a teacher to know and understand their learners’ strengths and weaknesses, and therefore requires an in-depth assessment of each learner. Knowledge of executive functioning levels, past traumas and current triggers are essential considerations when crafting individualized pathways to connections. Then, as behavioral data and assessments are gathered on the performances of our learners, there must be consistent mindfulness

and appropriate alteration of curriculums, management plans, and student strategies for success. Self-reflection is imperative to ensure the integrity of the classroom in general.

It is the suggestion of this author that Scanlan's themes of emotional capacities should be blended with Kremenitzer's four branches and the Arnold P. Goldstein approach to Skillstreaming to create the ultimate reflection program. This would take the shape of an Emotional Intelligence Journal, and as Kremenitzer states, "Keeping an emotional intelligence personal journal for several weeks with a particular "hyper-awareness" focus on the abilities related to regulating and managing emotions is a recommended tool for consideration by classroom teachers, particularly those who are long removed from their initial pre-service training" (Kremenitzer, 2005). This "hyper-awareness" would allow teachers to create a dialogue, and as Effie Christie lo as 'reflection-on-practice' and 'reflection-in-practice', would effect a transformation of how and what we think about children and their ability to learn in spite of formidable barriers" (Christie, 2007). Mary Roche, adds her input on the importance of dialogue, when she writes, "For me, dialogue, including dialogue with the self through reflection, is crucial to the development of critical awareness, because dialogue, as I understand it, honors the other as an equal knower who can think and speak for herself" (Roche 2011).

The bottom line is that educators must tow their own lines and work to better themselves as teachers because they are passionate about teaching, not because they have to produce scores or data. Mary Roche states "thinking critically about what constitutes critical thinking must be grounded in the idea that people have infinite capacity to be critical thinkers, bring their own backgrounds and ontology to the process and generate new knowledge for themselves in the process, and that thinking needs to be understood as a dialogical and relational process, not a product" (Roche, 2011). Only through reflection can teachers rise above the commodification of their practice and create meaning for themselves. The heart and soul of reflection is in the altruistic journey into the inner-self; teachers need

to be reflective because it's the good and right thing to do, and once it's done their best practice will be just that, the best.

Chapter 3

In a classroom occupied by At-Risk students, delivering academic content is quite often the hardest possible thing in the world to do. With the constant necessity of managing behavior, documenting data and generally keeping the peace, there are myriad distractions and time drainers that limit the amount of quality instruction afforded by the teacher. In view of that, there is a distinct need for lessons and units to be amicable with behavior management and character education. Effective teachers in these environments tailor their curriculums not only in accordance with state/national standards, but also with the emotional needs of the classroom and its inhabitants.

The use of journaling across the contents is a well documented and proven method of recording and reflecting on content, and is quite frankly, old news. The part of it that will always require new research, trial and speculation is the question "How can we create a viable skills-based reflection program that can first make personal writing approachable and then make it absolutely necessary for our students beyond our classrooms?" As a Special Ed teacher with a background in English Language Arts, I know that I must make this my mission each and every school year, but the constant battles with crises and extreme behavior make this a difficult task.

Project Setting

I've always considered myself fairly adept at creating diverse opportunities for self expression in my classroom. Accordingly, over these first years of my career, I have compiled innumerable journal prompts, thought provocations and suggestions for reflection. These collected resources typically

appear peppered throughout my year's curriculum, but I had never attempted an intensive reflection unit with a focus on preserving peace. I was determined to activate the need to self-examine within my students, to create an understanding of the importance of peace in our lives, and continue to deliver the content that I love so much.

I started this unit in April, after a winter that was just brutal with daily crises and violent physicality within my program. Being my second year working with ED students, I was bracing for the inevitable increase in behavior issues that the spring thaw always brings. In my building, there is always a noticeable in-flux of negative behaviors, specifically among ED and ASD students as seasons change, allergies emerge, and the power of more sun energizes already over-anxious kids. Spring madness is a very real thing and there is really nothing on a BIP that tells staff how to deal with such a circumstantial detractor.

