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Building Teachers' Emotional Competence: A Transactional Training Model

Caroline Fulton

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Psychology

Department of Graduate Psychology

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## **ABSTRACT**

Classrooms are complex entities, where the emotions of students and teachers interact to influence learning, relationships, and students' social emotional development. Teachers' understanding of emotional processes within the classroom is critical to effective teaching, promotion of healthy child development, and attaining desired learning outcomes. Further, emotions have powerful consequences for teachers themselves. They affect teachers' well-being, self-efficacy, and ultimately whether teachers remain in the profession or not. Therefore, teachers need skills to recognize and respond to emotional experiences in the classroom.

In the present research project a set of emotional competences relevant to educational practices were developed. These competencies include awareness of one's own experience, capacity for effective self-regulation, knowledge of emotional transmission, and maintenance of emotional well-being. In addition, there are competencies related to understanding emotions in systemic and relational contexts, utilizing emotions to promote learning, recognizing and responding to emotions in students, and building students' emotional competence.

This research project further offers a conceptual model of training of emotional competencies to preservice teachers by employing a transactional, process-based approach. The transactional aspect of the model emphasizes that emotions emerge as a result of interpersonal transactions in the classroom informed by teachers' and students' personal histories and experiences. The process-oriented aspect emphasizes that teachers must develop an understanding of how and why emotions emerge through an increased awareness of self, emotional experiences and expression in self and others, as well as the individual goals that pervade the classroom. The training model provides a rationale for

each emotional competency, an illustrative example that describes the competency in practice, and means for instilling the competency in pre-service teachers.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

Emotions abound in the classroom. They originate within a context of teacher and students' individual histories, goals, coping, self-efficacy, and appraisals (Lazarus 2001, 2006; Frijida, 1996; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002a; Frenzel, 2009). Emotional experiences have important influences on relationships, motivation, and learning processes (Izard, 1977; Lazarus 2001, 2006; Pekrun & Stevens 2012; Pekrun et al., 2002a; Linnenbrick, 2007; Immordino-Yang, & Gotlieb, 2017).

Contrary to some beliefs, no emotion is solely “good” or “bad.” Instead, all emotions are functional. There is a complex relationship between emotions of all valences and cognitions, behaviors, affect, phenomenological experience and action. Emotions exert their influence through effects on attention, reasoning, planning, problem-solving, and interpersonal interactions (Cole, Martin, & Dennis, 2004). They reflect “the attempt by the person to establish, maintain, change, or terminate the relation between the person and the environment on matters of significance to the person” (Campos, Mumme, Kermoian, & Campos, 1994, p. 285).

Emotions in the classroom are elicited by both proximal and distal variables. Distal variables include temperament, self-efficacy, culture, identity, and beliefs. Proximal variables, such as time of day, recent experiences, and current class content also shape emotional experience. Adding to their complexity, emotions unfold within a social context. The multi-dimensional nature of emotional experience makes effective emotional responding a difficult enterprise. Multiple elements, including “the goodness of fit among the valence of the emotional expression (i.e., positive and negative), the characteristics of the child involved in the interaction (e.g., age and gender), and the nature of the social interaction (e.g., public, private, home, and school)” influence

emotional interactions and emotional climate in the classroom (Zeman, Cassano, Perry-Parrish, & Stegall, 2006, p. 160).

Emotions are inherently relational and transactional (Lazarus, 2001). They emerge from individual meaning making about the relevance of a situation, relational history, and performance in relation to self, goals, values, and beliefs (Lazarus, 2001). The classroom represents a unique intersection of these variables, in which the complexity of individual goals, personal histories, and the systemic context of the classroom contribute to a wide variety of emotional instigators and experiences. As a result, emotions have bidirectional influences on both children and adults. For example, there are reciprocal connections in teacher and student enjoyment, in which enjoyment for one is mediated by the observations of the others' behavior (Frenzel, Becker-Kurz, Pekrun, Goetz, & Lüdtke, 2018). In the classroom, emotional transactions take place within the context of varied roles and situations, and through the lens of perceptions, appraisal, attributions, and action tendencies.

Emotions are also interwoven through teaching and learning processes. They are elicited from lesson content, perceptions of success and failure, and the interpersonal interactions that occur throughout (Immordino-Yang, & Gotlieb, 2017; Buckley, Hasen, & Ainley, 2004; Mainhard, Oudman, Hornstra, Bosker, & Goetz, 2018). When students and teachers experience negative emotions, working memory and attention function less efficiently (Eisenberg et al., 2000; Flook, Repetti, & Ullman, 2005; Fried, 2011; Linnenbrick & Pintrich, 2000) and academic achievement is diminished (Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, & Castro, 2007). In contrast, positive emotions enhance learning and support teacher well-being. They also promote attention, enhance motivation, and increase problem-solving and creative efforts (Fredrickson, 2001; Fried 2011;



Linnenbrick, 2007; Pekrun et al., 2002b; Pekrun & Stephens, 2012). While pedagogical knowledge has historically been considered the crux of good teaching (Hargreaves & Tucker, 1991), teachers must be able to understand and manage emotional experiences to effectively promote learning in the classroom.

The classroom is an important context for students to develop emotional competencies as its emotional and relational nature provides opportunities for children to practice and develop adaptive ways to express and regulate their emotional experiences. A review of the current literature reveals consensus that efforts to promote social-emotional learning in youth are valuable, and that development of these skills contribute to a variety of positive outcomes. Students who are provided social-emotional learning intervention at school display higher levels of pro-social behavior, perform better academically, have more positive attitudes, and higher levels of overall well-being. (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg 2017). The effects of social-emotional skill development are observed across diverse populations and for students of varied backgrounds (Greenberg et al., 2003; Taylor et al., 2017).

Further, the available literature suggests that these gains translate to long-term improvement in graduation rates and social relationships (Taylor et al., 2017). This data is consistent with an earlier meta-analysis of over 250,000 students in more than 200 schools, which found that students who participated in social-emotional learning interventions displayed stronger social and emotional skills, academic achievement, and behavior than those who did not receive intervention (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Further, emotional regulation skills are negatively correlated with later risk of psychopathology, adding to the importance of school-based intervention to support emotion regulation competencies (Hargreaves, 1998; McLaughlin

Hatzenbuehler, Mennin, & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2011).

Teachers play an essential role in implementing formal and informal social-emotional learning interventions; therefore, they must be equipped with skills to deliver those programs. Emotional competencies can be instilled through explicit teacher intervention, including modeling and direct instruction. They can also be taught to children implicitly, as children observe the behavior of others and experience how others respond to their emotions. In order to promote emotional competencies in their students, teachers must have mastery of emotional concepts, including being able to accurately identify and understand the emotions of their students. (Hargreaves, 2000).

The teacher's ability to recognize, regulate, and respond to emotional experiences has powerful consequences for students' social-emotional development, learning in the classroom, and the teacher's own well-being. To respond effectively, teachers must have sufficient emotional competencies. Unfortunately, teacher preparation programs devote very little, if any, time to developing these competencies (Schonert-Reichl, Hanson-Peterson, & Hymel, 2015; State, Kern, Starosta & Mukherjee, 2011; Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education, 2006), leaving young teachers prone to feelings of exhaustion and burn-out.

Effective strategies for managing emotions, particularly intense ones, are critical to teachers' well-being and healthy relational experiences (Lee et al., 2016; Keller, Chang, Becker, Goetz, & Frenzel, 2014a; Day & Qing, 2009). Teachers who lack the capacity to effectively regulate their experiences and respond to students' emotional needs, are limited in their ability to support students' regulation, and are at increased risk for burn-out. Unfortunately, there is a paucity of information about the qualities and competencies teachers must develop in order to achieve emotionally healthy classrooms,

to enhance student social-emotional development, and to maintain their own emotional well-being, avoiding burnout. At present, teacher training focuses most extensively on pedagogy, diversity and individual learning differences, and curricula (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015; State et al., 2011). As a possible result, one of the most common early teacher reflections is that they feel insufficiently prepared in the area of classroom management, a skill heavily rooted in emotional competencies.

Teacher's emotional competence also directly links to experiences of burnout and emotional exhaustion. Teacher burnout has received significant attention in the literature, and understanding the complex interaction between teachers' emotional experiences in the classroom, emotional exhaustion, and emotional labor are critical to retaining teachers. Further, young teachers are at highest risk for burnout, and increased understanding of emotions may reduce experience of burnout and emotional exhaustion (Chang, 2009). This appears to be a critical goal given the alarming rates of teacher migration and attrition, particularly during the early years of teaching.

While teaching is clearly situated in a complex matrix of individual, community, and political influence, the exploration of the effects of these factors on teacher emotional practices, emotional functioning, and relational engagement are rather limited. Further, there have been few attempts to discern what changes are necessary to enhance teacher preparation in order for teachers to thrive in such an emotional context (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015). Enhancing teacher knowledge of managing emotions in the classroom seems critical for effectively preparing aspiring teachers undertake what Hargreaves (2000) described as an inherently emotional practice. This description seems apt, as teachers are nearly constantly immersed in a context of student emotions and needs as well as their own emotional responding to events and interactions occurring through the day.

Emotional expression and attributions are also relevant for how teacher identity develops (Shutz & Zembleyas, 2009), informing sense of efficacy, goals, and satisfaction in teaching practice. Understanding the formation and expression of teacher identity, beliefs, and experiences as they relate to emotions is essential to the development of teacher interventions and the creation of emotionally supportive classroom practices. Currently, teacher preparation programs do not address these areas, nor do they provide sufficient training in children's emotional experiences (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015; State et al., 2011; Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education, 2006). As a result, teachers often enter the field feeling unprepared for the emotional experience that ensues (Meyer, 2009), and ill-equipped to support the emotional needs of their students (Brophy, 1988). A review of eighteen teacher preparation programs revealed that discussion of social emotional development was consistently less than two hours, with an average of seven minutes devoted to the topic (State et al., 2011). As a result of this gap, several interventions have been developed to support practicing teachers' ability to develop positive relationships and development of healthy emotional classrooms (Hamre et al., 2012; Cappella et al., 2012). Unfortunately these efforts may be "too little, too late," as an alarming number of teachers leave the field before reaching their fifth year of practice (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010). Further, available interventions for practicing teachers are limited in scope and difficult to implement due to teachers' heavy workloads.

Developing emotional competence as a pre-service teacher is particularly important in the context of the educational reform in the United States and many western nations over the last twenty years. These changes have emphasized the elements of teaching and learning that can be readily measured and standardized, and moved away from the more emotional elements of pedagogy. Oplatka (2009) argues that the

conceptualization of the education process as a business-like enterprise in which students are tantamount to clients and teachers are service providers removes the emotional elements of pedagogy, and emphasizes the rational ones. This data-driven philosophy problematically overlooks the complexities, ambiguity, and emotionality that pervade everyday classroom functioning.

While teacher preparation programs often overlook emotional competence for teachers, public schools are increasingly implementing social-emotional learning curricula. These programs are focused on student competencies, with inadequate attention to the teacher competencies needed to promote these skills (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Concerningly, such interventions may even be implemented by someone other than the classroom teacher, leading to a startling disconnect and lost opportunity for integration and modeling of skills across the school day.

The present research intends to fill in a gap in the teacher preparation regarding their emotional competences. First, it delineate a set of emotional competences relevant to educational practice. Second, based on integration of research from clinical, educational, school psychology, and teacher education, it offers a conceptual model of training of emotional competencies to preservice teachers. This model is based on a transactional, process-based approach. A transactional aspect of the model emphasizes that emotions emerge as a result of interpersonal transactions in the classroom informed by teachers' and students' personal histories and experiences. Therefore, instilling emotional competence is much more than telling teachers "what to do" or even "how to" do it. They must develop an understanding of how and why emotions emerge through an increased awareness of self, emotional experiences and expression in self and others, as well as the individual goals that pervade the classroom. Teachers who are able to

understand and use their emotions in their relationships with children, as well as in their teaching, are primed to promote learning and healthy social-emotional development in their students. In order to attain such competence, aspiring teachers must be provided a space to openly offer their own thoughts and feelings, as well as frustrations and disappointments, in the same way it is hoped that these teachers will later be able to create a similar environment for their own students.

Through mastery of these competencies, teachers will develop increased awareness of emotions in themselves and others, internalize strategies for managing and displaying emotions, and build their sense of self-efficacy as an emotionally competent educator. Ultimately acquisition of the skills and knowledge delineated here intends to inform effective responding to the everyday emotional situations that take place in the classroom, and to promote social-emotional learning and emotional competence in the classroom. The training model is further based on positioning the teacher as an agent for promoting social-emotional competence in the classroom.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

### **Emotions and Their Regulation**

Emotions are both complex and highly relevant across many domains of everyday life. They are intertwined with relationships, motivation, personality, learning, and behavior. Emotions are understood as relatively brief feelings states that include a phenomenological experience, cognitive and physiological processes, and expression (Izard, 1977). They can be expressed through verbalizations, physiological arousal, and behavioral manifestations, such as body language and facial expression (Adelmann & Zajonc, 1989). They arise in relation to a stimulus or object, which creates an emotional response through its significance to a person's identity, goals, coping, and values (Frijida, 1996; Lazarus, 2001). Campos and colleagues (1994) argue that only events that are significant to a person elicit emotions. Emotions provide cues about what is important and valued, and performance in relation to one's goals (Solomon, 2004).

How a situation is perceived, physiological responses, and body language (e.g. facial expression), all contribute to how emotions are experienced (Pekrun, Frenzel, Goetz, & Perry, 2007). Resulting emotions also contribute to perceptions of the environment, thoughts, and behavior. The perceptions, thoughts, and behaviors elicited by emotional stimuli can become patterned over time, contributing to development of personality traits and behavioral action tendencies (Izard & Ackerman, 2000). Emotions are understood as both motivational (Izard, 1977) and relevant for learning (Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002a, Pekrun, 1992).

Emotions are relational and contextual. They arise in relation to the perceived impact of an experience on self and relationships. The valence of an emotion is determined by subjective feeling, social consequences, and relationship to goals (Lazarus,

2001). In his “person-centered” conceptualization of emotions, Lazarus (2006) described emotions as fluid and evolving rather than static and discrete. Once an emotion is experienced, it can shift in intensity, duration, and type (Campos, Frankel & Camras, 2004). Emotions can then be understood as a flowing back and forth between two people in an interpersonal exchange. Within these transactions, emotions are experienced and expressed in ways that are unique to each individual. This makes knowledge of the other, their personality, and historical events within the relationship important to understanding and responding in emotional transactions (Lazarus, 2001). Lazarus used a figure-ground analogy to convey this concept, in which the initiating event is the figure, while the relational history and personality characteristics comprise the background, and the two parts cannot be meaningfully separated from one another (Lazarus, 2006). Similarly, Campos and colleagues (1994) use an analogy of warp and woof combining to make fabric to describe how emotions are contextualized by broad elements of the person’s history, goals, self-efficacy, and environment. They explain, “...each has a separate existence, but, when interrelated, both lose their separate identity” (Campos, et al., 1994, p. 285).

Appraisals form a significant link between emotional experience and these contextual, relational elements. That is, an emotional experience emerges in the context of what an individual wants (goals) and an assessment of how the event relates to one’s goals (appraisal) (Lazarus, 2001). In a potentially emotional situation, a person makes a primary appraisal of whether the situation is meaningful in relation to one’s values, goals, beliefs, and situational plans. This evaluation informs whether attention should be given to the situation and influences physiological responding. If relevant, there is a secondary appraisal of how to respond and cope with the emotional experience. Situations that



foster progress towards a goal are likely to elicit positive emotions. In contrast, those that inhibit goal progress are likely to elicit negative emotions (Lazarus, 2001).

Once deemed relevant, additional layers of appraisal taken place in attempts to cope. Lazarus (2001) outlines three essential judgments. First, an assessment of *blame or credit* is made about what or who caused the action, with consideration of whether it was in their control and what their intention was. The second appraisal, *coping potential*, is linked to whether or not the person feels they are able to manage the perceived harm. Finally, an assessment of *future expectations*, is made. This represents a judgment of whether the relationship between the person and environment will be improved or harmed. These secondary appraisals are situated in relational meaning and may intensify or reduce emotional experience.

Emotion regulation is the means by which a person controls his or her experience and expression of emotion, by altering, reappraising, or redirecting emotional states (Gross, 2002; Sutton, 2004; Schutz, Hong, Cross, & Osbon, 2006). Emotional regulation is believed to be comprised of emotional awareness, emotional acceptance, and ability to utilize strategies to regulate emotions (Robertson, Daffern & Bucks, 2012). Emotions can be regulated through varied strategies and at different stages of an emotional experience (Gross, 1998). A person can regulate their emotions by selecting what experiences they approach or avoid based on what is anticipated to occur (*situation selection*). Emotions can also be modulated by making attempts to modify the situation in order to change the emotional impact (*situation modification*). Emotion regulation can also occur through *attentional deployment*, such as focusing on the less emotional elements of the situation or thinking about something other than the current situation. *Cognitive change* allows individuals to change their emotional experience by changing their appraisals of a

situation or comparing the situation to one of someone less fortunate. Finally, an individual can make attempts to control their physiological reaction in order to modulate their emotional experience (*response modulation*). While both positive and negative emotional experiences can be regulated, intense negative emotions are regulated most frequently (Barrett, Gross, Christensen, & Benvenuto, 2001).

### **Emotions in the Classroom**

Classrooms are highly emotional environments. Both students and teachers are continually interacting with others, responding to performance demands, and seeking to attain individual goals, all of which elicit emotional responses. Emotions also influence motivation, engagement, and learning. They contribute to how the classroom operates, short-and long-term academic achievement, and social-emotional development.

A wide range of emotions can be observed in the classroom. Pekrun & Stephens (2012) proposed classification of academic emotions by *valence* and *level of activation*. Valence identifies emotions as *positive* or *negative*. Enjoyment, pride, and relief are examples of positive emotions, while anger, shame, and boredom are examples of negative emotions. Activation refers to the impact that a particular emotion has on arousal. In this way, emotions can be grouped as *activating* and *deactivating*. For instance, while anger and sadness are both considered negatively valenced emotions, anger is an activating emotion while sadness is a deactivating emotion.

Pekrun and Stephens (2012) also outline five groups of academic emotions: Achievement emotions, epistemic emotions, topical emotions, and social emotions. *Achievement emotions* are elicited by achievement-related tasks (e.g. test preparation) as well as tasks that influence achievement outcomes (passing/failing). *Epistemic* emotions are associated with creation of new knowledge. For instance, a student who learns that

Monarch butterflies migrate thousands of miles might experience surprise, while a student who learns about early colonists spreading diseases to native populations might experience sadness or anger. Emotion objects can also be *topical* and connected to specific content within learning material. For instance, a student might experience emotions in response to the content of a novel or a particular lesson. Finally, emotions have *social* objects and arise from social situations, as "...students do not exist in a social vacuum, rather, the goals, contents, and outcomes of learning are socially constructed" (Pekrun and Stephens, 2012, p. 5). Empathy, envy, contempt, and admiration are emotional responses commonly elicited from social situations .

In addition to this classification of emotions, emotions can also be considered from a process-based or temporal lens (Pekrun et al., 2002a). There are emotions related to the *process* of completing tasks, such as experiencing boredom while reading a story that one is not interested in. Emotions also arise *prospectively*, in anticipation of a task, performance, or interaction (Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012). For instance, a student who struggles with math may feel anticipatory anxiety as the class math period approaches. Emotions also arise through *retrospective* consideration of past performance, task completion, or interaction. Students may reflect on these incidents positively, as with pride, or negatively, as with shame (Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012). For instance, a student may feel pride when remembering that he scored highest in the class on a recent science test or feel shame when recalling how he provided the wrong answer during a lesson.

Anxiety is perhaps the best understood academic emotion, though the focus has been somewhat limited to performance and test anxiety in students. Previous research suggests that anxiety accounts for 15-27% of emotional experiences in academic contexts

(Pekrun, 1992, Spangler, Pekrun, Kramer, & Hoffman, 2002). Anxiety is experienced when the available information is not easily interpretable or there is a perception of threat or harm (Lazarus, 1991). Anxiety is also associated with a lack of confidence in one's abilities (Frenzel, Goetz, Stephens, & Jacob, 2009b). Distal influencing factors of anxiety include temperament and learned history. Feelings of anxiety prompt a drive to avoid the situation or to escape it entirely (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999).

Empirical studies have linked anxiety to varied outcomes, and suggested that the association between anxiety, performance, and achievement is complicated. Anxiety impacts working memory resources through the interference created by task-irrelevant thinking (Pekrun & Stephens, 2012). It is also relatively well-established that the level of difficulty of a given task is correlated to the impact of experienced anxiety. More specifically, experiencing anxiety when completing a difficult task is linked with diminished performance, while anxiety has less impact on easy to moderately challenging tasks. In the latter case, anxiety might even improve performance (Hembree, 1988; Zeidner, 1998, 2007). It is less clear how experiences of anxiety affect future behavior, task performance, and emotional experiences (Pekrun & Stephens, 2012). Chronic anxiety in the school setting is, however, associated with problems such as school absenteeism when students avoid school to avoid anxiety provoking experiences (Kearney & Albano, 2004).

