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The Effectiveness of Spiritual Wellness in the Classroom to Promote Resilience

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STUDENT WELLNESS: Effectiveness of Spirituality in the Classroom

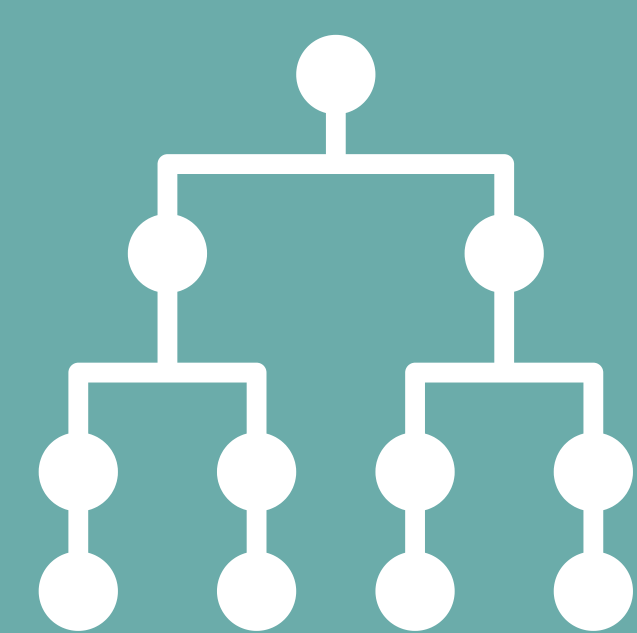
Tori Horton, Emma Normand, Ben Smoot, Amy Violante, Emily Brooke, Ashton Smith, & Anisa N. Goforth, PhD

METHOD

The current study is part of a larger research project examining educators' perspectives of social-emotional learning (SEL) and spirituality in the public-school setting, the relationship between SEL and spirituality, and cultivating them for students' overall wellness.



N=12



Snowball Sampling



Zoom Interviews

Using qualitative methods, we analyzed public school teachers' perspectives on spirituality and approaches used to support spiritual development in the classroom to promote resilience.



CRESP
Culturally Responsive
Evidence Based Practices
in School Psychology

INTRODUCTION

Spirituality is a crucial aspect of a child's development but it is often overlooked and misinterpreted in school settings.

Research Aim: The purpose of this research is to examine teachers' approaches and activities in the classroom to foster students' spiritual wellness.

Spirituality, unlike religion, (a more concrete organized system of belief), is an abstract internal mechanism that can provide a sense of purpose, drive conscious intention, and expand conscious understanding of oneself in the context of something larger. It envelops compassion, loving-kindness, service, engagement, and connection towards others (Cervantes & Parham, 2005).

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) is an integrative process of students' development that enhances knowledge and provides skills that help support student's emotional and behavioral growth, including self-awareness (identifying emotions & accurate self-perception), self-management (regulating emotions and goal setting), social awareness (empathy & respect for others), relationship skills (communication, listening, conflict resolution), and responsible decision-making (problem-solving) (CASEL, 2017).

Student Wellness: Spirituality and SEL components often overlap. SEL can support Spirituality, and their collaboration can:

- Promote well-being, academic performance, and resilience
- Support youth navigating challenges of daily life
- Protect against negative mental & behavioral outcomes
- Predict lasting benefits in adulthood such as overall well-being, life satisfaction, prosocial behaviors, and positive emotions
- Foster a sense of meaning & purpose
- Improve attitudes towards self & others

RESULTS

Findings of Spiritual Development in the Classroom



WONDER

Providing opportunities to express wonder & ask questions. Responding with care & encouragement.



FRIENDSHIP

Relationships, caring for others, finding connection, and belonging. Experiences of empathy and compassion towards others.



NATURE

Spending time in nature, allowing opportunities for exploration, and being connected to world around us.



MINDFULNESS

Slower-paced, quiet activities that allow reflection, listening, and concentration ie. yoga, stretching, mindfulness, breathing, and reading.



COMMUNITY

Helping others, moving beyond the self, finding meaning, and being an active participant of community through service.

DISCUSSION

Results and conclusions revealed common themes related to spirituality. For example, participants acknowledged the importance of spirituality and SEL for students' overall well-being, and that teachers play an active role in the well-being of their students. Activities teachers implement in their classrooms to promote spiritual development include being in nature, yoga, mindfulness, breathing exercises, quiet time, and involvement in the community. Participants also expressed concern regarding potential pushback within the community related to teaching topics involving spirituality. Collaboration between teachers, administrators, and community members can help foster an understanding of spirituality and how it's integration can support children in the classroom and beyond.