My current caseload sees me responsible for the instruction of 22 seventh and eighth graders who are grouped together by similarities in disabilities as well as histories of violent behavior and other various traumas, but for the sake of this thesis, I will only be presenting the data collected from my specific homeroom of five seventh graders. Each of these students has an IEP with various accommodations and supports included in their program. For this project, the students will be referred to as Students A-E. Three of the students have 1:1 paraprofessional support staff, one has an Associate Teacher 1:1 and the fifth student has no 1:1. All five students participate in group and individual counseling sessions weekly. Further information regarding the students' individual profiles can be found on page 22.

At this point in the school year there was a noticeable level of frustration, desperation and exhaustion among many of my staff members. I could tell that relationships between my one-on-ones and their assigned students were becoming strained and tensions were persistent. Much more of my time was being spent managing the adults in my room, detracting greatly from my student case

managing. I know that self-reflection is a very important tool that often becomes neglected, even by the most emotionally competent. My staff was going to need equal involvement and endorsement of this reflective, peace promoting project.

All of the journal lessons contained within this unit are crafted to incorporate and consider the Skillstreaming program that is also utilized by my school's counselors and related service staff. It does, in fact, take a village to raise a child, and only through collaborative efforts with fellow teachers, administrators, and mental health professionals can teachers truly expect to succeed with this population. As I was about to find out, true success from reflection with this population and the dedicated staff with whom they work, comes mostly in singular victories with agonizingly limited immediacy. By the end of this project, I learned that we must celebrate all of the little victories and whatever positive momentum we create, regardless of how long it takes to get the ball rolling.

Unit Outline

Week 1

Perception, Appraisal, and Expression of Emotion

2 lessons/5 prompts

Week 2

Emotional Facilitation of Thinking

1 lesson/5 prompts

Week 3

Understanding and Analyzing Emotions

2 lessons/5 prompts

Week 4

Reflective Regulation of Emotions

1 lesson/4 prompts

Learner Profiles

Student A: This student is classified as Emotionally Disturbed, possibly stemming from severe emotional traumas from the past. Behavioral data collected on this student indicates frequent aggression to both students and staff on a fairly regular basis. Academic levels for this student appear to be at or around grade level, despite the recurrent reluctance to appropriately participate in academic classes. His IEP states that he requires a highly structured, extremely consistent environment that supports his academic, social/emotional and mental health needs. He needs frequent breaks and consistent adult support during times of frustration and agitation. He requires direct instruction about how to appropriately handle frustrating situations and he continues to need close supervision in order to maintain the safety of himself and others and therefore an Associate Teacher has been put in place to, at times, conduct instruction for him in an alternate location. The pairing of this student and his AT will be an integral component of this project. A disciplinary report of the current school year shows 12 suspensions of varying length both in and out of school. Of the 12 incidents, 7 incidents involved fighting/ physical aggression, 4 involved continued disruptions of the educational process/ destruction of property, and 1 involved elopement from school grounds. His FBA diagnosis cites “agitated depression with a strong trauma component and symptoms of ADHD. Data from ABC charts indicates events that have negative outcomes often trigger frequency of unsafe behaviors, suggesting a great need for coping skills to be addressed and practiced. This student has an ongoing BIP in place to provide consistency for staff members when dealing with behaviors, however, since its inception, behaviors only improved slightly before plateauing and then resurging.

Student B: This student is classified as OHI with symptoms of ADHD and very low academic levels, especially in reading where he is at around a 1st grade level. This student has a 1:1 paraprofessional in place to assist in redirection and maintaining expectations. A discipline report for the school year shows

10 suspensions: 9 of which were for fighting/ physical aggression, and 1 for eloping from school grounds. His FBA indicates that this student is a natural leader who uses his “street smarts” to maintain his status as an alpha figure among peers, despite his lower academic levels. Student A and Student B have a close knit relationship that can be both healthy and productive, however it may also lend itself to making them accomplices in various infractions.

Student C: This student is classified with ASD, presenting with symptoms resembling Asperger’s Syndrome as well as ADHD. His FBA suggests he has a very difficult time dealing with emotions and reading social cues. ABC charts show that this student has a very hard time accepting responsibilities for behavior and dealing with any kind of change in his routine. He has excellent academic levels but requires a 1:1 para to remind him of expectations and help keep him organized and on task. His frequency of violent behaviors is not as severe as some of his classmates, but data shows he is in desperate need of self-regulatory strategies.