Shame is a powerful and negatively valenced emotion, associated with critical self-evaluation, humiliation, distress, and sense of the self as a failure (Lewis, 2008; Pekrun et al, 2002a). Relational contexts and performance situations can evoke shame in both students and teachers. In the classroom, shame is elicited by negative feedback, making errors, and an appraisal of oneself as deficient. Shame is felt more intensely when

students make a mistake when they were confident they were correct, as compared with when they were unsure (Vogl, Pekrun, Murayama, & Loderer, 2019). Shame can have varied impacts on performance and behavior, particularly motivation (Vogl et al., 2019; Pekrun et al., 2002a; Turner & Schallert, 2001). Some evidence suggests that it is negatively associated with effort (Pekrun et al., 2002a).

Anger is experienced when there is a real or perceived block to reaching a goal (Kuppens, Van Mechelen, Smits & De Boeck, 2003), an appraised injustice, (Bonanno & Keltner, 2004), and/or when there is an element of blame, either to the self or another (Lazarus, 1991). Those experiencing intense anger may struggle to concentrate and feel distracted, as anger contributes to intrusive thoughts (Sutton, 2007). Anger also fuels a desire to act, either to attack or retaliate (Lazarus, 1991) or to get past the obstacle blocking the goal (Saarni, Campos, Camras, & Witherington, 2006). The associated feelings, actions, and behaviors elicited by anger mobilize resources and energy to overcome to impediment (Campos, Campos, & Barrett, 1989).

Sadness is a deactivating, negative emotion which emerges when there is a perception of permanent loss (Beck & Alford, 2009) or that one is no longer positively viewed by another (Lazarus, 1991). Sadness can also be existential in nature, when there is a loss of meaning. The experience of sadness is one of decreased physiological arousal, a sense of helplessness and powerlessness (Lazarus, 1991), and may also incite dysphoria or rumination (Bonanno, Goorin, & Coifman, 2008). As a result, the experience of sadness prompts reflection inward, lack of action or shut down (Lazarus, 1991), and goal revision (Oatley & Johnson-Laird, 1996). Sadness may affect perception, particularly social judgments (Ambady & Gray, 2002) as well as working memory functioning (Gray, 2001). Chronically experiencing sadness in the classroom may contribute to lower energy

levels and less engagement. Sadness may also be distracting, as attention is directed to the emotion-eliciting event and away from classroom activities (Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, & Swanson, 2010; Roeser, Strobel & Quihuis, 2002). Sadness is significantly linked to maladaptive beliefs for learning, such as the idea of intelligence as a fixed construct, poor sense of tasks as valuable, as well a tendency to use avoidance and limit academic risk-taking in order to protect the ego (Roeser et al., 2002). Further, is negatively associated with sense of academic efficacy (Roeser et al., 2002).

Negatively valenced emotions have substantial impacts on students' learning. They are correlated with lower academic achievement (Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, & Castro, 2007) and decreased capacity for working memory and attention (Eisenberg et al., 2000; Flook et al., 2005; Fried, 2011; Linnenbrick & Pintrich, 2000). They also have negative social consequences and are linked with impairments in relationships with teachers and classmates (Fabes & Eisenberg, 1992). At the same time, anxiety, anger, and shame all have some potential to foster motivation as a means to avoid future experience of unpleasant emotion (Pekrun & Stephens, 2012), though this is a complicated, nonlinear relationship. Experiences of negative emotions also vary across gender, as girls are more likely to experience negative emotions than boys (Pekrun et al., 2007)

The available research on emotions in the classroom focuses on negatively valenced emotions more than on positively valenced emotions. Positive emotions in the classroom include emotions like joy, satisfaction, enthusiasm, hope, relief, and gratitude. Joy and happiness are elicited by perception of progress towards a goal or a sense of mastery (Fredrickson & Cohn, 2008). They are experienced as a feeling of pleasure and security (Lazarus, 1991) and bring openness to experience. The experience of happiness promotes physiological arousal which mobilizes individual for play, exploration, and

learning (Fredrickson & Cohn, 2008). Positive emotions happen rather frequently in the classroom, accounting for approximately 40% of student's emotional experiences (Pekrun et al., 2002a). Personality traits influence the likelihood of experiencing positive emotions, and those with an extraverted demeanor are more likely to experience positive emotions (Shiota, Keltner, & John, 2006). Those who can carefully differentiate between different emotional experiences also are more likely to experience joy and happiness (Tugade, Fredrickson, & Barrett, 2004).

Happiness is also linked with pride, in the sense the pride occurs when one plays a role in his or her own resulting happiness. Pride is hypothesized to support attention, foster interest and motivation, and to elicit self-regulation in learning contexts (Pekrun & Stephens, 2012). Pride, in conjunction with other positive activating emotions, such as enjoyment and hope, is associated with effort, self-regulation, academic agency, and positive academic outcomes (Pekrun et al., 2002a, 2002b).

Positive emotions have important influences within the classroom. The broaden-and-build theory posits that positive emotions broaden the range of thoughts and behaviors, thus preparing individuals to meet challenges and enhancing resiliency (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001). They also foster enjoyment, which, in turn, increases attention, motivation, and creativity (Fredrickson, 2001; Fried 2011; Linnenbrick, 2007; Pekrun et al., 2002a; Pekrun & Stephens, 2012). Further, positive emotions facilitate engagement and are associated with positive coping (Reschly, Huebner, Appleton & Antarmian, 2008). Joy and happiness lead to approach behavior (Cacioppo, Priester, & Berntson, 1993; Frijda & Mesquita, 1994) and motivation to continue the action (Carver & Scheier, 1990). Adaptive outcomes related to positive emotions likely arise through effects of positive emotions on self-regulation and appraisals of the task and its value

(Villavicencio & Bernardo, 2013). Positive emotions also provide a buffer for negative emotions and enhance overall psychological well-being (Fredrickson, 2001).

Teacher and student emotional experiences do not occur independently from one another; instead they are intertwined through the reciprocal interactions happening throughout the day. Schulz, Rogers, and Simcic (2010) used an Ecological Dynamic Systems perspective to capture the complex emotional transactions that occur between teachers and students in the classroom. They argue that emotional episodes are dynamic encounters which occur within social historical contexts. From this perspective, emotional episodes are “socially constructed, personally enacted ways of being that emerge from conscious and/or unconscious judgments regarding perceived successes at attaining goals or maintaining standards or beliefs during transactions as part of social historic contexts” (p. 47). In this way, individually held teacher and student goals are referenced against the salience of an emotional episode. The comparison of the goal and the meaning of the event offers information about whether the individual is moving towards or away from a goal. This congruence or discrepancy from a desired state or achievement informs resulting emotional experiences.

Student and teacher emotional experiences also intersect through teacher management of emotional incidents in the classroom. Williams-Johnson et al. (2008) characterized teacher responses to student emotions in three ways. The first is a *not right now* approach, in which the student is asked to ignore their emotions in the interest of completing educational activities. In the second approach, *shifting directions*, the teacher identifies an emotionally salient event (e.g. boredom, frustration) and adjusts accordingly. In the third approach, described as *handle with care*, the teacher uses emotional events as



an opportunity to respond to a student's emotional need. This approach reflects recognition that students' academic success is predicated on their ability to manage their emotions. Taking such an approach also suggests teacher confidence and competence in creating an environment in which students can be open about their emotions.

### **Sources of Student Emotions in the Classroom**

As has been discussed, emotions emerge from an amalgamation of factors related to goals, relational factors, appraisals, and coping potential (Lazarus 2001). Applying these factors to the classroom context makes it clear that there is an abundance of potential for emotional experiences across the school day. Students engage in a variety of tasks and interactions, and their emotions may be influenced by academic content, performance demands, relational interactions, and the classroom environment. The emotional experiences that result are rooted in each student's goals, beliefs, history, and coping.

Academic tasks elicit emotional reactions through cues about success and failure, as well as effects on self-perception of abilities and performance (Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012). A performance situation may produce pride or relief in response to a perceived success, or elicit shame, guilt, or hopelessness when the performance is interpreted as a failure (Weiner, 1985). Students' emotional reactions to task are also influenced by the perceived difficulty of the task. Feelings of enjoyment, curiosity, or boredom may arise relative to the level of challenge of the task (Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012).

Students also have emotional experiences in response to the topic of their academic content (Immordino-Yang, & Gotlieb, 2017; Pekrun & Stephens 2012). Topical content has been associated with a range of positive and negative emotional

experiences (Buckley, Hasen, & Ainley, 2004). For instance, students may feel sympathy for a character in a book experiencing adversity, sadness when learning about the Holocaust, shame or anger when learning about the history of slavery, or anxiety in learning about current events. The elicited emotions are also shaped by students' individual history and connections to the content. A student of Jewish heritage might experience more intense sadness than other students while talking about the Holocaust, while an undocumented student may experience more anxiety than students born in the United States while discussing current political events. Resulting emotions from such topics may be mediated by level of interest. When there is interest in the topic, positive, activating feelings (e.g. curiosity) tend to emerge (Ainley, 2007). In contrast, lack of interest in the topic may result in boredom and disengagement from the task .

Student interactions with the teacher are also a source emotions (Mainhard, Oudman, Hornstra, Bosker, & Goetz, 2018). Teachers own emotions of joy, anger, and anxiety influence the emotions of their students, while their instructional behaviors can be a source of anger and enjoyment (Becker, Goetz, Morger, & Ranellucci, 2014). Teachers incite student emotional experiences when they provide feedback and engage in ways that enhance autonomy and support (Pekrun & Perry, 2014). When teachers display cooperative behaviors, such as helpfulness and understanding, students have more experiences of positive affect, such as pleasure and confidence (den Brok, Levy, Brekelmans, & Wubbels, 2005). Similarly, student enjoyment is higher and anxiety is lower when teachers exude warmth and have positive interpersonal relationships with students (Mainhard et al., 2018). Further, teachers' ability to accurately assess student performance and skills is associated with increased enjoyment and less anxiety and boredom. This is seemingly due to students feeling more in control and valuing the

lessons more when teachers adjust content to match student comprehension (Westphal, Kretschmann, Gronostaj, & Vock 2018). Students also report more enjoyment and pride, as well as less boredom when teachers to use a supportive presentation style (e.g. illustration, and fostering attention) and are enthusiastic, regardless of the perceived level of difficulty of the task (Goetz, Lüdtke, Nett, Keller, & Lipnevich, 2013; Frenzel, Goetz, Lüdtke, Pekrun, & Sutton, 2009a). Positive emotions are also elicited when teachers are experienced as giving clear instruction (Kunter, Baumert, & Köller, 2007) and when they praise and reinforce academic achievements (Goetz, Pekrun, Hall, & Haag, 2006). Teachers can also be a source of negative emotions. Students experience negative emotions when a teacher is experienced as unfriendly or anxious (Becker, Goetz, Morger, & Ranellucci, 2014; Hembree, 1988), and when a teacher is perceived as exerting excessive academic pressure (Goetz et al., 2006).

Interactions with peers are another source of emotional experiences for students. These interactions are relevant to students' inherent needs to feel connected to others, to be able to express their authentic self, and to feel effective in social interactions (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Deci & Ryan, 1985). Students are likely to feel positive emotions, such as happiness, trust, love, and calm, when they engage in positive and inviting interactions with peers, and when they feel autonomy in peer relationships. Peer relationships can also be a source of negative emotions, such as anger, shame, confusion, and sadness, when a student is excluded, rejected, teased, overpowered, or coerced by others (Furrer, Skinner, & Pitzer, 2014). Further, peer interactions may provide feedback on an individual's academic and social performance through self-comparison (Bandura, 1994). Students in a classroom receive feedback from one another about their performance, both directly and through observation. Common examples would include

one student receiving a high academic mark while the other fails at the task or a student being assigned to a lower level reading group.

Finally, the physical classroom environment also affects student emotional experience. This would include how it is organized and managed, the degree of stimulation and amount of activity in the room. A predictable and well-organized classroom may offer a foundational sense of safety, while an unpredictable and poorly organized classroom environment creates anxiety and dysregulation (Day, Connor, & McClelland, 2015).

### **Emotions and Learning**

Emotions are central to learning. They are the “rudder that steers learners’ thinking, in effect helping them to call up information and memories that are relevant to the topic or problem at hand” (Immordino-Yang & Fischer 2010, p. 313). The relationship between emotions and learning is multi-faceted and complex, as they interact across content, attentional process, relationships, motivation, and goals (Frenzel & Stephens, 2013; Pekrun et al., 2002a; Gross & Thompson, 2007). Both positive and negative emotions influence students’ engagement, self-regulation, and attentional resources. It is difficult to describe the effects of emotions based strictly on the domains of positive and negative, however, as student emotional experiences are multi-dimensional and complex. For instance, a pleasant, but deactivating emotion may decrease engagement, while a mild negative, activating emotion may enhance motivation for improved performance (Valiente, Swanson, & Eisenberg, 2012).

Positive emotions are important for learning behaviors and academic performance. They are associated with student engagement, exploratory behavior and integration of new problem-solving methods (Fredrickson 1998, 2001). Students who

experience pride, hope, and joy, tend to have higher levels of academic achievement, put forth greater effort, and have better developed academic self-efficacy (Pekrun, Goetz, Perry, Kramer, Hochstadt, & Molfenter, 2004). Positive emotions have also been associated with use of more adaptive learning strategies (Lin, Peng, Cherng, & Chen, 2014; Xiong, 2009) and higher-level thinking skills (Harvey & Chickie-Wolfe, 2007).

Negative emotions can disrupt cognitive processes necessary for effective learning. When negative emotions arise, attention may shift to the negative emotional experience, reducing cognitive resources and attention available for learning (Valiente et al., 2012; Pekrun & Stephens, 2012). Indeed, negative emotions are correlated with increased inattentive and hyperactive behavior and diminished academic competence (Bulotsky-Shearer & Fantuzzo 2004; Keogh & Burstein, 1988). In addition, students who reported experiencing more frequent negative affect during a variety of academic tasks had lower grades in language arts and math even after controlling for intelligence (Gumora & Arsenio, 2002). Similarly, students with higher levels of anger have lower academic performance (Zhou, Main, & Wang, 2010). Negative emotions such as anger, sadness, and anxiety may also negatively impact learning through their impact on learning motivation and engagement in academic tasks, as well as use of avoidance to minimize negative experiences (Linnenbrick, 2007). While some evidence indicates that negative activating emotions may in some instances foster task performance (Lane, Whyte, Terry, & Nevill, 2005), empirical results overall for this have been mixed and require further study (Pekrun & Stephens, 2012).

Emotions are relevant for content-based learning. As students learn new material, they appraise the material, experience an emotional response, and assign meaning to the experience (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007). Immordino-Yang and Damasio (2007)

captured this process through the term *emotional thought*, proposing that tasks most essential for learning, such as attention and memory, occur through the intersection of emotion and cognition. This intersection of appraisal and emotion in learning was exemplified in a study completed by Frenzel, Pekrun, and Goetz (2007). The authors found that despite similar math achievement across genders, boys reported more pride and enjoyment than girls, while girls reported more anxiety, hopelessness, and shame than boys. The emotional experiences were linked with beliefs about their competence in math as well as the value placed on math achievement.

Emotions are also intimately associated with motivation. In the classroom, students have two major academic goals: *performance goals*, in which students seek to be judged favorably on their performance and competence, and *learning goals*, in which students seek to increase their knowledge and competence (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Emotions can affect what goals students select and how they act on those goals. For instance, experiencing positive affect may signal that a student is capable of completing a particular task, and increases adoption of the goal. In contrast, a negative emotional experience provides an indication that the student lacks the capability to achieve a task and leads the student to move away from the goal (Linnenbrick, 2007). Specific emotion states also affect effort and engagement. Experiencing pleasant, activating emotions, such as excitement, are associated with increased effort, while negative emotions, including boredom and anxiety, are associated with less effort (Pekrun et al., 2002a). Sadness and anxiety both may contribute to withdrawal behaviors (Beck & Alford, 2009, Bonanno et al., 2008; Weeks, Rodebaugh, Heimberg, Norton, & Jakatdar, 2009). In addition, when there is ongoing sense of disengagement and lack of positive emotional experiences, students may lose motivation and interest in school entirely (Raver, 2004).

Several studies have identified neurological correlates of the connection between emotions and learning. Drevets and Raichle (1998) showed that strong activation of emotion suppresses or reduces blood flow in the cognitive area of the cingulate. At the same time, mild level of positive affect can improve subsequent cognitive processing including creative problem solving, and increased dopamine activity elicited by positive affective states enhances cognitive processing (Ashby, Isen, & Turken, 1999).

Finally, the emotional dimensions of the student-teacher relationship are also integral to engagement and learning (Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White, & Salovey, 2012). Classrooms in which teachers are sensitive to student needs, engage in warm and caring relationships, consider student perspectives, and engage in friendly interpersonal exchanges and fair discipline practices are considered to have a positive emotional climate (Hamre et al., 2013). This type of environment promotes engagement, interest, and enjoyment (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Wentzel, 1997). Further, students in classrooms with positive emotional climates engage in more exploration and engage in more complex play (Howes & Smith, 1995) and display better academic performances (Wentzel, 1998).

### **Emotion Regulation in Students**

Learning how to regulate emotions is an important developmental task. It appears to emerge as children develop effortful, goal-directed skills to modify their reactions (Denham, 2006). Over time, children learn to shift their focus and attention, to inhibit or activate behavior as appropriate, and increasingly integrate information, plan, and modulate emotions and behavior (Eisenberg, Eggum, Sallquist, & Edwards, 2010). Regulating oneself includes cognitive and executive, and emotional elements, in which cognition affects emotions, and emotions affect cognition. Regulation then emerges

through the effective integration of the systems involved in both emotional arousal and cognitive control (Blair & Diamond, 2008). Thus, when a child is faced with an emotionally laden situation, he or she relies on known information, rules, and strategies to deal with that situation. Emotion regulation is also situational specific, with the child trying to meet a goal within a particular setting (playground, home, daycare, etc.) and with specific people (teacher, parent, etc.) (Thompson, 1994).

Children who learn to regulate their emotions effectively show a number of positive long-term outcomes in school and relational functioning. Self-regulation is linked with ability to engage in learning behaviors (Neuenschwander, Röthlisberger, Cimeli, & Roebbers, 2012) as well as academic performance and skills development (e.g. Valiente et al., 2010; Clark, Pritchard, & Woodward, 2010; Howse, Calkins, Anastopoulos, Keane, & Shelton, 2003). The ability to regulate one's emotions is important for effective interpersonal functioning. It is specifically associated with socially appropriate behavior, likeability with peers, adjustment, shyness, sympathy, social competence and positive peer relationships (Eisenberg et al., 2000; Eisenberg, Fabes, Guthrie, & Reiser, 2002; Lengua 2003; Trentacosta & Shaw, 2009; Zhou & Wang, 2010). Having a constructive style of emotion regulation is also negatively associated with internalizing problems (Blair, Denham, Kochanoff, & Whipple, 2004), perhaps because it enhances effective management of negative emotions (Lengua, 2002).

In contrast, ineffective regulation of emotions through over or under-regulation can lead to problematic consequences. For example, poor regulation of uncomfortable emotions, such as anxiety or shame, can contribute to avoidance or withdrawal, leading to missed opportunities for learning and social development (Florez, 2011). When emotions are not adequately regulated, students are increasingly likely to be off-task, and



subsequently lose opportunity for instruction and feedback. Chronically dysregulated children may also show temperamental tendencies towards disengagement (Althoff et al., 2012) that further their lack of academic engagement. In addition, emotion regulation is a necessary component for cooperative learning experiences (Järvenoja & Järvelä, 2009). Inability to regulate one's emotions early on presents a risk for later psychopathology (Cole, Hall, & Najal, 2013). Notably, impaired ability to effectively regulate emotions is a central feature of a number of mental health disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Cicchetti, Ackerman, & Izard, 1995; Gross, 1998; McLaughlin et al., 2011). Within these disorders there are often difficulties with displaying inappropriate or blunted affect, anxiety or fears, mood instability, or a relative imbalance of emotion, with one being experienced more than others (Cole, Michel, & O'Donnell-Teti, 1994).

The literature supports that individual differences in the ability to self-regulate have a strong basis in temperament (Rothbart, Ahadi, & Evans, 2000; Eisenberg et al., 2010). Temperament is comprised of the inherited tendencies in physiological and psychological processes responsible for levels of reactivity and self-regulation across affect, activity, and attention (Kagan, Snidman, Arcus, & Reznick, 1994; Rothbart & Bates, 2006). Temperament helps to explain the varied responses children give to the same stimuli, as well as the differences in the intensity of emotional responding (Rothbart & Jones, 1998).