Student D: This student is classified as Emotionally Disturbed with a history of extreme trauma. Typical behaviors for this student include profane or over-sexualized talk, angry and tearful outbursts, and a heavy reliance on material reinforcers to succeed within the classroom. His BIP suggests a token system for behavior management. Academic levels are average in Math and Reading, but this student struggles with writing. He has a 1:1 para in place who helps to remind him of social and classroom expectations.

Student E: This student is classified as OHI with symptoms of ODD. Academic levels are slightly below grade level. There is no 1:1 in place for this student who is often able to advocate for himself and maintain a certain level of consistency within the classroom. His FBA cites many occurrences of argumentative behavior and disruption of class in order to achieve personal, short term goals.

Lessons

Week 1: Perception, Appraisal, and Expression of Emotion

Lesson 1: Introduction to the Class Reflection Log

Purpose:

Students will be introduced to the community reflective log as a tool to become more aware of their thoughts and feelings about the classroom environment and how these contribute to the overall well being of everyone in the class. Once introduced, the log will be used daily to monitor various aspects of the reflective program and keep track of students' interest levels and areas of concern.

Duration:

One class period (40 minutes)

Revisited weekly for ten minutes per student and staff member

Objectives:

The Learner will:

- *Identify positive results of community dialogues
- *Establish expectations for an effective community log
- *Become acquainted with the classroom reflective log
- *Contribute thoughts and ideas into the log

Materials:

1 Notebook, Pens, white board or Smart Board for displaying brainstormed items, loose leaf paper, shoebox or other small box for collecting written responses.

Instructional Procedure:

Anticipatory Set: As a class discuss the various benefits of having an avenue for expressing thoughts and opinions to the teacher. Demonstrate the use of a suggestion box. Have the students each write down something they would like to see that could improve the quality of life within the classroom. Have learners fold their papers and put them in the box. The Teacher then reads a few of the suggestions, provided there are appropriate ones to talk about. The teacher will then read his own suggestion: "Give out more snacks and breaks". The teacher then will pass out light snacks and tell the students that they can have a 5 minute snack break because somebody suggested it and sounded like a great idea.

* Compare the pros and cons of verbal communication as opposed to collecting thoughts and opinions in a classroom log. Essential Question: Why is it important to write things down? Answers may vary but the teacher should hurdle help students to realize that by writing things down, we can keep track of important things that may be working or not working and then make plans to always improve these things.

*As a class, brainstorm reasons a log might be necessary and list them for all to see.

*Discuss rules and guidelines for the classroom log such as no swearing or putting down others.

*Everyone, including staff, is entitled to 10 minutes per week with the log. At the end of each week, the teacher will read comments and bring up any items of importance, at which point the class may engage in a "town meeting" to brainstorm ways of making things better.

*Allow students 10 minutes to think about times when they made improvements in their lives by communicating their needs to an adult. Have them write down ideas with their names on them and then put them in the box.

*Start using the log book by having students take turns writing lines of a chain story.

*Allow time for written suggestions

Week 1, Lesson 2: Introduction to the Personal Reflective Journal

Purpose:

Students and staff will be introduced to their own reflective journal as a tool to become more aware of their thoughts and feelings and how these contribute to their overall well being and happiness. Once introduced, these books will be used daily to inspire pro-social meditation and personal awareness.

Duration:

One class period (40 minutes)

Revisited daily for ten minutes per student and staff member

Objectives:

The Learners and Staff will:

- *Determine the benefits of self-reflection
- *Establish the difference between reflective journaling and autobiographical reporting
- *Become acquainted with the reflective journals
- *Complete their first Journal entry

Materials:

Enough Notebooks for the entire class, Pens, Markers, Stickers, Would You Rather cards

Instructional Procedure:

Anticipatory Set: As a class, play a few rounds of Would You Rather and start a conversation about the importance of knowing what you like. Comment on why people need to know what they like and how they may best incorporate that into instances of success. (10 min)

- * Notebooks are handed out and students and staff are encouraged to decorate the fronts and backs of their journals with markers and stickers. (10 min)

*Teacher calls for attention from the class to demonstrate use of the journal. The very first journal prompt is “Who are you and what do you think is great?” On the first page, the teacher writes “Hello. My name is _____ and I think _____ is great.” Teacher asks for suggestions to fill in the blanks. Once a particular interest is selected, the teacher writes a second sentence that explains why that interest is great: “I feel this way because_____”. The teacher identifies this as the minimum requirement for the first few journal entries. That is, one statement sentence and one sentence explaining the feeling or thought behind the statement.

*Students and staff are then instructed to write their own personal interest statement with explanation or further development.

*Students may share what they have written.

*Teacher collects journals and places them together in a designated spot in the room.

*Students and staff are given time with Classroom Log.

***Journal prompts for the week:**

Something that really irks me is... I can cope with it by...

I am happiest when I... What steps can I take to get more happiness?

I am really good at... I am not so good at...

What I like most about myself is...

***Staff Journal prompts for the week:**

Am I good at identifying how I am feeling?

Am I good at identifying how my students are feeling?

Would most people I know consider me to be perceptive regarding my emotional state and theirs?

Am I able to notice when my students are angry, sad, bored, etc.?

When can I begin to increase my perception of emotions?

Week 2: Emotional Facilitation of Thinking

Lesson: Peace Contracts

Purpose:

Students and staff will work together to brainstorm items to be placed on large visual peace contracts displayed around the room. Everyone will then sign each contract, confirming their share in the responsibility of maintaining the classroom order. The purpose is to have a visual reminder of the shared ownership of expectations.

Duration:

One class period (40 minutes)

Objectives:

The Learner will:

- *Identify the teacher's expectations for the staff and students to maintain peace
- *Identify the students' expectations for each other. What are some of the things needed to keep the peace in the classroom?
- *Identify staff and students expectations for the teacher. How can the teacher best promote peace?
- *Rotate, brainstorm and sign off on the completed Peace Contracts

Materials:

Markers, 3 large sheets of paper, individual sheets of paper

Instructional Procedure:

Anticipatory Set: As a class discuss the various benefits of having a classroom wide set of rules and expectations devised by and agreed upon by everyone. Tell everyone that they are about to come up with three sets of rules that we will review and then sign off on, but first, they must take a few minutes

to come up with their unique signature. These can be any type of visual representation of students' and staff's names.

- * Everyone counts off by threes, forming the rotating groups

- *Groups are given 5 minutes at each station to brainstorm things that they think would fall on each list of expectations.

- *Once everyone has had a chance to contribute to each poster, groups share what each one says.

- *Everyone then signs their personal signatures on each of the lists.

- *Direct students and staffs attentions to the peace contracts daily or as particular situations arise.

***Journal Prompts for the week:**

Why is peace important?

Does fighting and war solve problems? Why or why not?

Describe the first thing you think of when you hear the word "Peace".

What are 3 things you can do to become more peaceful?

Do you think everyone wants world peace? Who would not want it?

***Staff journal prompts for the week:**

Am I good at identifying emotional swings in myself and others?

Am I able to counsel myself in making important decisions if I am in a negative state?

Do I try to do creative and interesting projects when I am in a highly positive and motivated state?

Can I also identify optimal times for my students to work on certain projects?

Week 3: Understanding and Analyzing Emotions

Lesson 1: Dealing with Feeling

Purpose:

Students and staff will work together to brainstorm the feelings that may occur after certain situations.

They will name the feeling then discuss good and bad ways of dealing with the feeling. The purpose of this lesson is to continue to practice understanding feelings, why they may occur, and what we can do to manage them.

Duration:

One class period (40 minutes)

Objectives:

The Learner will:

- *Identify the feeling that occurs after certain events.
- *Identify a positive way of dealing with the emotion.
- *Identify a negative way of dealing with it.
- *Compose a journal entry.

Materials:

Paper, pens, journals, situation cards

Instructional Procedure:

Anticipatory Set: As a class discuss how different events trigger different emotions. Brainstorm possible emotions.

*Students are assigned two situations each. For each situation, they must describe what feeling they would feel, how to deal with it and how not to deal with it.

How do you feel when someone blames you for something that you know you didn't do?

How do you feel when somebody keeps fouling you in a game?