The interaction between temperament and regulation has been observed empirically at several developmental stages. Infants who were described by their mothers as more anxious, stayed closer to their mother in the presence of a stranger and used gaze aversion longer and more frequently than those babies described as less fearful (Mangelsdorf, Shapiro, & Marzol, 1995). In an exploration of temperament and emotion

regulation in preschool students, Blair and colleagues (2004) found that temperamental variables are associated various styles of regulating, such as emotional venting and constructive approaches to regulation. More specifically, the authors found that children with a sad–fearful temperament tend to use emotional venting and passive coping, while those with an irritable–frustrated temperament more commonly managed emotional experiences through passive coping.

Emotions and their regulation are socialized, as adults and peers provide important influences on how children regulate and express emotions. Children observe others regulating their own emotions (e.g. modeling) and absorb information from the emotion-related discussion and content within their environment. Children are also responded to with behavioral contingencies that shape their later responding (Saarni, 1999). As children interact with various figures in their world, they acquire “emotion-laden beliefs” and “emotional-expressive behaviors.” Saarni highlights the interactional nature of the acquisition, noting, “Thus, even as we may observe emotional development *in the child*, those who interact with the child are communicating their own emotions *to the child*, often elicited by their evaluation of the child’s emotional behavior” (Saarni, 1999, p.57).

Barrett and Campos (1987) detail several pathways by which adults express emotions and influence development of children’s emotional competence. First, adult attention to the emotional salience of events provides cues to their emotional significance. Second, adults model emotional expression through facial expressions, verbalizations, and behaviors, as well as engagement in behaviors associated with emotional coping. Finally, adults influence the overall climate of the environment and contribute to emotional experience. The idea of internalization of emotions and emotional

expression from the behavior of others is supported by neuroscience. When watching others, neural networks in the self which are involved in planning and embodying those actions become active (Gallese, Fadiga, Fogassi, & Rizzolatti, 1996; Umiltà, Kohler, Gallese, 2001).

There are particularly well-established connections between parent behavior and emotional expression and children's development of emotional regulation. Excessive expression of negative emotions by adults is dysregulating for children (Cummings, Davies, Campbell, 2000), while emotion regulation is supported by a warm, responsive, accepting parenting (Fabes, Leonard, Kupanoff & Martin, 2001). Through this type of socialization, children acquire culturally informed theories of emotion which affect how they understand and engage in emotionally laden situations and interactions. These models also provide suggestions for what children should do to manage an emotional experience. For instance, the North American idea of "out of sight, out of mind" suggests that if emotions are avoided, they will go away. The idea that emotions are irrational, may lead older children to try to solve problems strictly using logical, cognitive problem solving (Saarni, 1999).

Attachment theory provides another lens for how social and relational interactions influence emotion regulation, as it posits that children's behavior is grounded in use of strategies that evolve from the caregiving environment and the child's expectations of caregiver responding (Cassidy, 1994; Bowlby, 1980, 1988). Child may adjust their behavior, thoughts, emotions, perception, and attention as a means to maintain a connection to an attachment figure and in line with their historical experiences (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985; Cassidy, 1994; Bowlby, 1980, 1988). Securely attached children have experienced adults as consistently responding to their cues, and anticipate

that their caregiver will respond to future emotional cues. They are able to express emotions flexibly and openly, which promotes affective communication and relational enhancement (Bretherton, 1990), as well as effective emotion-regulation (Thompson, 1994).

In contrast, insecurely attached children have a history of inconsistent parental responding to their emotional signals (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). As a result, they might develop a tendency to suppress or heighten their emotions in an attempt to influence responding. Their ability to flexibly and openly express their emotions tends to be suppressed out of fear that it may lead to negative consequences (Thompson, 1994). Insecure/avoidant children may minimize emotional expression because they have experienced rejections during times of high emotional need; as a result, they attempt to cope by limiting their visible need for the adult (Ainsworth et al., 1978). These children may anticipate that open expression of emotion may threaten the relationship with the caregiver and lead to rejection. They might further suppress even positive emotion, as expression of happiness may invite relational contact and engagement, which they are avoiding (Cassidy, 1994). Several studies have observed this emotional masking, which reveal that the avoidant children are more distressed than their securely attached peers on measures of physiological arousal (e.g. heart rate), while their facial expression and verbalization are more constrained (e.g. Spangler & Grossman, 1993). These children may also manage experiences of caregiver unavailability or neglect by increasing the importance of the caregiver and attempting to gain the caregiver's attention. In this way, expression of negative emotions can be exaggerated or used excessively to maintain contact with the caregiver (Cassidy, 1994).

### **Emotions as an Integral Part of Teacher Professional Identity & Beliefs**

Teachers are unique individuals who bring individual goals, values, histories, and appraisals to the classroom. In order to understand how and why teachers respond in emotion situations, it is important to understand how these elements shape teacher identity and influence responding. Teacher identities result from a complex intersection of personal and professional experience, as well as the intersection of experiences with the broader context of the environment. This includes emotional experiences and emotional rules (O'Connor, 2008; Darby, 2008), which contribute to identity, and are also manifested in the context of identity. Emotional experiences such as decision-making, emotional exchanges, and giving and receiving feedback result in feelings that have powerful influence on identity (Zembylas, 2005). For instance, feelings of guilt and self-blame might inform a teacher's sense of identity and mastery. A sense of pride upon seeing a child's progress contributes to a sense of success and a view of oneself as a competent teacher (Zembylas, 2005).

Identity also includes elements of individual goals and values which shape emotional behavior. Lazarus (2001) argues that personal goals have a substantial impact on what emotions are elicited by a situation as well as the emotional intensity. Goals related to self and identity, such as self-esteem, morals, life goals, are considered particularly important. For instance, experiences of shame, pride, and anger may emerge when one is trying to enhance self-esteem, while guilt is elicited in relationship to issues of morality.

Zembylas (2003) argues that teacher identities are constructed through affective processes, and dependent on power and agency. He cites a Vygotskian perspective that to understand the individual functioning, the relevant social and cultural processes the individual is embedded in must be considered. He later introduces the idea that teachers

build a history of experiences, termed “genealogies of emotions in teaching,” as they attempt various means to manage emotional situations that arise in educational contexts (Zembylas, 2005, p. 938). This contributes to development of rules and patterns of emotional expression, as well as which emotions are expressed and inhibited. This is also consistent with dynamic systems theory and the idea that “emotion functions as the ‘glue’ for identity,” as they provide a context of meaning for experiences (Haviland and Kahlbaugh, 1993, p. 294).

The broad nature of the factors that shape teacher identity result in identities that are complex and multi-faceted (Day & Qing 2009). These identities influence teacher behavior, experience, and pedagogy in the classroom, and are concurrently influenced and shaped by classroom experience, perceptions, attributions, and emotional experiences. Issues of identity are relevant for the way a teacher responds in the classroom and how he or she manages emotions (Schutz, Cross, Hong & Osbon, 2007). Understanding teacher identity is extremely important, as the nature of a teacher’s beliefs and identity is connected to their ability to be empathetic and what they do with their thoughts and emotions (Cross & Hong, 2012). The connection between identity and emotional practices also elucidates teachers’ emotions as possible “sites of resistance and self-transformation,” and appear critical to interventions to support changing classroom practices (Zembylas, 2003, p. 214)

As a part of the individual identity brought to and shaped by the classroom, teachers maintain beliefs about emotions: their meaning, desirability, social appropriateness, and utility. Beliefs are shaped by historical information and past emotional experiences and influence current appraisals and meaning making (Hargreaves, 2001). Both individual and systemic factors shape teacher beliefs. Teachers’ views of

emotions are influenced by cultural standards as well as individual school culture, which both inform how teachers manage emotions (Oplatka, 2007). Teachers may receive implicit and explicit messages from administrators and school systems about what emotions are acceptable to show in the classroom (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003).

Teacher beliefs influence how teachers evaluate emotional situations in the classroom (Cross & Hong, 2012). For instance, a teacher who believes negative emotions are to be avoided, might be dismissive of a child's tearful presentation, while one who believes emotions are indicators, might be more inclined to approach the situation, label it, and move forward. Beliefs also influence how teachers perceive student interest and motivation in the classroom, as well as what strategies they select to manage the classroom (Cross & Hong, 2012). Beliefs about emotions have relevance for the bidirectional interactions that take place in classroom management, as teacher beliefs can contribute to misinterpretation of disruptive behavior and the underlying emotions. Such misinterpretation can inadvertently escalate conflict, ultimately leading teachers to feel emotionally drained (Chang & Davis, 2009).

### **Teachers Emotions in the Classroom and Their Sources**

Teachers experience a variety of emotions in the classroom, both positive and negative. These emotional experiences are not isolated events; instead they represent complex transactions between the individual and the environment (Cross & Hong, 2012). Understanding the events that elicit emotional responses requires examination of psychological, relational, and environmental contributors to emotional experiences. Becker, Keller, Goetz, Frenzel, & Taxer (2015) identified overarching themes that can be used to organize how situations affect teacher emotions. These include the influence of appraisals, evaluation of how the information or a situation fits with their goals, and their

perceived ability to cope with the situation. Teaching is also embedded a complex context, where emotional responses can be elicited from a combination of distal and proximal causes. Meyer (2009) captured the deep emotionality embedded in teacher emotional experiences through the journals of beginning teachers. One teacher reflected, *“The way the students react to the lesson and activities- if they are enjoying themselves and learning, I feel as though the lesson/activity is successful”* (p. 84). Another teacher remarked, *“Sometimes, when I am frustrated with their behavior, I feel like I cut them off when they need me the most. I don’t mean to get short with them, but I do. I feel like they will understand what to do better if they stop the chatter and “wild” behavior”* (p. 85).

Several studies indicate that positive emotions are quite common for teachers in the classroom and may even make up the majority of teacher’s emotional experiences (Chen, 2016; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Teachers experience positive emotions such as love, care, excitement, pride, and joy in the classroom (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). These positive emotional experiences lead to enjoyment and professional satisfaction. Notably, these conclusions are primarily drawn from self-report data, and may reflect some social desirability bias (Keller, Frenzel, Goetz, Pekrun, & Hensley, 2014).

Students are a major source of positive emotions for teachers (Chen, 2016; Cross & Hong 2012). Positive emotions are elicited when students enjoy a lesson and show care to the teacher (Chen, 2016; Becker et al., 2014). Students complying with classroom rules also bring positive emotions (Frenzel et al., 2009a; Winograd, 2003). Interactions with students introduce opportunities for humor, and students’ unexpected comments can be a source of joy and enjoyment (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Further, teachers enjoy interactions with their students beyond the classroom, such as when prior students return to visit them (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003), and engaging in interactions with students



through advising, sports, clubs, and other less traditional teaching roles (Hargreaves, 2000, 1998).

Teachers also experience positive emotions when they feel understood and recognized by their school community, students' families, and the broader community (Chen, 2016). Similarly, teachers enjoy positive feelings when they feel respected or recognized by students beyond their teaching role and expertise (Hargreaves, 2000). Colleagues can be a source of positive emotional experiences, as they offer opportunities to receive support and can elicit feelings love and caring (Chen, 2016; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Finally, teaching can also bring a sense of accomplishment and productivity when tasks are completed (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003).

Student performance is another source of teacher emotions. Teachers are invested in the performance of their students, in part because it is often considered to be a reflection of their own performance. Teacher competence is in part formally measured through analysis of student performance, which might signal whether a teacher is effective or ineffective (Kelchtermans, Ballet, & Piot, 2009). In particular, student performances on high stakes testing are critically examined by teachers' colleagues, administrators, and parents, placing teachers under additional scrutiny. As such, teachers feel pride when they perceive students are successful, making progress towards a goal, learning, and being productive (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003).

In contrast, teachers may experience frustration, anger, and shame when students do not perform as expected (Sutton, 2007). Teachers also feel angry when they perceive that student failures are a result of a lack of effort on the part of the student (Frenzel et al., 2009a). Teacher experiences of fear, embarrassment, despair, anguish, and guilt, are also common as they strive to demonstrate expected levels of competence using available

resources (Bullough, 2009). This experience is likely rooted in the seemingly impossible task of demonstrating grade level proficiency, regardless of the students' baseline performance at the start of the year. Indeed, teachers often sow seeds of learning, with fruitful results not evident until much later (Van Veen & Slegers, 2009).

Anger seems to be the most frequently experienced negative emotion for teachers (Carson, 2006; Keller et al., 2014b). Interestingly, teachers often describe anger as frustration, as it is considered more socially acceptable (Sutton, 2007). Other negative emotions experienced by teachers include shame, guilt, and anxiety, particularly as they relate to teachers progress on their own goals, as well as their perceptions of their influence on their students (Sutton & Wheatley 2003). Anxiety appears to be more common in younger teachers, and has been linked to feelings of being overwhelmed and underprepared (Chang, 2009). Teachers may also worry about their students outside of the school context, particularly with regards to their safety and access to resources.

The behavior and responses of others powerfully influence teacher emotions, and commonly elicit negative emotional experiences. Emotion elicitors include students misbehaving or being noncompliant (Chang & Davis, 2009, Sutton 2007, Sutton & Wheatley, 2003) and teachers perceiving that students are inattentive or not trying hard enough (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Similarly, perceptions of students' motivation, use of time, and disruptions to the lesson are significant sources of teachers' anger and enjoyment (Becker et al., 2015; Hargreaves, 2000). Colleagues can also elicit negative emotions, particularly when they are experienced as uncooperative or competitive (Chen, 2016; Sutton, 2007). Parents are another source of negative emotions, often when they are perceived as uncaring or irresponsible (Sutton, 2007).

Teachers' internal experiences and cognitions are also a source of emotional

experiences. This may occur through self-appraisal of whether they meet certain standards of performance in the classroom. When teachers sense themselves as effective and acting according with their beliefs and values, they tend to experience positive emotions (Nias, 1996). Similarly, teachers experience positive emotions when they feel successful in their teaching and when they experience personal and professional growth (Darby, 2008; Zembylas, 2002; Hargreaves, 2000).

Emotions are also associated with teacher self-concept: perceiving oneself to have strong teaching skills is linked with enjoyment, while negative self-concept is linked with anger. Similarly, a poor sense of mastery of content material is associated with feelings of anxiety (Lohbeck, Hagenauer & Frenzel, 2018). Teachers can also experience negative emotions as a secondary emotion to their primary emotional experiences. For instance, a teacher may feel shame as a secondary response to becoming angry if she believes that she should not feel anger in the classroom. Relatedly, teachers may experience negative emotions when they perceive they are not controlling their emotions effectively.

Teachers appraisals are a strong contributor to their resulting emotional experience (Becker et al., 2015). What is attended to and what meaning is derived from environmental cues shape and direct the emotional experiences that ensue (Frenzel et al., 2009a). More specifically, appraisals appear to be what mediate the relationship between how students act and the resulting teacher emotional experience (Frenzel et al., 2009a). Teachers bring many goals to the classroom, including a desire for their students to develop skills and knowledge, for students to be motivated and engaged in learning, and for students to have good social skills and demonstrate empathy for others. Student behaviors are referenced against these goals and may be interpreted as supporting the teacher's goal or impeding progress toward goals. In the classroom, appraisals related to

achievement and performance are particularly salient (Pekrun et al., 2007).

Appraisals are varied across individuals. As such, different teachers who encounter the same situation may have very different reactions (Sutton, 2007). Consider a student who has arrived late to the first period class. One teacher may become angry, feeling that the student is old enough to manage getting himself to class on time. Another may feel sad, thinking that the student relies on getting breakfast at school, and has missed a meal. Still a third may feel anxious, anticipating the disruption to the lesson as the student settles into the room.

Notably, teachers' interpretation of emotional situations is rooted in a bidirectional interaction between the teacher's own identity and beliefs. Interpretations of emotional situations are situated in teachers' views themselves and how they want to be seen by others. These appraisals impact perception and meaning making (Cross & Hong, 2012). While some appraisals are well-grounded and accurate, others might be subject to inaccuracies and influence from one's motives and beliefs (Lazarus, 2001). The accuracy of interpretation is an essential consideration for attuned emotional responding in the classroom. Lazarus & Lazarus (1996) identify five sources of inaccurate judgments that influence emotional experience, which can be applied to an educational context. These include, physical ailments that affect reasoning, lack of knowledge about the situation, failure to attend to the appropriate elements of a relational transaction, denial in the face of a personal crisis, and ambiguity about what is happening.

Student behavior, particularly compliance, also provides feedback related to teachers' desired goals and outcomes. Students appearing disengaged, noncompliant, or engaging in acting-out behavior represent a threat to the teacher's ability to attain these desired outcomes. The appraisal that these behaviors are blocking the teacher from

attaining these goals (e.g. teaching a concept, students attaining proficient scores on assessments), will elicit a negative teacher emotional experience (e.g. anger) and the intensity of that emotional experience will be influenced by the strength of the appraisal (Tsouloupas, Carson, Matthews, Grawitch, & Barber, 2010).

Teachers also have emotion experiences in response to changes in the educational setting which require accommodations to different leadership, policy, administration, and student demographics (Van Veen & Slegers, 2009; Darby 2008; Nias, 1996). The way teachers experience and express emotions in part reflects their experience of the school environment and the inconsistent expectations for their performance and behavior. This instability and ever-present change promote feelings of vulnerability in teachers (Kelchtermans et al., 2009). In contrast, having a competent administrator who can implement positive changes for the school is reassuring to teachers and may mitigate potential negative emotional experiences (Cross & Hong, 2012)

Large-scale reform and legislation influence individual school functioning in a number of ways, as these changes bring concurrent changes to the local and individual school level. One affected area is the way teachers perceive they are “supposed to” act, which is influenced by the spoken or unspoken expectations around the display of emotions embedded within each school’s culture. These “display rules” provide teachers with a code of behavior that guides and dictates their actions within their classrooms (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989). Not surprisingly, there is a great potential for juxtaposition between the beliefs of the individual teacher and the culture in which they work and teach, and which teachers feel unprepared to manage.

This emphasis on teaching as a standardized, regulated experience has also raised identity confusion in the teaching field. How well should teachers know their students?

What should they show? What should they say, and how should it be said? Perhaps more importantly, how do the answers to these questions align with individual beliefs and philosophies of teaching? As teachers develop their own identity in the context of individual school environments, this uncertainty in expectations translates to uncertainty in classroom practices, responses, and relational norms.

### **How Teachers Manage their Emotions**

Emotional displays are integral to social communication. The intensity of emotional displays, when they are used, and how, varies across individuals, cultures, and settings. Similarly, sometimes it is beneficial to show emotion openly, while at other times hiding emotions from others is adaptive. Teachers have distinct attitudes and practices around emotional expression and regulation, though often not discussed. Often these attitudes are influenced by perceptions of how one should be, and what emotional expression is acceptable within the school and cultural climate. For instance, one teacher reflected, *“I easily become frustrated and discouraged, but I have learned that I can’t reflect these feelings onto the students. I have learned to control my emotions – especially when we are having a bad day and the students misbehave”* (Meyer, 2009, p. 85). How teachers regulate their emotions has implications for their immediate emotional experience, as well as emotional exhaustion and burnout in the broader context.

Teachers use several emotional regulation strategies in the classroom, including cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression (Gross, 1998a). Sutton (2007) investigated more specifically how teachers regulate their emotions, finding that many of the strategies fit within the categories outlined by Gross (1998). Teachers attempt to preemptively *modify the situation*, by being well-prepared, informing students when they feel ill or unwell, and adjusting lesson activities in response to emotional situations. They

also utilize *attention deployment* by learning to ignore minor behavioral problems, focusing on positive thoughts, and thinking about a calming image. Teachers utilize *responsive strategies* once emotional situations have occurred, by reducing proximity to the situation, exercising, taking deep breaths, and adjusting their emotional expression. They also engage in *cognitive change* when they use self-talk to promote calm and adjust their perceptions when they appraise that a student has committed a personal attack. These strategies for regulating their emotions in the classroom may be different than strategies they may use in other situations (Gross & Thompson, 2007), particularly those specific to preventative regulation (Sutton, 2007).

Strategy use is not static, and in fact may change across a teacher's career (Tsouloupas et al., 2010). Changes in teacher strategy use may relate to changes in identity and overall level of exhaustion (Tsouloupas et al., 2010). Consistently expressing or inhibit one's emotion, or even consistently utilizing distraction or reappraisal strategies are not adaptive approaches. Instead, flexibility in emotional regulation strategy use is integral to well-being (Chervonsky & Hunt, 2017). In their comprehensive meta-analysis, Chervonsky & Hunt (2017) identify that individuals who can move between strategies in light of contextual factors, tend to experience better psychological outcomes than those who struggle with this skill.