How do you feel when a friend cancels plans on you with no warning or explanation?

How do you feel when you accomplish something you have worked really hard for?

How do you feel when your team keeps losing?

How do you feel when you get positive feedback on a school assignment?

How do you feel when you bomb a test you weren't prepared for?

*Students are given time to address each of their situations individually.

*Everyone shares out.

*Class members come up with new situations with attached feelings to log into their journals.

*Students are given time to write in Journals or Classroom Log.

Week 3, Lesson 2: A CASE OF EMOTIONS

Purpose:

Students and staff work together to brainstorm emotional states (sadness, anger, happiness, fear) and the adjectives that help describe them. They will compose “Poemotionals” or poems made up of emotional words. They will contribute their work to the class room “Case of Emotions”. All of the poems are then used to play a game of Categories as a class. The purpose of this lesson is to appeal to multiple intelligences while allowing students and staff time to brain storm and process emotions both as a group member and personally.

Duration:

One class period (40 minutes)

Objectives:

The Learner will:

- *Work in pairs to brainstorm adjectives related to an emotional state then synthesize that into a poem.
- *Contribute to a collective classroom “Case File”.
- *Draw poems from the Case and engage the group game “Categories”.
- *Compose a journal entry.

Materials:

Paper, pens, journals, emotional state cards (anger, fear, sadness and happiness), file folder

Instructional Procedure:

Anticipatory Set: Happiness, Sadness, Anger and Fear are written individually on index cards and assigned randomly to partners.

*Everyone begins brainstorming adjectives that describe their respective emotional state. Using the words generated, partners begin to construct “Poemotionals”. These flash poems should be open-ended, but framed enough to include the brainstormed ideas.

*The poems are all entered into a classroom file and then picked randomly by partners who must then take turns acting out the word or giving examples of things in life that may create that emotion.

***Journal Entry: What makes you happy? What could make you happier?**

***Journal Prompts for the week:**

Write about a situation you’ve been in where you felt the need to hide your emotions. Do you think this is healthy or not so much?

Have you ever had a giant mood swing? What happened and how did you deal?

Was there ever a time where you felt mad at the whole world? What happened and why do you think you felt like this?

Do you have someone you can talk to when you are feeling down? What are some of the things that this person says or does to make you feel better?

***Staff journal prompts for the week:**

Am I good at finding the right word(s) to use to express my feelings?

Can I help my students to use words to express themselves during both positive and negative times?

Am I good at understanding what causes children to feel and behave in a certain way?

Am I good at reminding myself about the different developmental stages and that sometimes students act in a more mature or immature manner and to see the whole child in perspective and not just an isolated event?

Week 4: Reflective Regulation of Emotions

Lesson: Everyday Feelings/Regulating Zones

Purpose: Students and staff will explore the four Zones of Regulation as created by Leah Kuypers, identify the emotions that fit into each of the zones and then brainstorm characters from popular literature, TV and movies that typically exist within certain zones. The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the Zones of Regulation as a classroom management tool. This system helps reinforce reflection and the regulation of emotions.

Duration: One class period (40 minutes)

Objectives:

The Learner will:

- *Explore the Zones of Regulation.
- *Work together to list the emotions assigned to each zone.
- *Brainstorm popular characters as examples of extreme emotions and assign them a colored zone.
- *Begin using the Zones in the classroom.
- *Compose a journal entry.

Materials:

4 large poster boards or areas on the whiteboard, pens, markers, journals, video clips

Instructional Procedure:

Anticipatory Set: Ask students about colors and their connotations. What about phrases like “Seeing Red” and “Feeling Blue”?

*Students are introduced to the four zones of regulation which are: “Red, Yellow, Green and Blue”, which Leah Kuypers describes on her website:

The Red Zone is used to describe extremely heightened states of alertness and intense emotions. A person may be elated or experiencing anger, rage, explosive behavior, devastation, or terror when in the Red Zone. The Yellow Zone is also used to describe a heightened state of alertness and elevated emotions; however, one has some control when they are in the Yellow Zone. A person may be experiencing stress, frustration, anxiety, excitement, silliness, the wiggles, or nervousness when in the Yellow Zone. The Green Zone is used to describe a calm state of alertness. A person may be described as happy, focused, content, or ready to learn when in the Green Zone. This is the zone where optimal learning occurs. The Blue Zone is used to describe low states of alertness and down feelings, such as when one feels sad, tired, sick, or bored. (Kuypers, 2013)

*As a class we will analyze the emotions of each zone.

*Teams will work together to come up with a graphic representation of each zone.

*After sharing out, the class should play a few rounds of categories (competing to see who can come up with the most characters that typify each zone).

***Journal Entry: What conditions do you need to be in the Green Zone?**

***Journal Prompts for the week:**

When was a time I shifted quickly between zones? Did I have a choice in the matter?

What am I like in the Yellow Zone?

How do I want people to feel about me?

***Staff journal prompts for the week:**

-What does regulation mean to me and why is it important in life?

-Am I good when I am caught "off-guard" and good at responding to an unexpected event?

-Am I able to self-regulate my behavior even under very difficult circumstances?

-How do I model good self-regulation for my students/ peers?

Chapter 4

Week1:

This week saw the introductions of the classroom log and the personal reflection journal and of course, I was met with resistance. For students and staff alike, I think the idea of writing everyday seemed almost like a punishment. I stressed the importance of quality over quantity and promised that I would never ask them to write any more than a paragraph in one sitting but there was still quite an air of mistrust.

Lesson 1 went off without a hitch, like any good lesson featuring a snack time should. I really wanted this to be a laid back class session where I could introduce the classroom log and hopefully get them used to the idea of proactively making suggestions and voicing concerns in the log book. The chain story that we created was about a raccoon that could skate and wanted to get some tacos. It wasn't exactly Pulitzer Prize winning, but it warmed them up to the idea of writing in the same book as others. I only had three kids in class for this lesson, so I made them honorary classroom log ambassadors. Their job was to teach the other two boys about the importance of communication within the classroom.

Lesson 2 seemed much more exhausting than the first. I don't know if it was because people felt intimidated by a whole notebook's worth of paper, or if personal writing in general upsets many people but it was truly difficult getting everyone on board and initially writing in their journals. Many kids wrote about inappropriate topics, such as drugs and sex, which I completely expected to happen. Looking back, I feel I should have given more open ended instructions, allowing everyone the option of creating something visual in their journals, instead of writing. I focused on the writing portion to gauge how stressful writing assignments might be for students and staff.

Behavior for this week was similar to the week before, with only one student earning above 75 percent of his total points. The second highest point total was a meager 60 percent of earned points and that student (Student B) was involved in a physical altercation with another student and then staff. The three students below 60 percent were mainly losing points due to elopement , harassment and destruction of school property. Support was called a total of 27 times for our students during this initial week, which was one higher than the previous week.

Sample Classroom Log Entries:

“We should not have to take any tests” – Student B

“Can we move our desks?” – Student C

“Smoke Weed.” – Student D

Sample Journal Entries:

“Something that irks me is writing. I think it’s stupid and I hate it.” – Student A

“I’m happiest at my Dad’s house. We play video games and watch movies. I don’t get to see him as much as I want to.” – Student D

“I am really good at fighting. I can fight anyone and win. I not afraid of anybody.” – Student B

Sample Staff Entries:

“I think I’m very good at recognizing the emotions in our students. I usually know when a crisis is about to occur and I always try to be proactive about dealing with it. I wouldn’t have been with this company for as long as I have been without having the skills needed.” – AT

“I am pretty good about noticing kids’ emotions. I don’t always know what to do when the kids are getting angry but I am willing to work with the team all the time.” – Para #1

“I am still new to this but I am confident that I know when I’m getting frustrated and how that affects people around me.” – Para #3

Week 2:

This week's lesson, featuring the Peace Contracts, was a hit and a miss. Students initially had a hard time buying into it because it seemed trivial to them. I think if I were to do this lesson again it would be within the first couple of days of school as the classroom behavior plan was being introduced. Some of the student's responses were actually thoughtful as they considered their own expectations of the class room. One student even brought up that he often has unfair expectations of people, which, in my eyes was an amazing epiphany. Week 2 had 1 less support call than week 1, which is surely a result of my amazing reflective interventions. We had one more tracked instance of physical aggression on the ABC charts. I was starting to worry that my prodding of emotions was creating more violence than it was preventing but I would continue with my endeavor.