*Cognitive change* or *cognitive reappraisal* has received hearty empirical support as an effective means of regulating one's emotions. Reappraisal allows one to reconsider the initial conclusions and attributions made about an emotional situation, and to adjust it in such a way that it changes the resulting emotional experience (Gross, 2008). This can evolve a change in which emotion is elicited, as well as how intensely it is felt (Gross, 2008). This strategy is often deployed early in an emotional experience and can limit

negative emotions from being completely generated (Sutton, 2007; Sutton, Mudrey-Camino, & Knight, 2009). It is associated with a decrease in emotional experience and expression of the emotional experience (Gross, 1998). In teachers, use of cognitive reappraisal is negatively linked to emotional exhaustion (Tsouloupas et al., 2010) and positively correlated with teacher efficacy (Sutton et al., 2009). Further, use of cognitive reappraisal has the potential to reduce teacher burnout (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2007; Yamasaki et al., 2006).

In contrast, *emotional suppression* is type of response modulation that involves attempts control expression of emotion, including managing facial expression and what is said (Gross, 2002; Gross 2008). This strategy tends to occur towards the end of an emotional episode (Sutton, 2007). It requires significant cognitive resources, as individuals exert purposeful effort to manage their experience and impulses (Goldin, McRae, Ramel, & Gross, 2008). It is associated with poorer memory performance (Richards & Gross, 2006) and social discomfort (Butler et al., 2003). In a meta-analysis of the emotional suppression literature, Chervonsky & Hunt (2017) found emotional suppression to be related to a variety of negative social outcomes, including diminished social support, higher levels of social difficulties, and diminished relationship quality and social satisfaction. The emotion suppression literature also suggests that females in particular show negative outcomes when using suppression strategies (Chervonsky & Hunt, 2017). It is hypothesized that because females tend to be more naturally expressive than males, suppression has a particularly strong impact. This warrants mention, as females make up 76% percentage of the US teaching workforce (Keller et al., 2014a).

Teachers commonly express genuine positive expressions, while tending to withhold or hide their negative emotions (Taxer & Frenzel, 2015). In these instances,



teachers suppress their emotions and attempt to display a more acceptable emotion. Keller and colleagues (2014a) found that teachers suppressed or faked their emotions in approximately a third of the lessons they taught. This appears related to the display rules present in schools, which foster emotional suppression and sublimation (Chang, 2009). There are a number of unwritten rules about acceptable emotions in school. In a teacher interview (Zemblayas, 2005), a teacher recalled frequently talking with other teachers about what emotions were considered appropriate or inappropriate. She described a sense, particularly early on, that she should remain neutral, and that expression of emotion would be unprofessional. Indeed, teachers frequently describe themselves as “frustrated” by student behavior, and rarely described themselves as “angry,” which was viewed as less appropriate (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003).

It appears that when teachers experience emotions that are perceived to be unacceptable, they may work to actively change these emotions or their displays for the benefit of the job. This phenomenon has been termed *emotional labor* (Oplatka 2007, 2009), and is integral to the teacher experience. Emotional labor has been described as, “the effort, planning, and control teachers need to express organizationally desired emotions during interpersonal transactions” (Morris & Feldman, 1996, p. 987). Managing and altering one’s emotions and emotional displays to match another’s expectations can have significant consequences. Emotional exhaustion, dissatisfaction with work, employee burnout, and a disconnect with one’s organization are all detrimental outcomes of emotional labor (Hartel, Hsu, & Boyle, 2002). For teachers, there are also negative impacts on physical health, psychological well-being, and teaching behaviors (Wang, Hall, & Taxer, 2019).

Emotional labor often gives rise to feelings of exhaustion and resentment,

particularly when teachers engage in *surface acting*, that is presenting with external emotions that are incongruent with their internal experience (Yin, Huang, & Lee, 2017; Chang 2013). Those who engage in surface acting experience lower job satisfaction (Zhang & Zhu, 2008), a sense of depersonalization (Näring, Briët, & Brouwers, 2006), and higher levels of burnout and emotional exhaustion (Basim, Begenirbas, & Can Yalcin, 2013; Näring et al., 2006). In contrast, *deep acting* is “the internalization of desired emotions such that expressed emotions are more consistent with experienced emotion” (Wang, Hall, & Taxer, 2019, p. 1). Those who modify their emotions inwardly and display congruent emotions experience more positive feelings than those who act differently outwardly than what they are actually feeling, particularly with regard to negative emotions (Oplatka, 2009). While this process may become automatic and habitual for teachers and simply intertwined with the teaching process, it also may require continued high levels of cognitive resources. In the latter case, this may inhibit the previously identified correlation to well-being (Wang et al., 2019). Notably, teachers who genuinely express their emotions in the classroom experience lower stress and burnout, as well as increased job satisfaction (Taxer & Frenzel, 2015).

Anger in the educational context is often linked with display rules, district norms, and teacher beliefs about whether or not it is acceptable to show or feel the emotion. Management of anger, more than anxiety or enjoyment, leads to emotional labor (Keller et al., 2014a). Interestingly, exposure to moderate levels of negative emotions were found correlated to increased emotional understanding (Denham & Grout, 1992; Garner, Jones, & Miner, 1994). It seems as though witnessing the full continuum of emotions may provide a positive learning experience. In contrast, exposure to heightened levels of negative emotions appears detrimental to development of emotional competence (Garner

et al., 1994). For the teacher, inhibition of anger expression is associated with negative social wellbeing (Chervonsky & Hunt, 2017). In sum, both inhibiting and expressing anger can have detrimental outcomes. As such, earlier regulation strategies such as distraction and reappraisal may be valuable in reducing the amount of anger experienced.

Notably, emotional exhaustion is a predictor of teacher turnover (Tsouloupas et al., 2010). This may be due to the impact of emotional exhaustion on subsequent emotional experiences, including reduced enjoyment during lessons and increased experiences of anger (Keller et al., 2014). Burnout is a threat to retention of skilled teachers, as it is estimated that as many as 50% of teachers leave the field within the first five years of working in the profession (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010). Student behavioral and emotional dysregulation are commonly cited by teachers as the cause of job stress and burnout (Byrne, 1994; Friedman, 1995).

### **Teachers' Emotional Competence**

Emotional competence is a complex concept grounded in emotional elicitors, self-efficacy, character, social transactions, and resilience (Saarni, 1999; Pianta, 1999; Campos et al., 1994). It is comprised of skills centered on motivation, managing impulses and delaying gratification, persisting through difficult situations, and managing one's own mood. Emotional competence also requires effective emotional expression, provision of empathy, ability to sustain relationships, and a sense of self-efficacy (Saarni, 1999).

In order to be effective in responding to emotional situations, teachers must be emotionally competent. Garner (2010) posits that teacher emotional competence includes awareness of emotion, understanding emotion, analyzing and using emotion, and managing emotions. Similarly, Zinsser, Denham, Curby, and Shewark (2015) indicate

that teacher emotional competence is predicated on awareness of their internal states, ability to convey their feelings verbally and nonverbally, awareness of the feelings of those around them, ability to use emotions to foster engagement, and ability to maintain control over their emotions and behaviors in healthy ways. Zembylas (2007) found that competent teachers maintain awareness of both their own emotions and those of their students. Teachers themselves perceive an emotionally competent practitioner to be one with self-awareness, flexibility, the ability to control his/her emotions, and awareness of what may elicit emotional experiences in the classroom (Zinsser, et al., 2015).

Teachers play a critical role in managing the overall emotional climate of the classroom by anticipating and attending to emotional needs and being mindful of their own emotional reactions (Schutz et al., 2006). Teachers' emotional competence affects both the quality of the instruction and students' social emotional development (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Teachers who are able to partake in emotionally supportive practices with their students enhance cognitive and emotional development (Zinsser et al., 2015).

Relationships with teachers shape how students interpret and respond to tasks, behaviors, and conflict (Chang & Davis, 2009). In the classroom, teachers act as socializers for students through modeling of emotional expression, responding to children's emotional displays, and provision of direct teaching around emotions and emotional responding. Teachers can intervene by building relationships with students, which supports emotional regulation through a sense of security, trust and open affective communication, opportunity to observe effective emotion regulation, and positive feedback about the child's own efforts to regulate emotions (Joseph & Strain, 2003). Teachers can also directly talk about emotional experiences, as well as explicitly teach

emotion regulation (Denham, 1998).

Teacher behavior and interaction style contributes to regulation and student engagement. For instance, close teacher-child relationships and low levels of student-teacher conflicts enhances engagement (Pianta, Hamre, & Stuhlman, 2003). Similarly, students show more on-task behavior and put forth greater effort on academic tasks when the classroom teacher demonstrates high levels of positive emotion (Davis, 2003). Findings suggest that effective teacher engagement through conversation or joining play during independent activities in the classroom positively contributes to social skills development, as well as vocabulary and math skills in children from low SES backgrounds (Goble et al., 2016).

Teachers can also support emotion regulation through use of language. Language may be used to offer the child a strategy to support inhibition or increase the child's awareness of his emotional experience. Teachers can also help children to share their experiences through gestures, words, and pretend play (Greenspan & Wieder, 1998). Teachers can build vocabulary and promote understanding by labeling emotions in themselves and observing them in others, while also helping children to understand that emotions arise from actions and experiences (Denham, 1998). Having an accurate label for an emotion experience is important, because it can provide information and can activate strategies for responding (Barrett et al., 2001).

In the classroom, children are faced with situations that require them to utilize self-regulation skills, such as ceasing one activity to begin another, sharing materials with others, and inhibiting responding when it is not appropriate to speak. These situations provide teachers the opportunity to use modeling and scaffolding to promote development of emotional and self-regulation skills (Florez, 2011) while sensitivity

responding to child needs and enhancing children's emotional knowledge (Morris, Denham, Bassett, & Curby, 2013).

In order to understand child behavior and emotional reaction, teachers must be able to understand the individual and developmental variables that contribute to child functioning. In particular, emotions are contextualized by goals, beliefs, and coping resources, and understanding emotional reaction is dependent on awareness of these factors (Lazarus, 2001). Knowing the student and understanding these elements offers space for clearer interpretation and prediction of emotional reactions and coping.

It is clear that teachers are critical to the overall emotional climate of the classroom, and that emotions are relevant to teachers' well-being. Teachers are also important contributors to students' social emotional development. In order to promote emotional wellness and to maintain their own well-being, teachers must be emotionally competent. Emotionally competent teachers are aware of their own emotion experiences. They are able to react adaptively to their emotions, modulating them to fit the context and minimizing judgment of their emotional experience. Emotionally competent teachers also understand how emotions are expressed in others and use their knowledge to safely and effectively communicate their own emotional experiences. Further, emotionally competent teachers understand how emotions influence relationships. Emotionally competent teachers also understand how emotions are related to their sense of self as a teacher, and how they correspond to their own goals and perceptions of their skills. They understand how emotions are elicited and can predict and respond to emotional elicitors in the classroom. They can also apply knowledge of emotions to learning and utilize emotions to promote engagement and quality instruction. Finally, emotionally competent teachers are able to instill emotional competence in their students and are knowledgeable

about various means to emotional self-regulation.

Unfortunately, the present models of promoting social emotional competence in the classroom are primarily centered on skill-based, social-emotional learning curricula which target students without effectively including teachers. Overall these programs have been implemented with generally positive outcomes, particularly in increasing social skills and decreasing antisocial behaviors (Sklad, Diekstra, De Ritter, Ben, & Gravestien, 2012). Notably, however, these programs vary in effectiveness and ability to produce long-term change and do not include teacher implementation training as a key competent (Sklad et al., 2012; Greenberg et al. 2003). When social processes are not addressed as part of classroom interventions, they may be less effective in improving achievement and learning processes (Cohen, Raudenbush, & Ball, 2003; Fullan & Hargreaves, 2014). Zinsser and colleagues (2015) propose that in order for these interventions to be effective, they must have an impact on interactions between teachers and children in classrooms.

### **Training Teacher Emotional Competence**

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2010) has put forth a report which highlights the importance of preservice teacher training in the areas of social and emotional development and student-teacher relationships. It also indicates that current teacher training on student development is not sufficient. The current NCATE standards for teacher development indicate that “The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences” and “The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social

interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.”

Despite the importance of emotional competence for teachers and these NCATE standards, preservice teachers often feel they receive insufficient training about how to manage their own emotional experiences (Meyer, 2009) and how to support social-emotional development in their students (Brophy, 1988). Teachers feel insufficiently trained to manage complex emotional behavior in the classroom, and lack confidence in their ability to intervene to support social emotional outcomes (Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Puri, & Goel, 2011), despite viewing children’s’ social emotion development as valuable and teachable (Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013). Thus, student’s emotional development might be enhanced through teacher intervention to support more effective responding in emotional situations throughout the school day.

One review of syllabi for coursework in preservice teacher training across eighteen institutions, revealed that approximately half of the programs did not provide coursework on the topic of social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties, and only five percent included information on student’s social and emotional development (State et al., 2011). Within the analysis the authors also note that on average aspiring teachers were provided less than three hours of time related to intervention for social emotional needs, and approximately an hour was devoted to classroom management. Social/Emotional development related topics were discussed on average for 7 min with a range of 0–105 minutes (State et al., 2011). Thus, while teachers are expected to deliver social-emotional learning interventions and to support social-emotional development, pre-service teaching curricula are lacking in their training on social-emotional competencies (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015; Reinke et al., 2011; Patrick, Anderman, Bruening, & Duffin, 2011).

While NCATE has identified some competencies for teachers to facilitate social-



emotional development in the classroom, there is a lack of conceptually and empirically supported set of competencies which allow teachers to be successful in creating an emotionally healthy classroom and regulating their own and students' emotions. While there have been several successful interventions targeting practicing teachers' ability to create a supportive emotional climate (e.g. Hamre et al., 2012; Raver et al., 2008; Webster-Stratton, Reid & Hammond; 2001), these are not available for the pre-service teachers. Intervention for pre-service teachers is particularly critical given the rate of new teachers who leave the field within their first five years of teaching, as well as the number of teachers who feel underprepared to respond to the social-emotional needs of their students. When teachers are able to have improved interactions and emotional experiences with their students, they experience greater levels of well-being, satisfaction with their work, and sense of efficacy (Pianta, 1999). It is critical that teachers leave their training programs with the necessary knowledge and skill to maintain such interactions.

Perhaps this lack of attention to emotions in teacher preparation stems from the rather fragmented state of the literature on teacher experience, which transcends the fields of education, clinical psychology, educational psychology, and school psychology. As a result, despite the universality of emotions in the classroom, knowledge of teacher emotional experiences and interventions to support management of these emotional experiences are limited. Synthesizing the available literature to further this understanding represents an important opportunity to increase the emotional health of classroom. Additionally, as the primary adult contact in the classroom teachers are a critical intervention point for enhancing students' emotional well-being and development of self-regulation. Teachers possess the potential to influence students' emotional experience through their responding and influence on classroom climate. Further, as

relational objects, emotional entities, and models in the classroom, teachers are essential to children's emotional experiences and learning. The experiences teachers provide are highly influential on children's learning, self-esteem, and emotional growth.

Explicit training in emotional competence is critical. Unlike other teacher skills, emotionally supportive practices do not seem to develop naturally as teachers become more experienced. Instead, emotionally supportive practices increase across training, and then decrease in early teaching, only to increase again later in teaching (Malmberg, Hagger, Burn, Mutton, & Colls, 2010). Given the high rate of teacher burnout that occurs during the first several years of teaching, supporting teachers' emotional well-being and ability to provide emotional support may be important for retaining beginning teachers.

There is evidence that teachers can improve their emotional competence through training. Hamre et al. (2012) provided a group of early childhood teachers with a fourteen-week course in effective teacher-child interactions. As compared to controls, these teachers displayed greater knowledge and skills for identifying effective interactions and engaged in more effective emotional interactions with students. Similarly, an intervention implemented in several urban elementary schools provided teachers with training as well as consultation and coaching from a mental health professional, and led to an identified increase in the closeness of student-teacher relationships as well as improved student academic self-concept (Cappella et al., 2012).

Similarly, when Head Start teachers participated in behavioral management training and had mental health consultants complete weekly coaching visits within their classroom, their classrooms had more positive emotional climates. Teachers also displayed increased sensitivity as compared to controls (Raver et al., 2008). The authors note that opportunities for training and coaching enhanced teachers' integration of skills

into daily routines. Further, they found that teachers had positive reaction to the use of a model which promoted collaboration and coaching, while engendering a shared goal of meeting the emotional and behavioral needs of children. Another study conducted with Head Start teachers found that teachers who participated in a multi-day workshop and received in-class coaching had a more positive classroom climate, worked preventatively to manage behavior, and engaged more often with students (Domitrovich et al., 2009).

Webster-Stratton and colleagues (2001) also completed a teacher training intervention in which Head Start teachers attended six monthly trainings across the school year, which utilized videotape and discussion centered on developing positive relationships with students, developing students' social skills, strategies for managing misbehavior, as well as teaching children problem solving, social, and anger management skills. As compared with the control group, these teachers used more praise, implemented more effective discipline strategies, and used less critical or harsh responding.

One professional development program, Making the Most of Classroom Interactions, is based in small group supportive intervention. This program increased emotional support in the classroom, including displays of respect and enjoyment, responsiveness to children, emphasis on children's interests, and lack of hostility. There were also improvements in setting and maintaining consistent limits, establishing routines, and organization of learning activities (Early, Maxwell, Ponder, & Pan, 2017). Intervention using MyTeachingPartner, a means of professional development that utilizes web-based video vignettes and online consultation on teacher-child interactions, has also resulted in improved interactions with students (Pianta, Mashburn, Downer, Hamre, & Justice, 2008; Early et al., 2017).

These interventions have several limitations. First, they are designed for

practicing teachers. While valuable, the literature indicates that risk for burn-out and emotional exhaustion is high within the first several years of teaching. Given this, it is important that teachers leave their training programs with adequate preparation for managing emotional events and experiences. Further, the demanding nature of the teaching profession makes it difficult to allocate time for teacher training. Training on emotional competence appears best completed as a part of initial teacher training.

In addition, each of these programs addresses elements of teacher training, but none are comprehensive. Emotional competence is a “subtle, complex, and sometimes, downright elusive concept” (Saarni, 1999, p. 2). It transcends a number of domains and bodies of knowledge. In this way, it is essential that teachers receive comprehensive training to become truly emotionally competent. This comprehensive training must also go beyond developing individual skills. Instead, teachers must develop an awareness and knowledge that allows them to more effectively select and deploy a range of strategies and skills. This level of understanding allows teachers to be successful across contexts and with the heterogeneous student population. The model that follows synthesizes the available literature to deliver a comprehensive set of competencies.

## **Chapter 2. Teaching Emotional Competencies for Preservice Teachers: A Training Model**

### *Introduction*

Emotional experiences in the classroom are critical to the well-being of students and teachers. These experiences can support students' acquisition of self-regulatory skills and social-emotional learning. When they are effectively managed, they can also protect teachers from burnout. Unfortunately, teachers receive very little training about emotions and emotional development during their pre-service teacher preparation programs.

The present model defines nine competencies essential for emotionally competent teaching practice. This is in contrast to many existing interventions which teach discrete skills. Skills involve the interaction between a person and specific contexts. Skills also vary across individuals and are also variable within the same individual across contexts. For instance, a young toddler may walk quite confidently on a smooth kitchen floor, but will stumble on carpet and have more difficulty managing the sloping grassy lawn (Fischer, Bullock, Rotenberg, & Raya, 1993).

Training skills in isolation are problematic at the classroom level, because the context is complex and fluid. Events and relational transactions are continually unfolding in the classroom, often concurrently. Teachers continually make split-second decisions about whether and how to act. Within these events, subtle and nuanced cues influence behavior, interactions, and outcomes (Doyle, 2006). While a teacher may be able to enact a particular skill in one context, it may be insufficient in isolation across the many school contexts. The emotionally competent teacher then, must be prepared to be effective across the fluid conditions of the classroom. In this way, discrete skills must be adapted

and generalized to new contexts to produce competency.

To be emotionally competent, a teacher must also possess the metacognitive abilities to enact particular behaviors and strategies in response to situational conditions. Successful management involves accurate understanding of the events that are occurring as well as the ability to monitor and adjust in response which relies on comprehension and interpretation (Doyle, 2006). This skillset is more complex than discrete rules or simple formulaic recommendations for behavior. Pedagogical knowledge alone is not sufficient for teacher classroom management, particularly when teachers lack sufficient emotional competence. Knowledge is more valuable and effectively applied when it is possessed in conjunction with emotional competencies, as high levels of emotional exhaustion may limit teachers' ability to apply their knowledge of "what to do" (Seiz, Voss, & Kunter, 2015)

Additionally, a number of interventions have been developed to promote students' self-regulation and emotional competence in the classroom. However, these programs are often comprised of activities which are rather disjointed and lack an overarching framework. Instead of directly intervening with children, intervention may effectively target teachers a promoter of social-emotional competence through implicit modeling and explicit teaching.