Sample Classroom Log Entries:

"I hate writing in this book" – Student A

"Can we eat lunch in the cafeteria sometime?" – Student C

"Smoke Weed." – Student D

Sample Journal Entries:

"Not everyone wants peace. The people that make guns and bombs want war so they can be rich." – Student A

"I am at peace when I get to watch Dragon Ball Z" – Student B

"Peace is important." – Student C

Sample Staff Entries:

"One thing I know is when I need to tap out. Today I was involved in a spitting incident and I nearly lost it. I was able to hang in there until the situation was safe, but I definitely needed a tap out afterwards. I'm glad I can count on the other staff in the room for that." – AT

"I think people find me emotionally perceptive. I have been told that I am great at responding to how people are feeling." – Para #2

Week 3:

This week is where things finally started to work a little more consistently. While we were still in the 20's for our weekly support call totals, we had significantly less instances of physical aggression. The lessons, Dealing with Feeling and Case of Emotions, were actually a lot of fun. Having them back to back reinforced what we were talking about while appealing to different intelligences. My gamers and actors enjoyed Dealing with Feeling, while my artists and linguistics performed exceptionally well during the second lesson. As per the recommendation of Student C, we ate in the cafeteria three out of five days this week.

Sample Classroom Log Entries:

"Can we have more time to play at the end of the day?" – Student C

Sample Journal Entries:

"My brother turned off my game last night and I almost killed him. I was too mad. My mom had to hold me down. I did that to him last week and he didn't do nothing." – Student A

"I don't hide my emotions from anybody. They hide from me." – Student E

"I get mad when we have to write." – Student D

Sample Staff Entries:

"I sometimes have to stop myself because these children might have something much worse going on that I do not know about. It's hard sometimes to remember that." – Para #2

"Sometimes I feel like I need help speaking up." – Para #1

Sample of Poemotional:

"Sadness"

Blue, Depressed, Unhappy, Down in the Dumps, Sad, Tears, Pain, Bad Luck, Doom, Hopeless, Lost

Week 4:

For the last week of this project, my students seemed unfocused during the lesson, but the behavior seemed to show that something was clicking. We only had one instance of physical aggression tracked on the behavior charts and a total of 14 support calls for the week (half the amount as when we started). I think everyone was getting a bit burnt by all of the emotional instruction, even though behavior was improved. The lesson, integrating Leah Kuyper's Zones of Regulation, seemed to have its highs and lows, though I think this lesson's biggest problem was timing. Much like the Peace Contracts, this lesson would be far more effective right off the bat in the school year. This week we also sat down together and negotiated extra time at the end of the day for choice activities. We decided to shave a few minutes off of breakfast and lunch to allow for more time at the end of the day.

Sample Classroom Log Entries:

"Can we play Four Square today?" – Student D

Sample Journal Entries:

"I switch zones quickly around my family. We get mad at each other a lot." – Student A

"When I'm in the yellow zone, I am usually bouncing off the walls." – Student B

"I go red zone when someone talks about my mom." – Student C

Sample Staff Entries:

"This job is constant regulation. If I couldn't do it, I would have been gone a long time ago." – AT

"I model good self-regulation skills when I demonstrate calming techniques." – Para #3

"I regulate at home with a glass of wine." – Para #1

And yes, we played Four Square that day.

Final Reflection

I believe that there were some significant wins during this project for both students and staff. First and foremost is the fact that, before this project, journals were used almost exclusively on my team to merely enhance content and not to drive character education and emotional regulation. With this population of students, it is absolutely essential to teach coping strategies and regulation through the discipline of writing and reflection. We were too intent on using journals to supplement, as opposed to making them a mentally hygienic necessity. This project brought me back to the raw importance of journaling reflection and showed us all empirical proof that it is imperative to reflect.

The second thing that this project did was to teach a couple of my kids another form of advocacy. Using their own written words, they were able to incite positive change within our classroom by using the classroom log. We've eaten in the cafeteria so many more times and enjoyed so many longer earned choice periods and none of that would have happened if it the student didn't feel empowered to ask. The student who achieved all of this change for the class now knows first-hand what can happen when members of a society, using the appropriate avenues, advocate for themselves to create change. The classroom log is now a permanent fixture in my classroom to create an equal forum for all the students in my class to speak and be heard.