The current model focuses on the broader knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for emotionally competent practice. This approach allows the instructor to develop tailored activities which inform how activities may be selected to promote development of emotional competence. The model is also developed from the perspective of a relational, transactional frame. It emphasizes the phenomenological experience of teachers, their awareness of self and others, and use of relationships to promote emotional

well-being.

The curriculum describes nine competencies, which are each comprised four sections: Knowledge and Skills, Rationale for Importance, Illustrative Classroom Example, and Strategies for Teaching. Each competency begins with a description of the knowledge and skills pre-service teachers should develop to be proficient with the competency. A rationale then follows, describing the relevance, utility, and importance of the competency. In order to highlight the relevance and application of the competency in the classroom, an illustrative classroom example is subsequently discussed. Each section concludes with suggestions for teaching the competency to preservice teachers. These include specific prompts for discussion along with other means for developing the competency in the classroom.

## **COMPETENCE 1: Emotional Self-Awareness**

*Emotionally competent teachers maintain awareness of their own emotional states and are knowledgeable about sources of their own emotions. They understand how goals, values, and appraisals interact to influence emotion states.*

### **Knowledge and Skills**

#### Awareness of Emotional States

Emotional competence involves being aware of one's own emotions. Having an emotional reaction indicates that a situation is meaningful or relevant (Saarni, 1999).

Awareness of an emotional experience allows for consideration of what actions to take, including whether there is a need to regulate or change the feeling in some way (Barrett et al., 2001). The ability to effectively differentiate between negative emotion states is associated with increased well-being (Barrett et al., 2001), as well as a better overall understanding of how one is feeling and higher self-esteem (Erbas, Ceulemans, Lee Pe, Koval, & Kuppens, 2014). Further, those who are able to clearly and specifically identify their emotional state regulate their emotions more frequently (Barrett et al., 2001).

Emotional awareness also contributes to accessing a broader range of regulation strategies and implementing these strategies more flexibly (Farb, Anderson, Irving, & Segal, 2014; Gross & Jazaieri, 2014). Ersay (2007) found that emotional awareness in the classroom has important implications for teacher well-being and responding. When teachers attend to their emotions, they are more attentive to the emotions of their students. Attending to one's own emotions also makes teachers more likely to encourage students' emotions and to be understanding of children's negative emotions. Further, higher emotional awareness is associated with more communication about emotional experiences in the classroom (Ersay, 2007).

Awareness of emotional states includes attention to several elements of emotions.



Physical sensations, such as feelings of tenseness, pain or physical discomfort, or increased heart rate and respiration, can indicate emotional arousal. Level of energy and body posture can also offer cues to internal emotional state. In addition, awareness of one's mood can inform awareness of emotional state. Emotional self-awareness also requires the ability to recognize cognitions and attributions, as these inform interpretations and resulting emotion. This skill is especially important during interactions with students, instructional activities, and responding to emotional events in the classroom.

Many indicators of emotional experience operate in the background of conscious awareness, while the conscious mind attends to the current activity. Purposeful shifting of attention to these experiences allows for better awareness of emotional state. This awareness is important, as it informs responding. At the same time, providing too much attention to these cues can enhance negative emotional experience. For example, a teacher whose heart is racing as she presents a lesson for the first time is likely to underperform if the majority of her cognitive energy is used focusing on how anxious she is and attending to the variety of physical indicators that she is anxious. Emotionally competent teachers are able to maintain awareness of their emotional state without becoming overly preoccupied by the experience. They also become increasingly familiar with the individual cues associated with discrete emotion states, including the unique physiological expressions and types of cognitions they experience.

The emotionally competent teacher also understands that multiple emotions can occur simultaneously and remains open to and aware of all emotion states. Teachers are especially prone to mixed emotions in light of the various events and goals continually at play in the classroom. Teachers are often concurrently seeking to manage their

classroom, deliver lesson objectives, and monitoring that relational needs are being met. In addition, teachers often implement multiple tasks and attend to multiple students simultaneously. This complexity lends itself to frequent experiences of multiple emotions. Consider a teacher who is delivering a lesson she perceives is going well, with the majority of the class participating and giving indicators of comprehension. The teacher might also notice that her new student, a refugee with limited formal education and limited English proficiency, is wandering around the classroom, playing with materials on other students' desks. The teacher may feel a mix of pride in her lesson, frustration that she does not have adequate resources to engage the new student effectively, and anxiety about how the student's performance on upcoming state testing will affect her performance evaluation.

Notably, within a mixed emotional episode such as this one, positive emotions are often overshadowed by the concurrent negative feelings (Renshaw, Long, & Cook, 2015). In this case, if the teacher were to be consumed by her worry about her new student, she is likely to miss the opportunity for the positive emotions associated with her generally successful lesson. It is important that teachers can identify and attend to the positive elements of their experiences, as positive emotions are important contributors to teacher satisfaction (Day & Qing, 2009). In this way, appraisals that acknowledge all aspects of emotional experience may be beneficial for teacher well-being.

#### Awareness of One's Own Reactions to Emotions

The human brain allows for metacognition, meaning that in addition to primary thoughts and experiences, humans are capable of thinking about and reflecting on such experiences. This is salient for emotional experience, as often there is a secondary reaction or judgment to the primary emotional experience. This secondary reaction is

helpful in some cases, for instance, labeling feelings of pride, and considering it a well-earned indicator of success following a difficult task. In other cases, emotional states may be judged as inappropriate, signs that one is a “bad” teacher, or associated with the thought that one should not be having the feeling at all.

This reflection can hamper the ability to honestly and openly acknowledge primary emotional experience, and even to lead individuals to deny or suppress an emotional experience entirely. In teachers, anger is commonly suppressed or denied, as there is a secondary judgment of anger as inappropriate or shameful (Sutton, 2009). This process of suppression is important, as using suppression can contribute to burn-out and increased experience of negative emotions (Wang, Hall & Taxer, 2019). Emotionally competent teachers will understand that some emotional states may be denied or suppressed because they are experienced as inappropriate or shameful, will become increasingly aware of their own reactions to their emotional state, and will use skills to acknowledge, manage, and process all emotional experiences.

#### Awareness of One’s Own Beliefs About Emotions

The metacognitive reflections experienced in response to emotions reflect underlying beliefs about emotions. These beliefs are likely to be rooted in one’s personal history, such as which emotions were expressed in the family of origin and how they were permitted to be expressed. In addition, teachers are likely to be exposed to ideas about emotional expression during training and from observing other teachers in the classroom. Beliefs about emotional expression are also likely to be embedded in the teacher’s image of what a “good teacher” is, and how such a person behaves. Finally, teacher beliefs about emotions are likely to be influenced by the climate and display rules of the institution that they work in, with some teachers receiving explicit messages that it is

unacceptable to display certain emotions.

Emotionally competent teachers develop awareness of the implicit or embedded beliefs they hold about emotions, including what emotions they feel comfortable experiencing and expressing, and which may bring secondary judgment or lead to a sense that they should suppress such a feeling. Further, skilled teachers will remain vigilant that their personal experiences or implicit beliefs may lead to undesirable emotion states occurring outside of conscious awareness. This understanding is rooted in awareness of how historical context can influence emotional experience. For instance, consider a teacher who learns that her student has just experienced the death of a parent. If this teacher was shamed for crying during a student teaching experience, she is likely to suppress an open display of grief. If the teacher has previously experienced the death of her own parent, she is likely to feel a more intense reaction than one who has not. The emotionally competent teacher learns to acknowledge his or her emotional experience and reduces the urge to avoid the emotion due to judgment, shame, or belief that it is unacceptable.

#### Awareness of Causes of One's Own Emotions

Emotional awareness also requires an understanding of the proximal and distal factors that influence emotion states. This is to say that the emotionally competent teacher can identify what immediately preceded an emotion state, as well as the broader goals, values, and beliefs that influence the attributions and appraisals resulting from the situation. Teachers hold goals for desired nature of relationships in the classroom, academic outcomes, and development of particular professional competencies. They also maintain inherent attitudes about how students “should be” or what they “should do.” These internal rules and ideas influence resulting emotional experience, self-expression,

behavior, and means of responding.

Awareness of these factors includes the ability to engage in skillful, open, and critical self-reflection that acknowledges the presence of these beliefs, values, and goals as well as openness to adjust them when appropriate. Further, emotionally competent teachers will develop an understanding that certain emotions are rooted in temperament and experience, and will be able to identify how these connect to their own emotional reactions. Finally, emotionally competent teachers understand that emotions are not inherently good or bad, and are aware of how historical emotional experiences influence future perceptions and behavior.

Emotionally competent teachers can accurately narrate what precipitated an emotional state (“I am feeling X because Y and Z”). They are able to develop increasingly sophisticated explanations of their experiences as they reflect and learn from previous interactions and responses, and begin to identify individual patterns, triggers, and circumstances that elicit emotional responses. For instance, a teacher may find herself becoming angry more often when working with special education students and identify that she feels inadequately trained to differentiate her instruction to meet all of her students’ needs.

### **Rational for the Importance of Emotional Awareness**

Emotional awareness is critically important for several reasons. First, emotions provide cues to needs and goals. A feeling of sadness reflects a sense of loss, while anger is indicative that goal is being blocked. Anxiety provides a cue that there is some sense of threat, while joy is indicative of feelings of success and heading in a desired direction. Such cues are powerful for making sense of experience. For example, acknowledging a sense of sadness that a lesson went poorly on a day that the principal was observing

allows a teacher to have increased understanding of her goal to be viewed as a competent teacher, and guides actions to attain these goals. Perhaps next time she will prepare differently, or she will simply acknowledge that she designed a well-organized lesson and that sometimes students do not respond as hoped.

Emotions also inform actions. Indeed, it is distressing and uncomfortable to feel an intense negative emotion and this experience motivates individuals to respond in a way that reduces discomfort. Put another way, when people experience intense emotions, they seek to discharge the feeling. When teachers have strong emotional awareness, they are able to enact regulatory strategies to manage their emotional experience. In contrast, when emotions are poorly understood or recognized, they are less well-managed. For instance, an angry person without reflective awareness might yell, blame, or otherwise react impulsively. The angry person who is able to acknowledge feeling angry and generate an adaptive narrative of their anger creates opportunity to respond in healthy ways that help to get a need met or move towards a goal. This is to say that awareness of emotion state facilitates engagement in thoughtful and purposeful action rather than simply habitual or intuitive action (Winkielman, Berridge & Sher, 2011).

Further, labeling an emotional state has been shown to decrease the intensity of the emotion (Lieberman, Inagaki, Tabibnia, & Crockett, 2011) supporting adaptive responding. Awareness of emotional states also allows teachers to be a healthy model for students and fosters student awareness of their own emotions. Lastly, acknowledging an emotional experience allows for consideration of where the emotion is coming from and recognition of an underlying need or goal. For instance, recognizing that one is anxious provides opportunity to consider more specifically what is feeling threatened, and guides subsequent behavior.

## Illustrative Example in the Classroom

Consider the following scenario. Yesterday during her planning period, Mrs. Jones was working on an introductory lesson for a new math unit. She needed to leave right after school to take her daughter to the dentist, and this the only time she had available to prepare. As she is working, the principal arrives at the door unexpectedly, and asks her to join a special education meeting, as the teacher who was supposed to attend was out sick. Mrs. Jones ceases her planning to attend the meeting. When Mrs. Jones delivers the partially-planned lesson the following day, students are silly and off-task. Mrs. Jones heart rate is increasing, and she feels herself beginning to sweat. She snaps at the students to “focus” and when a student calls out, she quickly tells him he’s had enough reminders and directs him to go to the office.

It is fair to think that Mrs. Jones’ is experiencing anger and anxiety. Her goal of preparing an effective lesson has not been achieved, and as she watches the students struggle, she is experiencing a threat to her efficacy as a teacher. Her attributions and appraisals might take different forms:

- *“It’s so unfortunate that my planning was interrupted, I had envisioned this going very differently. It doesn’t seem like they’re getting it. How can I slow this down for today, and adjust going forward? Maybe we’ll just focus on two shapes today instead of five.”*
- *“I hate this school; the administration has no respect for teacher time. When the kids all fail the state tests this spring, they better not blame me.”*
- *“This group of kids is so low, why did I get assigned the low kids again? They never get anything. It feels like they’re not even trying, how am I supposed to teach when they can’t even listen to me?”*

Having an awareness of the source of the anger and anxiety is likely to help Mrs. Jones as she engages with the class. If Mrs. Jones is able to recognize and acknowledge her frustration related to yesterday’s interruption, she is more likely to be able to manage it and reduce the impact on her students. She might even narrate and reflect her

experience to the class: “It seems like the class is having some difficulty with this lesson. Let’s all take a pause for a few belly breaths, and then I’ll start again.” Such emotional awareness fosters effective responding and creates opportunities for modeling means for dealing with difficult emotional experiences.

### **Recommended Activities/Strategies to Teach Emotional Awareness**

1. Classroom scenarios provide rich material to help teachers reflect on their own experiences. The scenarios on the follow page can be used in several ways:
  - a. Ask teachers to indicate what emotions they would feel if they were the teacher in the situation. Use the resulting feedback to highlight experiences of mixed emotions.
  - b. Ask teachers to read the scenarios and encourage them to consider how their historical experiences, both personal and professional, would affect their responding.
  - c. Ask teachers to consider what appraisals they might generate if they were in each of the scenarios. How might they broaden their initial appraisal to reduce resulting negative emotions?
2. Utilize experiential activities (role plays, videos, case studies) that help teachers to feel “in the moment” and use these experiences to support open acknowledgement of all emotions that are elicited.
3. Promote journaling and self-reflection activities aimed at awareness of beliefs, values, and goals. Further, build from this awareness to link situational factors to internal experience, attributions, and classroom responding.



4. Engage teachers in small group discussion facilitated by an experienced teacher or psychologist or assign writing prompts to explore emotional attitudes. Possible questions might include:

- Are emotions good or bad? Why?
- How can emotions be helpful? Why do we have emotions?
- Are emotions ever harmful? How?
- Are some emotions better than others?
- How do thoughts affect emotions?

## Classroom Scenarios

- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ A child trying to complete an assignment becomes frustrated and starts kicking things around him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ After a carefully planned lesson, children do not seem to be grasping the concept that was taught.
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ An administrator is coming in shortly to conduct a formal observation, and the class cannot seem to settle down.
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ A child is continually out of his seat during instruction.
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ Parent teacher conferences are this week, and it feels like there is no time to get things ready.
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ The team designed a behavioral plan for a student who tends to act out, and it does not seem to be working.
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ A student starts picking on a peer who is easily upset.
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ A child with an explosive temper resists joining at the carpet and begins pulling things off the shelves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ The children in the recess soccer game are getting increasingly agitated and fighting over the rules.
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ A parent sends an email demanding to know why no one is preventing her child from being picked on.
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ It is time to go to specials and several children are already having a difficult day.
- \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ The class is taking a field trip and the parent volunteers do not seem able to handle their groups.

## **COMPETENCE 2. Emotion Regulation**

*Emotionally competent teachers are able to adaptively regulate their own emotions and maintain a sense of emotional self-efficacy.*

### **Knowledge and Skills**

#### Response Inhibition

Intense and uncomfortable emotions are common within the classroom. A teacher may become enraged when a child defies an instruction or feel defeated when a child who seemed to be comprehending instructional material does not pass a high-stakes assessment. Importantly, feeling an emotion does not mean acting on an emotion. It is essential in these moments that teachers are able to at least temporarily inhibit displays of emotions, even when experiencing intense or uncomfortable emotions. Emotionally competent teachers will develop the ability to recognize their emotional experience and maintain emotional control while they purposefully and thoughtfully respond. This requires being able to pause long enough to identify the emotion and consider the situation before implementing a response. This is a difficult skill to master, because intense emotions are often uncomfortable, and the person tries to discharge the sensations and energy associated with them. Emotionally competent teachers should have means to tolerate such discomfort in the space between the initiation of a feeling and initiation of a response.

Importantly, the idea of inhibition discussed here is not analogous to complete denial of an emotional experience or emotional suppression. Inhibition in this context refers to identifying that the initial urge to respond may be maladaptive and developing the ability to *temporality* withhold that response while thoughtfully considering options for responding. Consider a person on a diet who is offered a piece of cake at a work event. There is likely an immediate urge to accept the offering. Temporarily inhibiting

the response allows the individual to consider whether the initial “gut” or “emotional” response aligns with his or her goals and leads to an adaptive outcome. This logic also applies to the classroom. While the experienced emotion is valid and acceptable, the urge it creates for action is not always adaptive or appropriate. Development of the ability to maintain self-control and inhibit responding is critical to responding effectively to emotions in ways that support individual and student well-being. Over time, emotionally skilled teachers may also find that through work on goals, beliefs, values, and maintaining a mindful outlook, these emotions feel less intense, and it becomes easier to maintain self-control in emotionally charged situations.

### Means of Adaptive Regulation

Self-regulation in emotional situations can occur in adaptive and maladaptive ways. Werner and Gross (2010) identify four specific strategies for regulating emotions. First, in *situation selection*, a person participates in or avoids an emotion-eliciting situation. In *situation modification*, the situation is reappraised to change its emotional influence. In *attentional deployment*, a person directs their attention to something else or engages in other forms of distraction to reduce focus on the unpleasant emotion.

*Response modulation* is an effort to change the experiential, behavioral, and physiological manifestations of an emotional response, through suppression, exercise, relaxation activities, or thought avoidance. Emotionally competent teachers will be familiar the various ways that emotions can be regulated and will identify adaptive strategies to deploy when needed.

In order to maintain emotional health, a skilled teacher will be well-versed in a range of thoughtful, adaptive means for responding to emotionally charged situations. Such a range of responses should be practiced to determine which are most effective for

the individual and in which contexts. For instance, common self-regulatory interventions include engaging in positive self-talk, repetition of a mantra, labeling and acknowledging an emotional experience, measured breathing, adjusting attributions, and use of grounding techniques. Emotionally competent teachers recognize when it is necessary to enact such strategies and use them when they are warranted. They will also monitor effectiveness of these strategies and adjust as needed to find means that are effective for them. In addition, being able to remain regulated in emotionally charged situations requires that teachers become equipped with longer-term strategies and habits that promote well-being. Examples of this include maintaining healthy sleep routines, mindfulness practice, healthy eating, regular exercise, developing a social support network, therapy, and building ongoing habits that promote such routines.

### **Rationale for the Importance of Emotional Regulation**

The classroom is saturated with strong emotion (Hargreaves, 2000), and teachers may have emotional experiences related to events both in the classroom and in their personal lives. Teaching also requires an inordinate amount of self-discipline and self-regulation. As Aristotle points out, it is easy to experience emotion, but, "...it is not easy to determine how and with whom and about what and how long....and to specify what extent is right and what is wrong" (Judson, 2006, p. 1126a). A teacher's ability to manage his or her own emotions contributes significantly to the overall emotional climate of the classroom, and teacher dysregulation can inhibit effective teaching (Garner, 2010). Teachers with well-developed emotion regulation capacities are better able to create classrooms that feel calm and organized, support student regulation, and provide clear expectations and norms. In contrast, teachers who lack emotion regulation skills might have difficulty with classroom organization and classroom management, leading to

increased student anxiety.

Effective teacher emotion regulation benefits student development in a number of ways. First, it reduces unnecessary shaming experiences. A teacher with well-developed emotion regulation skills is able to consider what he or she wants to say and expresses themselves in a healthy way. They are also able to inhibit immediate responding to improve the situation. For instance, a teacher with underdeveloped emotion regulation skills might yell angrily across the room to redirect a student who is using materials without permission. A teacher with better regulation is able to offer a neutral reminder to the whole class (e.g. “Right now the direction is to be in your seat, working on your butterfly diagram”) or increase proximity to the student to cue the student to the direction more discretely.

Emotion regulation also allows teachers more carefully and accurately consider the context, leading to more informed responding. In particular, emotion regulation increases the range and flexibility of responding (Farb et al., 2014; Gross & Jazaieri, 2014). In the classroom this might occur through consideration of distal influences, generating hypothesized meaning of behavior as it pertains to the student’s need and emotional experience, and consideration of what types of responding has been helpful in past similar situations. Further, generating these thoughts is likely to modify or broaden the initial appraisal to one that is associated with a less intense emotion. For instance, an immediate reaction to feeling a student violated a rule may be to assign blame and to assume that the student intentionally broke the rule. In contrast, considering the factors that contributed to an overall difficult day for the student and how the noisy classroom may have been dysregulating in light of his past trauma, leads to more feelings of empathy rather than simply anger. It also better informs how to respond in a way that

meets the need of the child.