Along with the students finding their voices, I will work to ensure that my staff members also have a voice to be heard. I hope that by participating in this project with me they were able to see the value of professional reflection. They are the lifeblood of my classroom and I want to be sure that they always have opportunities to grow professionally, organize thoughts and fears about our workplace, and sort out the emotions that go along with this environment of students. I have already seen so many people burnt out from the turmoil, pain, and sadness of the ED population that I must try to inspire in

others proactive measures to preserve not only inner peace, but the very sanity of myself and my colleagues.

In the future, I will jump right into these lessons during the first week of school. Reflective journals and classroom logs will be used weekly throughout the school year as powerful agents of emotional regulation and personal reflection and processing. I will work to create a compendium of reflective journal prompts to encourage my staff, students and self to monitor and improve both professional practices and meaningful inner connections.

Appendix A

Table: Weekly totals for logged support calls (crisis situations) and instances of physical aggression

	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4
Support Calls	27	26	22	14
Tracked Physical Aggression	5	6	2	1

Appendix B:

Reflective Questions for Each Branch of a Teacher's Emotional Intelligence

Branch 1: Perception, Appraisal, and Expression of Emotion

- Am I good at identifying how I am feeling?
- Am I good at identifying how my students are feeling?
- Would most people I know consider me to be perceptive regarding my emotional state and theirs?
- Am I able to notice when my students are angry, sad, bored, etc.?
- When can I begin to increase my perception of emotions?

Branch 2: Emotional Facilitation of Thinking

- Am I good at identifying emotional swings in myself and others?
- Am I able to counsel myself in making important decisions if I am in a negative state?
- Do I try to do creative and interesting projects when I am in a highly positive and motivated state?
- Can I also identify optimal times for my students to work on certain projects?

Branch 3: Understanding and Analyzing Emotions

- Am I good at finding the right word(s) to use to express my feelings?
- Can I help my students to use words to express themselves during both positive and negative times?
- Am I good at understanding what causes children to feel and behave in a certain way?
- Am I good at reminding myself about the different developmental stages and that sometimes students act in a more mature or immature manner and to see the whole child in perspective and not just an isolated event?

Branch 4: Reflective Regulation of Emotions

- What does regulation mean to me and why is it important in life?
- Am I good when I am caught off-guard” and good at responding to an unexpected event?
- Am I able to self-regulate my behavior even under very difficult circumstances?
- How do I model good self-regulation for my students/ peers?”

Appendix C

Introspective Journal Prompts for Teachers

- Where did I fail as a teacher in the past? Where did I succeed?
- What is my top teaching goal for the coming year?
- What can I do to make my teaching more fun while adding to my students' learning and enjoyment?
- What can I do to be more proactive in my professional development?
- What resentments do I need to resolve in order to move forward optimistically and with a fresh mind?
- What types of students do I tend to ignore or do I need to spend more time serving?
- Which lessons or units am I only continuing to perform out of habit or laziness?

- Am I being a cooperative member of my grade level team?
- Are there any aspects of the profession that I am ignoring out of fear of change or lack of knowledge, such as technology, youth culture, relevant issues and current trends?
- How can I increase valuable parental involvement?
- Have I done enough to foster a productive relationship with my administrator?
- Do I still enjoy teaching? If not, what can I do to increase my enjoyment in my chosen profession?
- Do I bring additional stress upon myself? If so, how can I decrease or eliminate it.
- How have my beliefs about learning and my own pedagogy changed over the years?
- What minor and/or major changes can I make to my academic program in order to directly increase my students' learning?

Appendix D

Journal Topics for Self Understanding

- I really miss...
- I never expected...
- An unusual day in my life...
- For my birthday I'd like...
- The worst gift I ever got...
- I daydream most about...
- I really wish....
- Something few people realize about me...
- I wish I weren't so...
- One of my best points is...
- One of my most important goals is...

-I dream that one day...

-What makes me feel proud is...

-I'm glad I'm alive when...

-Some little things I often forget to enjoy...

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