Teacher self-regulation is particularly salient when a student becomes significantly dysregulated. When the teacher remains in control of him or herself, the student receives a meta-message that the teacher is competent, in control, and can protect him or her from his own emotional state. Teachers who can regulate their emotions are also able to help students regulate through co-regulation. In contrast, teachers with emotion regulation difficulties are reactive and as a result, they often escalate with their students, contributing to explosive behavior and power struggles. Modulating one's own reaction allows space for students to seek support, ask questions, learn how to respond in future situations, and to internalize healthy means of expressing their own emotions.

Teachers must be able to modulate their emotional reaction to express them safely. For instance, a teacher might become tearful upon learning of the death of a parent in the community. This provides an opportunity to model grief for students, to label emotions, and to genuinely express a profound sense of loss. In contrast, a teacher weeping uncontrollably at her desk in response to such news is likely to make students feel unsettled, and worry that adults are not in control. Uncontrolled emotional displays from adults may induce fear in children, as the teacher may be perceived as unpredictable, unsafe, or out of control.

### **Illustrative Example in the Classroom**

Consider a teacher who has just witnessed one child kick another in the classroom. The teacher may feel anger, as her classroom norms have been violated and it is her goal to create a safe space. She may also feel worried for the well-being of the victim, and perhaps even concerned about repercussions from the child's parent. Her immediate urge to respond may be to yell across the room to the offending student that

his behavior is unacceptable. She might feel like slamming down the book she is holding in frustration. She might even wish to yell “I’ve had it!” and slam the door on the way out of the room. These immediate urges would produce varied influences on the overall emotional climate of the room, and even the teacher’s sense of self. None of them are likely to produce particularly beneficial outcomes for the students.

In this situation, it is helpful to consider what thoughts and appraisals might emerge for the teacher. Such experiences inform the intensity of resulting feelings and contribute to the teacher’s regulation and ability to take a non-defensive stance. For example, she may think, “He is old enough to know better. His parents clearly haven’t punished him enough for this behavior, he’s such a brat. They let him get away with everything.” As she thinks these thoughts, she feels increasingly angry and out of control, and is having difficulties generating ideas of how to express her anger safely. These blaming attributions limit the teacher’s ability to consider the other factors that may influence the child’s emotional experience, and to generate attributions that produce less intense negative emotion and dysregulation.

The teacher who is able to remain regulated allows herself to generate more comprehensive appraisals that inform an adaptive response to the child’s need and emotional experience. For instance, she may think, “Bobby seems ok, I will go check on him. I forgot what a hard time Johnny has with big groups, he’s probably feeling overwhelmed working with so many students when his math skills are still so low. I’ll go move him to a quieter area and talk with him about it when he’s calm. Maybe I will try setting him up with only one partner in a quieter area next time.” Having the ability to remain regulated has allowed this teacher to reach a more informed understanding and has prevented her from responding a way that may be detrimental to all. Maintaining self-



control in this way promotes regulation for all of the students, limits fear, and promotes adaptive behaviors in students.

### **Recommended Activities/Strategies to Teach Emotional Regulation**

1. Provide pre-service teachers with direct instruction on coping and stress management strategies. Encourage them to consider how they have coped with difficult situations in the past and how these strategies might be applied to the classroom. Promote consideration of how coping may need to vary with situational demands.
2. Model regulated responding in instruction.
3. Utilize scenarios of emotionally-charged classroom situations. Encourage teachers to generate their automatic reaction, even if it seems “unacceptable.” Continue generating a range of responses. Consider the pros and cons of each reaction. Encourage participants to think about how they might manage or overcome their automatic reactions to respond thoughtfully.
4. Facilitate discussion about the importance of emotion regulation. Possible questions might include:
  - a. How is teacher regulation related to child feelings of safety? Or child feelings of success, fear, and engagement?
  - b. How might self-regulation be important for students who have experienced trauma?

### **COMPETENCE 3: Emotional Expression**

*Emotionally competent teachers are able to safely and effectively express their emotional experience across context, both verbally and nonverbally, to facilitate relationships and learning.*

#### **Knowledge and Skills**

##### Emotional Language

Developing a sufficient emotional language is critical to effective emotional expression. Teachers must possess a range of emotional vocabulary that allows them to accurately narrate their emotional experience to students, colleagues, administrators, and themselves. Emotional vocabulary includes both words to describe discrete feelings states as well as language to describe associated physiological and behavioral experiences, such as “tense,” “ache,” and “withdrawn.” Similarly, teachers would benefit from being able to describe emotional intensity and styles of emotional expression (open, blunted, etc.).

Given the developmental range of audiences that teachers communicate with, having the flexibility to adapt this language to meet the listener at their level is also important.

Emotionally competent teachers should be able to express themselves from the first-person perspective, in a way that is clear and conveys to the other what they are experiencing. Effective emotional expression utilizes “I statements” whenever possible. Such expression of emotion allows others to understand the emotional experience and the non-blaming stance promotes engagement and dialogue. For students in particular, it serves as a model for effective responding and healthy emotional expression.

##### Effective modulation of emotional expression

Adaptive emotional expression is modulated when appropriate. Emotionally competent teachers internalize that all emotions are acceptable and valid, and that there is a choice of *what* to do with them. It is *how* and *when* emotions are expressed that is important. Effective modulation requires the ability to separate feelings and their

expression, and emotionally competent teachers can modulate their emotional experiences without suppressing or denying them. They understand that their inner experience does not always need to be manifested externally (Saarni, 1999), nor does it need to be denied.

Emotional modulation involves adjustment of tone, rate, and volume of speech for accurate, safe expression of emotions. It also requires attention to body language and posture. For example, when a student breaks a newly acquired laptop in the classroom, the level of emotion a teacher feels may correlate to screaming in horror in response. Skilled teachers are able to adjust the intensity of their emotion to present a genuine emotional response that maintains safety and security for students. Importantly, modulated emotion does not mean no emotion. It would be disingenuous and potentially confusing to students to present outwardly in ways that are incongruent with the content of the speech. An example of this might be smiling while telling students that the grades were poor on a recent exam. This type of expression is problematic because students may not understand the teacher's true emotional experience, and they may feel confusion at the disparate messages. They may further infer that the exam was not important, which likely is not what the teacher intends.

### **Rational for the Importance of Emotional Expression**

Effective emotional expression contributes to healthy emotional communication and fosters learning. Teachers who are able to effectively express their emotions are less reliant on emotional suppression and are able to convey their needs and experiences to others. This type of open expression may promote overall teacher well-being and has been linked to reduced experiences of burnout (Oplatka, 2009). Authentic emotional expression may also enhance experiences of positive emotions, as individuals who avoid

negative emotional experiences dull their experience of emotions in general (Taxer & Frenzel, 2015). This type of expression may also reduce experiences of exhaustion, as inhibiting emotions requires significant cognitive and emotional energy.

Emotional expression is also important for making others aware of one's needs. For example, if a teacher is able to say to her principal, "I have been feeling very frustrated with my student's lack of progress," the principal has an opportunity to provide resources or suggestions to the teacher, and to offer needed validation for the teacher's ongoing efforts to support the student. Authentic emotional expression also provides feedback to students about their behavior. The display of positive emotions sends messages that a behavior is encouraged, desired, or acceptable. In contrast, displays of negatively valenced emotions, such as anger and disappointment provide cues that the student is not meeting expectations or engaging in unsafe or inappropriate activities. Notably, overuse of such displays to send these messages may elicit feelings of shame, hopelessness, and anger that may be counterproductive to changing the student's behavior.

Teachers who engage in healthy emotional expression are also modeling to students that emotions are tolerable, safe, and useful. These types of displays contribute to students' ability to predict cause and effect, and through consistent responding, students can develop a better understanding of what will happen next. This supports their ability to plan and reason in future situations. Additionally, this type of responding supports student understanding of how people and events influence emotional experience of others, fostering their ability to be empathetic and to take the perspective of another. Finally, teachers well-modulated emotional expression may be especially important for

children with a history of trauma, allowing them to feel safe and beginning to separate the established connection between emotion and threat.

### **Illustrative Example in the Classroom**

Mrs. Jones' students are engaged in small reading groups, when she hears snickering from the far side of the room. She looks up to see that a student who is supposed to be reading independently is using the nearby books to build a wall around himself. This is the third time today that the student has been significantly disengaged and off-task, and Mrs. Jones is quite annoyed. She makes eye contact with the student and gently shakes her head to indicate that this is not acceptable. When the behavior continues Mrs. Jones engages in strategies to manage her frustration and thinks about what she will do next. She elects to walk to where the student is sitting and firmly but calmly says, "Right now your direction is to be reading your book. If you choose to continue building with the books, you will need to do your reading while the other students have free choice time." In this instance, Mrs. Jones is validly annoyed and frustrated. She is displaying her emotions safely through a mild change in tone of voice, giving clear directions, and indicating that the student is not meeting expectations. A more intense display of anger is not warranted, nor is it likely to be helpful in getting the student back on task.

### **Recommended Activities/Strategies to Teach the Ability to Express Emotions**

1. Implement self-awareness activities that allow pre-service teachers to reflect on emotional intensity in responding. Encourage practice with modulating and expressing emotions at different levels (e.g. mild anger, moderate anger, intense anger). Facilitate discussion about what this might look and sound like, and how it might vary across ages and contexts.

2. Facilitate small group discussion or journaling centered on emotional expression. The following prompts may be helpful:

- What are some ways we express emotion?
- How does emotional expression vary across ages?
- How does emotional expression vary across culture?
- How are language and emotion related?
- What challenges have you seen students encounter in managing display rules for emotional expression at home and at school?
- Is it acceptable for teachers to display anger towards their students? Why or why not?
- How does emotional expression vary across individuals?
- Are there “acceptable” and “not acceptable” displays of emotions?

#### **COMPETENCE 4. Identifying and Responding to Emotions in Others**

*Emotionally competent teachers are able to recognize emotions in students, parents, and colleagues, through understanding of emotional expression and consideration of the others' developmental level, needs, goals. They are able to consider and integrate the influence of individual variables such as culture and lived experiences into their understanding.*

#### **Knowledge and Skills**

##### Identification of various feeling states in others

Emotionally competent teachers are able to identify a wide range of emotional experiences in those around them. In particular, they must be able to identify both intense and subtle emotions, as well as mixed emotional experiences. The ability to discern the emotions of others involves familiarity with nonverbal emotional cues, such as posture, proximity, movement levels, and facial expression. Accurate emotional identification also requires attention to tone, level of engagement with others, and changes in eye contact. The skilled teacher is capable of identifying and integrating these various indicators to infer feeling states. For instance, a student crouched under his desk may be experiencing fear, shame, or anger. If his brow is furrowed, his mouth is pursed, and his fists are clenched, these cues can be used to further differentiate his experience as one of anger. Emotionally competent teachers are efficient at attending to these various cues and synthesizing them to make inferences about the feeling state of the other.

Accurate identification of feeling states also relies on understanding of the emotional and behavioral patterns that students display. Skilled teachers notice and attend to what types of events and antecedents elicit emotional reactions in their students. The emotionally competent teacher then uses this information to facilitate effective interpretation of behaviors and emotional expression, linking past emotional eliciting situations with current circumstances and responding. This type of observation requires awareness of the proximal and distal experiences that influence others' emotions. Skilled

teachers remain open to knowing about broader events happening in students' lives, such as housing instability, family discord, parental separation, and so forth. Such information can provide valuable clues to what may instigate an emotional experience for a child, and to what emotion the child is now feeling. This skill also requires developing a healthy respect for individual differences, development, and life history. Each student is uniquely influenced by their own lived experiences, which include culture, relational needs and how they are met, current developmental level, and stage of cognitive development.

Similar attention should be paid to *how* feelings are manifested. While there are universal expressions of emotions, there are also more nuanced cultural and individual patterns and emotional tendencies. Some students may show fear paradoxically by becoming conflictual or argumentative, while others may clearly and openly display their strong emotions. Certain cultures may promote a more reserved display of emotions, requiring careful attention to more subtle behaviors.

#### Accurate differentiation between behavioral display and internal emotional experience

While attending to outward emotional cues is important, it is not sufficient for understanding and responding to the emotional experience of the other. This is in part because outward behaviors do not always match the internal experience. Such incongruent expression can be influenced by *lived experience*, such as growing up in a home where negative expression is punished, *trauma*, in which aggression may be a manifestation of an internal fear experience, and *shame*, which can lead to false bravado or other masking behaviors. This is particularly problematic when the external manifestation is one of non-compliance, aggression, or other forms of “acting out” behavior. In children, such external manifestations often stem from incongruent internal experience, such as feelings of fear or powerlessness, feelings of being out of control, or



a need for boundaries. Unfortunately, the common interpretation is that the child is purposefully refusing or not complying and leads to responses where the adult escalates with the child and engages in angry redirection, inadvertent shaming, and punishing behaviors. It is important to accurately identify both the external expression, and well as the less overt, underlying need and phenomenological experience of the child in order to respond effectively.

### Understanding the relationship between context and emotional experience

In order to understand the emotional experience of the other, teachers must develop the capacity to consider how various contextual experiences influence emotional experiences. Development of such knowledge promotes the ability to accurately infer the other's emotional state when outward expression is less clear. In addition, such knowledge enhances the teacher's ability to anticipate an emotional situation and to manage it more effectively. This is a complex skill, as distal variables are quite broad, and their influence will vary as it intersects with the individual's life experience. Some distal variables that may influence children's emotional experiences are familial dynamics, school culture and norms, time of year (both seasonal and academic), as well as classroom content and organization. The classroom represents a complex intersection of personal histories, temperament, and goals, which all have the power to influence how an emotional episode unfolds. Increased awareness of such factors promotes accurate identification of emotional experiences, as well as strategies for effective intervention.

It is important to maintain an awareness of one's own history and potential contextual influences in addition to those of the other. Failure to attend to one's own triggers, experiences, and distal influences may hinder accurate interpretation of the other's experience. Awareness of one's own experiences limits bias and increases

openness to the broad range of distal factors that may be influencing the other. For instance, a teacher who experienced a contentious parental separation growing up may assume that a student is appearing sad because his parents are in the process of divorcing. The emotionally competent teacher will be able to consider this hypothesis, while recognizing how her own lived experience may skew her perception of the student's emotional state and try to take a more detached perspective. Perhaps the child is not looking sad, he is thinking. Perhaps he is sad, but he is sad because his friends did not invite him to join the soccer game. Awareness of one's own history and influencing factors is then important for accurate interpretation.

The emotionally competent teacher is also able to recognize a child's emotional experience without interpreting the emotional manifestation as representative of the child more globally. A child can be sad without being a "sad child," and be angry without being a "defiant child." It is important to interpret emotional states as representative of a current need, and even to observe that emotional states are elicited by similar antecedents. It is less helpful to make global attributions about what the emotional incident says about the child as a whole, particularly when such attributions are blaming or lead to predictions of future difficult emotional episodes.

#### The capacity for empathetic responding

Emotionally competent teachers develop the capacity to hold an empathetic perspective (Saarni, 2000), in which the teacher considers the child as a broad and multi-faceted entity with complex underlying needs and intentions. An empathic perspective considers the multiple layers of a child's experience and fosters caring and compassionate responding. Empathic responding is more likely to meet the child's need, increase his or her own self-regulatory capacity, promote self-awareness, and reduce the likelihood of

power struggles.

Empathic responding is also rooted in a non-defensive stance, which avoids blaming, overly critical explanations, and skewed perceptions of others. This perspective supports healthy and realistic appraisals that inform adaptive responding. A non-defensive stance is comprised of several elements. First, it requires an authentic reflection of teacher's own role in the child's behavior and understanding how one may have influenced a child's emotional reaction. This includes the ability to generate and consider explanations of child's behavior and emotion that may reflect negatively on oneself. For instance, perhaps the lesson was a little longer than the students were able to manage or perhaps the new seating design in the classroom is contributing to more chatting amongst students. An empathic, non-defensive stance includes openness to acknowledging the teacher's contribution to emotional situations in the classroom.

Empathic responding can be derailed when teachers feel wronged by a child, an experience that is often rooted in one's own beliefs and values. For some it may interact with a common value that "children should respect their elders," for others non-compliance may be perceived as a threat to goals of being an efficacious teacher. In this way, an emotionally competent teacher must be able to recognize when they are experiencing an intense reaction to a child's behavior, and engage in thoughtful, objective analysis that allows for a more empathic stance.

### **Rationale for the Importance of Identifying and Responding to Emotions in Others**

Understanding a student's emotional experience provides cues to the student's underlying needs and creates opportunity for teachers to respond in an attuned manner that addresses these needs. Responding to a child's needs is powerful, as it promotes development of a positive sense of self. It also helps to diffuse emotional situations, as

the child feels understood and trusts that the adult will respond helpfully. Recognizing preferences and needs is important even when the need cannot be met in the way the child wants it to, as it is validating and enhances the relational connection. For instance, a student might try to climb a bookshelf in order to reach a desired book. While the teacher must interrupt the child in order to maintain safety, she can concurrently acknowledge, “Wow, you really wanted to get that book by yourself. You look very excited to read it.” Such a response is reflective of the child’s need and feeling state, and likely diffuses the frustration of being redirected from climbing.

Emotion recognition is also essential to managing potentially emotionally intense outbursts in the classroom. Children rarely display aggression without signs of emotional upset and escalation. The ability to recognize the cues that precede these events and begin to identify patterns in emotional events allows teachers to intervene more effectively. It also limits the likelihood that the situation will become a full-blown tantrum or episode of physical aggression. This is critically important, because the unfortunate reality is that de-escalating a child becomes increasingly difficult as he or she becomes more dysregulated. Additionally, children who repeatedly get to this point in the crisis cycle are in a sense “practicing” negative behaviors, making it more likely they will engage in such behavior again. The emotionally competent teacher is able to identify signs that an intense emotional episode is building and uses this knowledge to craft a response that identifies and responds to a need, and limits the child’s increasing dysregulation.

Recognizing feeling states also promotes perspective-taking within the classroom. As the teacher narrates emotional experiences and accurately responds to the emotional states of children, all of the students learn about emotions. Additionally, these transactions promote children’s ability to think about what another may be feeling, and

they increasingly associate facial expressions and behaviors with discrete emotional states.

### **Illustrative example in the classroom**

A class of kindergarten students were completing an art project and the time came for students to go to lunch. One student, who had a history of behavioral difficulties and dysregulation, continued stoically cutting and gluing while the students around him cleaned up. The teacher gave a second verbal instruction to the class to cease their work. The student glued with increasing vigor, avoiding eye contact with the teacher. The teacher angrily approached the student, loudly demanding he stop working on the project and walked away before the student could respond. She was gone so quickly that she didn't hear him say "But I want to finish it!" The teacher helped other students gather their belongings, and walked by the child's desk, collecting the art materials. The child was now panicked and emotionally aroused. As he saw the teacher collecting materials, his anger and anxiety became manifested in aggression as he began to throw the materials from his desk, narrowly missing other students.

Unfortunately, in this case, the teacher did not attend to the child's emotional cues, and she did not effectively consider the child's history of experiencing intense emotions during transitions. A teacher with more awareness of this child's historical difficulty with transitions might have indicated to the class when they started that they would continue the project after lunch. She might have provided the child with an individual warning that time was coming to an end. She might have offered a private conversation making a plan with the child for when he might finish the project. She might have set aside the necessary supplies he would need to continue to offer reassurance. Ideally, she might have also offered a verbal observation that recognized the need: "You

have been working so hard on that project and you *really* want to finish it now! Right now it's time for lunch, and when we come back for indoor recess, you can work on the project again. Here, let's put together the pieces you will need." Each of these potential interventions are based in recognition of emotional cues and demonstrate how using a child's history can inform predictions of how a child might respond and the teacher's response.

### **Recommended Activities/Strategies to Teach Responding to Emotions in Others**

1. Utilize classroom scenarios of a range of student behaviors. Encourage pre-service teachers to identify the possible needs being expressed in the scenario, as well as ideas for how to meet the need. The activity that follows provides a structured guide to how this type of activity might be completed.
2. Review the emotion escalation cycle (Colvin & Scott, 2015), considering how emotional expression is relevant at each stage.
3. Engage students in discussion and journaling, with the following possible prompts:
  - How does emotional expression vary in children and adults? For example, in what ways do children show they are anxious? In what ways do they display that they are sad? How does emotion expression vary across children? What distal variables influences emotional expression?
  - What makes a response to a child effective or not? Encourage participants to think of examples of times they intervened successfully, and what made it go well. Then encourage them to

think of unsuccessful interventions and to consider what may have led to the outcome.

### Sample Activity

*Situation 1:* Ms. Lopez’s class is sitting on the carpet doing a lesson. Ms. Lopez asks the students if one of them can tell her the answer to a question. Darren enthusiastically raises his hand and Ms. Lopez calls on him. Darren looks up and uncertainly says “Ummm,” and Ms. Lopez quickly says, “Let’s see who else might know!” and calls on another child.

Ask preservice teachers, “*How might Darren be feeling?*”

Welcome all responses. Offer *embarrassed, disappointed, sad, angry, relieved* as possibilities

Add the following contextual factors to the scenario, and ask preservice teachers, “*Knowing this, what do you think Darren’s experience is in this moment?*”

1. Darren’s mom just gave birth to another child  
(Possible reactions include *a need for recognition, feelings sadness/disappointment at losing opportunity to have attention on him*)
2. The kids on the playground teased Darren at recess because he got an answer wrong earlier in the day  
(He may now be feeling *embarrassed, angry*)
3. The teacher recently corrected Darren on how he was completing his math work sheet  
(He may now be feeling *embarrassment, anger, shame*)

Ask preservice teachers, “How might Ms. Lopez respond to Darren when he does not respond immediately?” Encourage them to consider how they might support Darren in the situation. The following interventions can be considered as possibilities.

- Allowing peer to choose a friend to help
- Moving on to next question, letting the student know you’ll come back to him
- Scaffolding/prompting to help get to response
- Asking if he needs another minute
- Ask another student to answer the question, then going back to ask the first student and asking if that was the answer he had
- Follow up/check in with him later to have private conversation

*Situation 2:* Ms. Simm’s first grade/second grade class is getting ready to go to gym class. The children begin to line up at the door, and Cindy races to be first. Scott steps in front of Cindy and tells her he is the line leader today. Cindy’s face turns red and her eyes fill up tears.

Ask preservice teachers, “*How might Cindy be feeling?*”

Welcome all responses. Offer *sad, angry, upset, disappointed, jealous* as possibilities

Add the following contextual factors to the scenario, and ask students, “*Knowing this,*



*what do you think Cindy's experience is in this moment?"*

1. Cindy's mom promised she'd come to lunch today and didn't show up
2. Scott did this to her twice earlier today during transitions.
3. Cindy's clay art project broke earlier today, and she was the only student who doesn't have one to take home.

Ask preservice teachers to consider each emotion and how they predict Cindy may act, and how they would respond.

*Anger*

Possible student responses: kick, act out

Possible teacher responses: gain proximity to the situation, reflect her experience, create space between the students

*Sad*

Possible student responses: crying, not speaking

Possible teacher responses: Reflect emotions ("I see that you are upset you don't get to be first and now you are missing part of your favorite game."), provide an alternative leadership task, remind her it is her turn tomorrow

*Situation 3:* Gerry, a fourth grader, is walking back to his seat after sharpening his pencil. As he and another student try to walk between the desks, you see them bump into one another. The second student, Patrick, becomes enraged and yells, "You did that on purpose!"

Ask preservice teachers, "Why might Patrick be feeling angry?" Generate a variety of possible reasons.

Now ask the group to consider how each of the following might have contributed to Patrick's experience.

*-Gerry and Patrick ride the bus and go to daycare together every day. They have been in*

*the same class for three years*

*-Gerry threatened Patrick yesterday at daycare after they had a disagreement*

*-Patrick has witnessed domestic violence*

*Situation 4:* Anna, a fifth grader, emerges from the lunch line and begins to sit with a group of girls. As she walks towards them, she stops suddenly and sits alone at an empty table. Soon after she begins to cry.

Ask the preservice teachers, "Why is Anna sad?" Generate a variety of possible reasons.

Then, ask preservice teachers to consider how each of the following might have contributed to Anna's experience.

*-One of the girls at the table recently told her she was too ugly to sit with them*

*-Anna's best friend was sitting at the table and didn't come join her*

*-Anna's dad was recently incarcerated*

## **COMPETENCE 5: Emotions in Relationships**

*Emotionally competent teachers understand that emotions are salient for relational transactions. They use this knowledge to respond effectively to children's needs and emotional displays, to establish trusting, nurturing, and consistent relationships, and to respond effectively to emotional incidents in the classroom.*

### **Knowledge and Skills**

#### Understand that emotions are elicited by interpersonal interactions

Emotions can emerge from a variety of elicitors, and relational transactions are important antecedents that give rise to emotional experiences. Relational interactions are often linked in complex ways with perceptions of self, attainment of goals, history, and appraisals of the other (Lazarus, 2001). Emotionally competent teachers will develop an understanding of how emotions are communicated and elicited within relational encounters. Further, they will understand that emotions are “contagious” and that their own emotions can influence the emotions of their students. Emotionally competent teachers will also utilize the contagious nature of emotions to promote learning. Further, they will use emotions to develop collaborative and supportive relationships and to foster engagement through relational connections in the classroom. They will also begin to understand that competitive and hostile relationships lead to negative emotions, such as anger and anxiety, that are often detrimental to learning.

#### Knowledge of how emotional needs can be met through interpersonal relationships

Relationships are a powerful tool in the classroom. The relational transactions that take place between teacher and student offer a critical opportunity to meet students' emotional needs. In addition, peer relationships also provide opportunity for children to develop competence in problem-solving, perspective taking, empathy, and reasoning. Emotionally competent teachers are able to develop positive, nurturing relationships with their students and create opportunities for students to develop relationships with one

another. To attain these positive relationships with students, teachers should also have a basic understanding of attachment styles. This includes recognition of behaviors of children with a history of secure and insecure attachment, and more specifically, how children might relate to adults in light of their previous relational experiences.

#### Ability to engage in emotionally attuned responding

Emotionally competent teachers are attuned to emotional states of children. Attuned responding includes the ability to verbally narrate the experience of the other in a way that conveys understanding and minimizes shame. For example, an emotionally attuned teacher might move next to a child standing alone at recess and say, “It looks like you are feeling sad. I saw that you were trying to join the girls at the blocks and they didn’t invite you to play. I wonder if you might feel left-out.” This type of response is based in an accurate interpretation of the child’s experience, and also creates a relational transaction in which the child can use the adult to help him manage his emotional experience and to problem solve the situation.

Attuned responding also includes the ability to match the child’s experience. For instance, consider a child who has just been pushed down by another child as they moved to line up, and stands up yelling “Hey, you pushed me!” In talking with that child, using a tone that matches the child’s angry experience is likely to be validating and provides a meta-message that the child’s experience is understood. In contrast, a neutral response may be experienced as irritating or invalidating. Such responding is particularly important when children are experiencing intense emotions. For example, a student who has just snapped his pencil in half after incorrectly completing a math problem will benefit from a teacher reflecting that, “These are *really* hard today, and you were *really* trying to get it. Let’s try it together.” Lastly, the emotionally competent teacher addresses

emotional issues privately when possible, in order to help the child to regulate and to reduce feelings of embarrassment or shame.

### **Rationale for the Importance of Understanding Emotions in Relationships**

Relationships are an essential part of the classroom environment. Teachers offer feedback in their communication to students that conveys approval or disapproval, leading to experiences of self-conscious emotions like pride, shame, or guilt. These emotional transactions have implications for students' future behavior, such as their interest in material, effort, willingness to take chances in learning, and perception of their efficacy as a learner. The emotions elicited can also more broadly influence their sense of self.

Relational interactions also elicit emotions because they can activate memories of previous relational transactions. For instance, a student who is yelled at by a teacher may be reminded of being yelled at by a parent and a physical punishment they endured, leading them to become more anxious and fearful. A student who receives critical feedback from a teacher on an assignment may be reminded of the last time a teacher spoke with them about their performance, and they learned they were being retained in that grade. Awareness of the connection between current and past relational experiences is important for development of positive relationships, and management of current emotional reactions.

Emotional interactions in relationships are also critical because they are intertwined with goals. When a student or teacher receives indication from another that they are moving towards a goal, they feel happy. In contrast, when feedback indicates there is an obstacle to achieving a desired outcome, they feel anger. These messages in relational communication can be explicit, but they can also be implicit. For example,

when a teacher has been actively working with a student on homework completion, and the student fails to turn in their homework assignments three days in a row, the teacher perceives that she is not meeting her goal of supporting the student. Likewise, a student who lacks sufficient supportive adult relationships may feel intense sadness when the teacher repeatedly redirects him for leaving his seat. These transactions are important, because they shape development of relationships, responding, and future behavior.

Relational transactions are also an important place for teachers to experience joy, a critical emotion to their ability to sustain well-being. Feeling care for students and having moments of humor have both been identified as experiences that contribute to joy for teachers (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003), and are rooted in relational experience. Positive emotions in relationships foster creativity, exploration, and sharing with others, while mitigating the effects of negative emotional experiences (Fredrickson, 2001). Relational interactions are also important for helping teachers to understand students' emotional experiences and behaviors. A teacher who attempts to only interact with a student about academics is likely to lack a holistic picture of the child to inform their responding.

### **Illustrative Example in the Classroom**

Mrs. Butler gets her class list for the upcoming school year and cringes when she sees a familiar student name on the list. She has already heard from the prior years' teacher how challenging this student's behavior is to manage. Mrs. Butler learns as much as she can about the student, discovering that he has been through a series of foster homes and struggles to get along with his peers. At the start of the year Mrs. Butler makes attempts to connect with the student by talking with him about his interests outside of school and helping to enroll him in an afterschool club. Mrs. Butler makes an effort to be calm and predictable in her interactions with the student, helping him to learn that she

will be reliable. While the student continues to struggle with self-regulation, Mrs. Butler finds that her interactions with the student help him to be responsive when she must redirect him. Further, she finds she is enjoying watching his progress as he begins to use the strategies she is teaching him for taking deep breaths and using the classroom calm-down space. She finds that as time progresses, the student begins to believe that she cares for him and appears increasingly motivated in the classroom.

### **Recommended Activities/Strategies to Teach about Emotions in Relationships**

1. Explicitly teach preservice teachers about how trauma and attachment affect how children engage with adults.
2. Engage preservice teachers in discussion or journaling about the role of emotions in relationships. Possible prompts include:
  - How are our emotions influenced by others?
  - When do we “show” others our emotions, and when do we hide them?
  - How can events in our lives affect how we respond to and interpret the emotions of others?
  - What does it mean to have a “safe,” “trusting” or “nurturing” relationship?
  - How does a child’s relationship with their caregiver affect their interactions and relationship with you?
  - What are the key ingredients for developing good relationships with students?
  - How do the emotions of students affect each other?
  - What kind of relationships do you think teachers should have with students? With parents? With administrators? With one another?
  - How do you feel when you meet your class for the first time?

- How does it feel to say goodbye to students at the end of the year? How does this vary across students?
- What unexpected goodbyes have you experienced with students? How did it go?

## **COMPETENCE 6. Utilizing Emotions to Promote Learning**

*Emotionally competent teachers understand the impact of emotions on learning and use emotions to facilitate learning.*

### **Knowledge and Skills**

#### Knowledge of how emotions influence learning

Emotion states, particularly fear, boredom, anxiety, confusion, pride, and shame, are relevant for the processes of acquiring new knowledge and demonstrating learned knowledge. Anxiety is a common emotion experienced during testing and when learning difficult new material. Depending on the intensity of the anxiety, it can promote arousal and engagement, or disrupt available cognitive resources through promotion of task-irrelevant thinking. Boredom arises when a task is not sufficiently challenging for a student. Curiosity is elicited in response to novel stimuli, but can also be enhanced more broadly through wonder, questioning, and inquiry. Pride and shame are self-conscious emotions which can arise from assessment of performance and progress on goals. Pride can fuel motivation and sense of self-esteem, while shame brings a sense of incompetence and failure.

Notably, negative emotions may lead to avoidance of similar experiences in the future. Skilled teachers can manage these negative experiences through awareness of student emotions and responding to help students gain a sense of mastery and effectiveness. Further, awareness of the association between negative emotions and avoidance should inform interventions for students who engage in behaviors that remove them from unpleasant situations. For example, if Johnny throws a cup at math time, he may spend the block in a buddy classroom instead of facing the unpleasant emotions that arise from his limited math competence. While safety is paramount, skilled teachers remain vigilant to these patterns, and promote corrective emotional experiences when



possible.

In contrast, positive experiences of joy and happiness lead to interest and a “moving towards” in which students are interested in completing similar experiences. Conjuring such experiences in the classroom through instructional design, as well as using emotions effectively in instructional delivery, can promote student engagement and learning. Emotionally competent teachers develop means to cultivate these emotional experiences and use them to improve academic outcomes.

#### Utilizing emotions to enhance the learning environment

The immediate environment, including individuals in the room, and the composition of the room itself, also have the potential to influence emotions and subsequently, learning. Both of these elements affect students’ level of arousal. Take a moment to envision a classroom in which the walls are painted bright yellow and posters adorn every available surface space. There are piles of papers on the all of the tables and discarded materials litter the floor. Such an environment likely elicits feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, confusion, and perhaps, stimulus overload. In order to access learning, students must maintain appropriate levels of arousal, in which they are stimulated and able to attend to learning without having their systems flooded by visual input. This can be supported by a well-organized classroom in which materials are structured to be easily accessible and visual displays are contained and pleasing to the eye.

Similarly, while teacher enthusiasm can promote curiosity and engagement, highly energetic displays presented without intermittent periods of calm, are likely to contribute to emotional dysregulation. Maintaining calm can be challenging for teachers who have dysregulated students in the room that contribute to unexpected activity within the classroom. Similarly, there may be a sense of chaos when students are removed from the

room repeatedly for intervention or special education services. It may be appropriate in such instances to talk with students about ways to manage anxiety that results from such situations in order to help them remain engaged and regulated.

### **Rationale for Teaching about How Emotions Can Promote Learning**

Learning and emotions are inherently connected, and emotions are particularly important for acquisition and recall of information. For instance, mood and emotion affect what information students attend to and what they remember (Bower, 1981). Positive mood may also increase rehearsal and learning of novel information (Lee & Sternthal, 1999). Teachers can influence these processes through knowledge and intervention around emotional content. For example, when students are supported in managing their negative emotional experiences, they are able to retain more information than those who are not (Rice, Levine, & Pizarro, 2007). Additionally, when students encountered emotional content, they retained and recalled more information when given directions to re-appraise the importance of the material or the outcome than those who were not given such a direction (Davis & Levine, 2013). Information is also recalled more readily when the student is in a similar mood state at the time of recall to when the information was initially learned (e.g. Bower, 1981), suggesting that interventions to manage anxiety and other intense emotions during testing may be beneficial.

When teachers maintain awareness of emotions and their influence, they can harness this information to support learning processes. Adults can direct children's attention towards and away from particular stimuli, support problem solving in times of difficulty, suggest reappraisals for upsetting situations, and steer the child towards adaptive expression of emotion (Thompson & Meyer, 2007). These are important, as intense emotions may direct attention away from learning material and reduce available

cognitive resources for learning (e.g. Strauss & Allen, 2009; McKenna & Sharma, 1995). Further, children often require adult support for emotion regulation, as the ability to independently deploy emotion regulation strategies is not well-developed in younger children (Cole et al., 2004; Campos et al., 2004; Saarni et al., 2006).

Teacher awareness of students' emotional states is important because of the power teachers' actions have to positively influence students' emotional experiences and learning. Teachers can mitigate student experiences of boredom by enhancing students' ability to understand the material, use of illustrations, presenting material enthusiastically, and fostering attention (Goetz et al., 2013), subsequently increasing engagement and fostering learning. Teachers can support regulation of both fear and boredom through reappraisal and enhancing curiosity. Teachers can manage negative emotional experiences by providing instruction at the child's level, providing alternative activities, utilizing partner work, and providing positive feedback, and explicitly recognizing areas of growth.

### **Illustrative Example in the Classroom**

Mrs. Smith is preparing to teach a unit on Ancient Greece. She anticipates that students may have difficulties making connections to the content and considers how she might increase their curiosity. She decides that students might feel surprised to learn the age of the structures still in existence from Ancient Greece. She designs a timeline activity that will foster interest and surprise as students learn how much older the Parthenon is compared to the White House. Students are very curious and surprised, and Mrs. Smith notices that they are asking more questions than they usually do. As the lesson wraps up Mrs. Smith begins to explain the homework from the lesson and sees that students are becoming restless. She realizes that this is a new type of homework, and

perhaps students are feeling overwhelmed and confused. She adjusts her delivery, breaking down the expectations more clearly, and sees that students are nodding and attending.

### **Recommended Activities/Strategies to Teach about Emotions and Learning**

1. Support preservice teachers in reviewing the curriculum and thinking about how they might foster curiosity about the content.
2. Engage preservice teachers in discussion about what content might elicit strong emotions.
3. Elicit discussion about how students might make helpful connections to previous learning that promote engagement, and how lessons can be differentiated to avoid student boredom.
4. Support preservice teachers in generating a list of emotions that might be elicited by a lesson. Encourage them to consider how these emotions will influence the learning process, and how they might adjust during the lesson in response to the emotional experiences.

## **COMPETENCE 7: Understanding and Managing Emotional Elicitors**

*Emotionally competent teachers have knowledge of a range of emotional elicitors in the classroom, and a range of strategies for managing emotional incidents.*

### **Knowledge and Skills**

#### Ability to identify common emotional situations in the classroom

Emotionally competent teachers will be knowledgeable about common emotion elicitors and be able to apply this knowledge to situational experiences. Emotions commonly arise from interactions between students and their peers or teachers. Within these transactions, both parties receive feedback about their performance relative to their goals. For instance, a student who asks a teacher what to do on an assignment that she just explained sends the message that the teacher is not meeting her goal of maintaining students' attention, eliciting anger or frustration. When a teacher tells a student to sit down three times during a lesson, he may feel he is not meeting his goal to be a "good student," and experience subsequent sadness or embarrassment.

Emotions also arise through performance-based activities. For students, these include completing classroom assignments, taking tests, and receiving grades on papers and tests. Student performance on these activities can also be considered performance-based information for teachers, as it can be interpreted as a measure of how well the teacher performed in delivering the information. Teachers also engage in their own performance-based experiences when they deliver a lesson or are observed by an administrator. Within these activities, there is an element of self-comparison that fuels emotional experience and sense of progress on goals. A teacher may notice learn that a neighboring classroom was considered proficient on a recent unit test while her own class was in the "needs-improvement" range. Similarly, students compare their performance to those around them, using peer performance as a reference to assess progress on their

goals.

Links between personal and classroom experiences also conjure emotional experiences. A teacher raising her voice may elicit fear from a child who has previously experienced that raised voices mean physical discipline or shaming. A student who struggles with a learning disability may evoke deep sadness from a teacher who struggled with dyslexia in her own schooling experience. Emotionally competent teachers will be able to identify elements of their own history that contribute to emotional experiences, and to effectively manage these through awareness and preventative intervention when possible. They will also be vigilant to how their behavior and expression may elicit student responding based on a student's own history.

#### Understanding of the relationship between emotional situations and common child needs

Effective understanding of emotional elicitors also requires understanding of common child needs. Children have inherent needs for safety, mastery, autonomy, competency, power, and nurture, which manifest in the context of development and life experience. A child's emotional response is more accurately understood when it is considered in regard to need. For instance, a child who becomes angry when he is not called on have an unmet need to feel competent or to have power. Understanding his experience in this context broadens the available strategies for responding and increases the likelihood that the response will be effective. The emotionally competent teacher will be able to generate hypotheses about child needs. Further, emotionally competent teachers will use this understanding of needs to inform responding, particularly implementation of strategies for supporting the child's emotional regulation and behavior.

#### Identification and use of strategies for responding

Children's emotional experiences are complex. Further, a teacher rarely encounters one emotional transaction at a time, as often multiple children are displaying disparate emotions concurrently. The emotionally competent teacher must be able to identify when to intervene and with whom. Further, she must maintain a wide range of adaptive strategies for responding. These strategies should be flexible and able to be tailored within the relevant situational experience. For instance, strategies might be adjusted in light of a child's history or developmental level. A student with a history of neglect who functions at a below-average intelligence level will benefit from short clear statements, which are delivered calmly and privately, while a more advanced child may benefit from a more complex, nuanced explanation. The emotionally competent teacher will adapt her interventions to her audience, observe the results, and make necessary adjustments in future responding.

### **Rationale for the Importance of Understanding and Managing Emotional Elicitors**

Being aware of emotional elicitors and prepared to respond effectively is a critical teacher competency. Maintaining awareness of common emotional situations leads teachers to feel prepared for effective responding, fostering self-efficacy and confidence. It also enhances proactive intervention, allowing teachers to plan and adjust with anticipation of what may be elicited from their actions and teaching. Further, low self-efficacy is associated with burnout and exhaustion, both of which put teachers at risk for leaving the field. Being able to anticipate emotional needs supports valuable confidence.

Having a range of responses is also essential for maintaining a healthy emotional climate in the midst of changing conditions. The classroom is an intricate environment in which goals and experiences are continually interacting. Being able to respond in flexible and diverse ways allows the teacher to be prepared for a wide range of possible

occurrences. It also prepares the teacher to work effectively with students of varied backgrounds and developmental levels.

### **Illustrative Example in the Classroom**

Today is “100 Day” in Mrs. Jones’ kindergarten classroom. The morning schedule has been disrupted and the students have spent time showcasing their “100 item” projects. A number of families have been in to visit, and there have been lots of special snacks and games. As the festivities wind down, Mrs. Jones leads the class into their regular reading block. One of the students sits sullenly at his desk refusing to join the class on the carpet. Mrs. Jones recalls that the student was upset earlier that his 100 cheerios had started to fall off of the paper that they were glued to, and his mother had to leave the party early to go to work. Mrs. Jones uses her knowledge of the student and the context to infer that the student may be feeling sad. She decides that the student may be feeling a need for nurture and competence. She invites the student to sit next to her at the carpet, and the student quickly gets up to join. When a question arises that she is confident he knows the answer to, she is sure to call on him.

### **Recommended Activities/Strategies to Teach about Managing Emotional Elicitors**

1. Encourage preservice teachers to think about the various activities that students engage in during the school day. What might elicit an emotional response and for whom? What kind of response would be helpful, and why?
2. Provide examples of child behavior in the classroom. Facilitate a discussion about what need the behavior might reflect.



## **COMPETENCE 8. Promoting Student Emotional Competence**

*Emotionally competent teachers are able to promote development of emotional competence in children through modeling, direct instruction, and attuned responding.*

### **Knowledge and Skills**

#### Ability to promote emotional self-awareness in students

Emotionally competent teachers help students to develop increased awareness of their emotional states. One pathway for this learning is through teacher instruction and incorporation of emotional vocabulary. Teachers can infuse emotional vocabulary into the school day by labeling of emotions within themselves, students, and characters in stories. Teachers should also be able to help students understand these emotional experiences by cuing them to outward manifestations of the emotional experience such as facial expression, body language, and verbalizations. Teachers can provide explanations identified feelings by offering a contextual information that includes a rationale for *why* a person might be experiencing a particular emotion. For example, if reading a story, the teacher might note “The cat looks like he is feeling mischievous. His mouth is making a smirk. He sees that there is a box of fish in the kitchen he is not supposed to touch, and he is thinking about taking one.” In another example a teacher might remark, “The boy looks like he is feeling sad. I see his head is down, he is alone, and he is frowning. He really wanted to go on that field trip with the class, and he cannot go.”

In addition to emotional vocabulary, emotionally competent teachers also teach adaptive means of emotional expression. As with teachers, all student emotions are valid and acceptable, though not all means of expression are safe or adaptive. Emotionally competent teachers support students by verbalizing and promoting authentic emotional expression, welcoming emotional comments, providing regular opportunities for students to check in with themselves to see how they are feeling, and providing acceptable

alternatives when emotional expression is maladaptive or unsafe. For instance, a child who is crying may need a check-in with the teacher to validate her sad feelings, as well as support for accessing means of modulating her experience. Teachers can also help students to express themselves in appropriate ways that allow them to more effectively get their needs met. For instance, a student who hits others when he is angry may be directed to hit a pillow or rip paper. From there, he might be encouraged to draw a picture of his angry feelings, verbalize that he is “mad!” and ask for a sensory object to use to help him calm down. For students who have experienced abuse or trauma, feelings of anger may be perceived as particularly threatening and may even be avoided. Teachers can help these students by teaching about emotional intensity, and increasing awareness that emotions themselves are not dangerous, it is how they are expressed that is important.

Increasing student emotional self-awareness also involves being able to cue students to their own internal experiences. This can be achieved through use of observation and reflecting language, as children are developing in their awareness of their body, thoughts, and experiences. While they might be able to identify feeling “bad,” they will benefit from support in linking their outward presentation and somatic experiences with to a more specific emotional label. Reflecting language involves being able to provide a reasonable narration of the child’s experience, which includes observation of physical manifestations, labeling of antecedents, and use of emotional vocabulary to label the resulting emotion. Teachers can also promote this awareness by activities which encourage students to reflect on where in their body they feel certain emotions and drawing pictures of a time they felt a certain emotion. Further, teachers can anticipate emotions and preemptively label them as a means of supporting self-regulation. For

instance, prior to a school assembly, teachers might talk with the class about how the fun music might make them feel excited and want to move and dance, then generate strategies for managing and expressing the emotion appropriately.

Use of a gentle, curious attitude may also be helpful when a teacher is unsure of the child's experience, as it conveys that the adult is interested, while leaving space for the child to provide clarification. A teacher might say, "I saw you put your head down when we started talking about Picture Day, and it looks like you might be feeling a bit sad. Can you tell me about it?" In contrast, peppering a child with many questions may feel overwhelming, and is likely to lead to the child retreating inward and reducing his or her communication with the teacher. Additionally, speculating extensively about what a child may be worried, angry, or sad about may feel invalidating or introduce new worries that the child had not been experiencing.

Teachers working with younger children should also be prepared to communicate with children at their developmental level. This requires awareness that young children are limited in their ability to describe their thoughts and feelings. Emotionally competent teachers will use language that matches the child's developmental level. They will develop the ability to use activities such as drawing, music, and play to demonstrate and elicit emotions. Emotionally competent teachers will also enlist support from counselors or psychologists when consultation is warranted.

Emotionally competent teachers should also educate students, at their developmental level, about the sources and adaptive nature of emotions. This includes education about how emotions are elicited in relationships, as well as information about how emotions impact learning. Curiosity, anxiety, embarrassment, and boredom are particularly important emotions within the learning environment. Emotionally competent

teachers will help children understand that emotions are indicators or guides, which tell people about what they want or need. Additionally, teachers will help students to understand that emotions do not need to be acted on. This is often best taught by the use of mindfulness activities which promote a more distant observation of emotional experiences.

#### Teaching and modeling of self-soothing strategies

Children, even more so than most adults, often have difficulty dealing with their uncomfortable emotional experiences. Emotionally competent teachers can support development of self-soothing by modeling their own self-regulation strategies, and at times making their internal coping explicit. For example, in a classroom with a calm down space, the teacher at an opportune moment might say, “I am feeling very excited after playing with you at recess. I am going to use the calm down space.” In these moments, teachers can further narrate their own self-regulation as they verbalize counting slowly to 20, doing belly breathing, or watching the glitter fall in a sensory toy. Notably, such overtures should avoid narration that may scare children or portray the teacher as being out of control. It is less optimal to use example of anger or fear that may lead children to feel unsafe in the room.

Emotionally competent teachers understand that it is essential for children to learn and practice these self-soothing activities when they are calm. Directing a child to take a break in the calm down space is unlikely to be successful if the child has not been introduced to such a routine. Similarly, teachers can instruct children on how to use calming tools when they are calm and can provide models and visual reminders of these strategies for use when the child is in a distressed or dysregulated state.

#### Utilizing clarity, consistency, and praise to promote positive development

In the classroom, teachers have significant power to influence child development through the types of relationships they develop with students, and the way that they respond in emotional situations. Positive influence is generated through use of genuine, specific, labeled praise, which helps students to internalize what they *should* do, rather than what they *should not* do. Such praise also contributes to a sense of efficacy, as the child recognizes him or herself engaging appropriately in the expected behavior for the classroom. Literature suggests that an optimal ratio of four to five positive comments should be made for each redirection.

Teachers also exert positive influence when they are consistent and predictable. This style promotes a sense of safety, in which children feel comfortable and are able to engage more effectively in learning. It also helps them to develop an internal locus of control, where they are able to associate their own actions with predictable outcomes. Consistency and predictability are particularly important for students with disrupted or unpredictable relationships with caregivers, who may have difficulty anticipating consequences and outcomes due to inconsistencies in past encounters. Children who have experienced complex trauma show increased responsiveness to stress (Nemeroff, 2004), increasing the likelihood of negative responses to chaotic or unpredictable environments. Emotionally competent teachers learn that while students may push limits or break rules, they achieve a sense of security from consistent limit setting which promotes more optimal development.

Development of clear goals and expectations are also important for emotionally intelligent classrooms. Emotionally competent teachers articulate and remind students of expectations for various situations and pre-teach them prior to activities whenever possible. Such expectations are best when kept simple and should be framed with positive

verbiage that tells children what to do, instead of what not to do. The expectations to “be respectful” and to “be safe” can be extrapolated to most situations. Some teachers may also include an expectation that students “try their best” or “ask for help.” Emotionally competent teachers will provide opportunities for students to apply these principles, helping to define what they look and sound like across situations, and will revisit them regularly.

### **Rationale for the Importance of Teaching How to Instill Student Emotional Competence**

Teachers are in a unique position to promote social emotional learning. Emotional events are continually unfolding throughout the school day, providing ample opportunity to practice understanding emotions and using emotional regulation strategies. Classrooms are also filled with relational transactions. Student interactions with their teachers are important for children’s social-emotional development. Pianta and colleagues (2003) describe relationships between children and adults as “the primary conduit through which the child gains access to developmental resources” and the “primary engine of developmental change” (p. 204). The authors further indicate that the child’s ability to utilize these relational transactions appears dependent on the adult’s ability to accurately decode children’s emotional and social experiences, respond effectively to the child’s experience, provide indicators of warmth and acceptance, aid the child when needed, display regulated behavior themselves, and generate appropriate structures and limits. Finally, promotion of social emotional skills, such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making are beneficial to the overall classroom environment (Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning, 2013). As students are able to increasingly regulate their internal experiences, they are

able to more effectively engage in learning.

### **Illustrative Example in the Classroom**

Ms. Garcia notices that her students have been bumping into each other frequently as they traverse the classroom. She has also received increased complaints from students about other students poking them and engaging in other unwanted physical contact. Ms. Garcia decides that she will utilize the book “Personal Space Camp” (Cook, 2007) during a reading lesson as a means to promote student awareness of personal space and showing respect for one another. Later, Ms. Garcia notices several students leave appropriate space between one another as they line up for recess. She verbally praises the students, noticing how they are respecting the “personal bubble” or others. At the end of the day, she has a brief discussion with students about how they used their learning, and provides further praise and feedback to reinforce the learning.

### **Recommended Activities/Strategies to Teach How to Instill Student Emotional Competence**

1. Encourage preservice teachers to consider how they might implement emotional discussion in their classroom. These might include opportunities for self-reflection, reflection on events in the classroom, and dialogue about how to use emotion skills in the classroom.
2. Facilitate dialogue about how opportunities for modeling and explicit social emotional instruction might be embedded within the school day. Prompt them to consider how everyday emotional events can be used as a springboard for teaching.
3. Teach pre-ervice teachers how they might increase their use of descriptive emotional vocabulary in the classroom.

## **COMPETENCE 9: Maintaining Emotional Wellbeing**

*Emotionally competent teachers develop a sense of self-efficacy and professional capability that contributes to an overall positive sense of self of a professional, as well as a belief in one's capacity to manage complex emotional situations.*

### **Knowledge and Skills**

#### Maintain awareness of goals and values

The emotionally competent teacher holds a clear awareness of her goals and values, both personally and professionally. This includes an articulated vision of self in the teaching role, goals for the initial phase of the teaching career, and identified indicators of progress. In addition, awareness of values is also critically important as it influences attributions, responses to emotional situations, and what is deemed desirable or acceptable within the classroom.

These goals and values implicitly influence interpersonal transactions and making them explicit allows for enhanced awareness of their influence. If goals are not well-defined, or set too high, negative student emotions and behavior can elicit intense negative emotions from the teacher, as it may be perceived as an indication that the teacher is not meeting her goal.

The emotionally competent teacher understands the relationship between goals and values and emotional, interpersonal exchanges. It is important to maintain awareness of the various ways that student behaviors, emotions, and performance in the classroom can influence the perception of progress on goals. For example, a teacher who sets clear, attainable goals is likely to have a smaller emotional reaction to a student's poor performance on an exam. In contrast, a teacher who hopes to be a "good teacher" with students who "succeed" is more likely to have a more intense negative reaction, as the poor performance may be indication that she is not meeting her rather nebulous and lofty aspirations. Emotionally competent teachers will then develop explicit goals and values,



and critically evaluate whether they are reasonable and attainable. Emotionally competent teachers will also hold awareness that their students and their families, as well as even the school community, may not share the same goals. Recognition of this potential incongruence may mitigate the frustration that results when these goals inevitably clash.

#### Development of sense as a competent and efficacious professional

Emotionally competent teachers develop a positive image of themselves as effective professionals. To attain this, teachers learn to manage their expectations, setting reasonable goals and recognizing the limits to their influence. Further, teachers believe in all students' ability to learn, while recognizing that broad life experiences outside of the classroom may make learning more challenging for some students. In this way, teachers are confident in their ability to instill learning, but do not internalize misbehavior or student failures as signs of incompetence. Further, teachers develop confidence in their repertoire of skills, feeling prepared to act and respond in emotional situations. In this way, emotionally competent teachers will set goals that they are able to influence and control. They will benefit from focusing on improving their own teaching skills and practice, without being overly consumed by student outcomes, which they may not be able to control.

#### Maintaining separation between professional and personal identity

The professional whose identity is solely grounded in their occupation creates a high stakes environment in which professional struggles inform worth more globally. That is to say, a teacher who does not make space and foster a positive sense of self identity broadly is likely to internalize negative professional events as a more global reflection of worth. Teaching can be all-consuming, with teachers working long hours, bringing work home, and thinking about students often during their non-working hours. It

can impinge on other roles as parent, spouse, sibling, friend, gardener, cook, and so forth. If other roles are insufficiently attended to, professional success becomes increasingly important to overall sense of value.

### **Rationale for the Importance of Maintaining Emotional Wellbeing**

Perceptions of self-efficacy influence cognitions and emotions, pursuit of goals, locus of control, persistence in the face of difficulty, and resilience (Bandura, 1994). Higher levels of teacher self-efficacy have been associated with a variety of adaptive teaching behaviors and remaining longer in the teaching profession (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Efficacy is relevant for emotional transactions in the classroom. As an emotional situation is processed, the emotional experience is mediated by the perception of whether it is manageable and can be effectively coped with (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988). Feelings of self-efficacy promote adaptive responding to emotional situation. Teachers' self-efficacy in handling problematic behavior in the classroom is shaped by several factors, including their goals, ability to regulate their own emotion, and the school culture. These skills influence teacher's perceptions of students, particularly the level of competence they feel, as well as how confident they feel they can respond effectively (Tsouloupas et al., 2010). Self-efficacy appears to reduce use of blame, feelings of hostility, and experiences of anger. Further, higher levels of self-efficacy support realistic goal setting, as teachers are aware of potential hurdles and feel equipped to meet challenges.

### **Illustrative Example in the Classroom**

Ms. Lin is a first-year teacher who has just gotten back the results of the state tests from her students. She is horrified to see that approximately one third of her class did not meet standards for proficiency on the reading assessment. Ms. Lin had envisioned herself

as a helper for struggling students and as someone who would promote learning in an underserved community. She feels an overwhelming sense of shame, and wonders if she has made things worse for her students. She begins to contemplate whether she should have pursued a teaching career after all. As she goes on to start the afternoon reading lesson, she sees the class looking distracted and acting silly. She sighs and feels exhausted, wondering whether this lesson will even matter.

### **Recommended Activities/Strategies to Teach Maintaining Emotional Wellbeing**

1. It is important for preservice teachers to understand the multi-faceted nature of the teaching role as they enter the profession. This understanding helps teachers to feel prepared to engage in the various roles they will undertake and to seek roles that may be interesting or fulfilling. The activity on the following page highlights the various roles teachers fill and encourages reflection of how individuals feel they will respond in such roles.
2. Encourage discussion of individual goals and values. Educate pre-service teachers about goal-setting, including both short-term and long-term goals. Help them to more specifically consider what goals they would like to attain and how they will know when they have reached them. Similarly, support preservice teachers in developing goals that focus on developing their teaching skills without being reliant on student data as a primary indicator of success.

## Sample Activity

Ask teachers to review the list of roles that teachers may assume as part of being a “teacher.” (next page)

Mark (+) if it’s something you enjoy or would want to engage in more frequently.

Mark (–) if it’s an aspect of the job you dislike or would like to do less.

Mark (O) if it is an expected role and you have a neutral feeling about it.

Mark (X) if it is not part of the teacher role from what you’ve observed so far.

Mark (?) if you are unsure.

Then engage in a discussion about the experience. You might specifically ask teachers to consider:

- *Which labels do you ascribe to as part of your teacher identity?*
- *Which ones are most rewarding? Most exhausting? Which ones do you resent? Which would you like to engage in more of?*
- *What are my goals as a teacher? Are they reasonable/feasible?*
- *How often will I want to reevaluate my goals?*
- *How will I know if I’ve met my goals?*
- *How can I move past setbacks?*
- *Where can I find professional support? What healthy models are available?*

*The many roles of being a teacher*

_____ Mentor	_____ Supplemental parent
_____ Data collector	_____ Social worker
_____ Cheerleader	_____ Nurse
_____ Psychologist	_____ Tutor
_____ Activity developer	_____ Lesson planner
_____ Dietician	_____ Meal giver
_____ Disciplinarian	_____ Leader
_____ Role model	_____ Supply provider
_____ Referee	_____ Email replier
_____ Entertainer	_____ Advice giver
_____ Meeting attendee	_____ Accommodation provider
_____ Fundraiser	_____ Secretary
_____ Peace-keeper	_____ Janitor
_____ Confidant	_____ Nurturer
_____ Paperwork completer	_____ Problem solver
_____ Learner	_____ Abuse-detector
_____ Behavioral support	_____ Conflict resolver
_____	_____
_____	_____

## **Chapter 4: Future Directions**

This project offers an integrated overview of teacher training as it pertains to social emotional development, as well as conceptual foundations for promoting teachers' emotional competence in the classroom. It will be important to further distill how this information can be incorporated within teacher training, to delineate who will provide such training, and to determine when in the training sequence it will be most useful. In addition, this project raises broader questions about teacher and child learning tasks and what requirements are implemented as standards. Finally, it will be important to empirically test these competencies in order to assess utility and to direct future intervention.

There are a number of questions related to implementation that are beyond the scope of the current project. In particular, it will be important to consider when during the teacher training sequence this training will be most valuable and effective. Current literature suggests that teachers benefit from being able to make practical connections between learned material and classroom experience. This indicates that learning about emotions in the classroom is best sequenced after pre-service teachers have begun to engage in some sort of field experience. On the other hand, it is important that this training take place prior to teachers independently managing classrooms as early professionals in order to reduce risk of burnout. This training then appears best suited to advanced teacher trainees who are in the latter part of their training. Because not all states require graduate training, year three or four of teacher training appears to be an ideal time window. Further collaboration with educational programs would be beneficial to assess how this content may complement the current training sequence.

In addition, it remains unclear who would be best suited to implement this type of training. From this perspective, the ideal instructor would possess sufficient knowledge of teacher roles, responsibilities, and experiences; awareness of typical school policies and procedures; and sophisticated psychological competence that can be applied to an academic context. Given that the number of individuals with this broad training are limited, it would likely be valuable to adapt these competencies into a more targeted curriculum which can be implemented by a professional who may lack this depth of knowledge. Similarly, it may be useful for coursework in this area to be co-taught in such a way that psychology and education are adequately represented within the training.

This project also highlights that emotions in the classroom must be understood through lenses of developmental psychology, educational psychology, teaching, social psychology, clinical psychology, school psychology, and policy development. In order for this rich array to be represented in teacher education, it will be important for various disciplines to work collaboratively. Such an interprofessional effort is critical to effectively preparing pre-service teachers for the complex undertaking of teaching. This is also a sensitive task, as teachers are often the target of criticism and questioning, and may not wish to have other disciplines offering their perspective. In order to successfully augment current pedagogy, it will be important that other disciplines also recognize the limitations of their experience, and thoughtfully consider how other bodies of knowledge may be effectively applied to the classroom. Cross-discipline collaboration in academic settings would be a welcome starting point for achieving these ends.

On a broader scale, efforts at the policy level to acknowledge the importance of emotions in the classroom will be critical to downstream changes within teacher training,

classroom curricula, and district policies. At present, broad understanding of academic progress is hinged upon pedagogy, without adequate consideration of the developmental, emotional foundations that support learning. Students are asked to complete tasks which are developmentally incongruent, and are not provided sufficient time or resources to develop the requisite skills for learning. Standardized testing has resulted in emphasis on internalizing and retaining facts, with less resources devoted to more emotionally laden tasks of developing critical problem solving and the ability to work collaboratively with others. Continued efforts to elucidate the importance of developmental frameworks for learning will be important in making the policy level changes necessary for change at both the classroom and teacher training level.

Finally, empirical investigations of the current framework will be important for determining next steps for refining these competencies and making recommendations for implementation. In particular, assessment of teacher training on teacher experiences and retention through the first five years of teaching will be quite important. In addition, measures of teaching quality, student engagement, and learning outcomes may all contribute to analysis of the effects of increasing teacher emotional competence. Finally, it will be helpful to quantify how enhanced teacher emotional competence influences develop of student emotional competence and related skills.



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