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Increasing Self-regulation Skills in Kindergarten Students

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A Capstone project for the Bachelor of Arts in Human Development and Family Science

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Introduction

Many young children have not yet developed social emotional skills. A lack of social emotional learning and self-regulation skills may result in children who may be unable to manage big emotions such as anger. Without the skills to process these big emotions, they may experience conflict in peer relationships leading to them potentially acting out. Children who learn social-emotional skills inherit self-regulation techniques that help combat emotional distress and encourage regulation. In order to support children in developing emotional regulation skills, I have created a two-day lesson for Kindergarteners at Robert Down Elementary school.

Needs Statement

Self-regulation skills are fundamental for a child's development and learning (Niu, et al. 2022). Emotional self-regulation refers to the set of cognitive processes by which emotions are self-regulated (Beauregard, 2007). When children have poor regulation, problems with behaviors and school performance develop (Webster, 2015). Due to a lack of social-emotional and self-regulation skills, children may not develop sufficient skills to treat others with kindness. Once children are taught how to self-regulate their emotions they attain the critical life skill of behaving in a socially acceptable way. Some methods to ensure these skills are developed include self-regulation techniques such as breathing and learning about feelings and emotions.

Self-regulation is the ability to remain calm, cope with big emotions, adapt, and respond appropriately to the environment (Yoo, 2018). Studies show that guardians are influential role models in teaching children self-regulation skills (Lerner, et al. 2021). For example if a child and guardian are eating ice cream cones together and the guardian drops their ice cream cone then reacts with a shout, it may show the child that it is okay to shout like that and to have outbursts

when similar situations happen. Teachers and guardians can also teach calming techniques.

Controlled breathing is proven to reduce stress and encourage calmness in children and adults.

In one study, teaching young children slow inhales and exhales gives tranquility to a region of the brain where stress and panic are located (Fodor & Hooker, 2008). In order for someone to calm down they need to have steady breathing. Fast and uncontrolled breathing increases heart rate whereas slow and controlled breathing decreases heart rate which calms the body.

Caregivers and teachers are the most influential on children, therefore it is important that they teach these techniques to their children so they can learn to properly manage their emotions.

Social emotional development means children start to understand who they are, what they are feeling and what to expect when they interact with others (Churchill & Lippman, 2016).

When children enter the age where they begin to go to school, this is preschool and kindergarten age 3 to 6, they have recess and play time. During this time they typically interact with others.

Their environment creates a space where they can play and make connections with others. In a study, environment, play, and relationship take part in the significant role in the child's social and emotional development. When one of these three elements do not develop the other two are affected dramatically (Karyn et al. 2022). According to Engelmann and Tomasello (2019) respect is needed to develop lasting relationships. To respect someone means valuing that person for their contribution to society, community, or the group (Sawyer, 2019). The need for peer respect provides lasting effects through life. The positive outcome of peer respect in relationships provides a range of crucial social emotional skills. For instance, empathy, cooperation, and problem solving. Negative outcomes with poor to no peer respect in relationships may cause bullying, exclusion, and deviant peer processes (Pepler & Bierman, 2018). Conflict may arise in relationships. Conflict is defined as a condition marked by lack of agreement. In order to resolve

conflict for young children, skills need to be developed. In a study between conflict and violence, research shows conflict does not naturally lead to violence. When children are not able to resolve their own conflict they need the support of an adult to guide them. When children are not supported through conflict that is when violence may come into play (Chen, 2003). Developing conflict resolution skills are useful for young children while developing healthy relationships.

Given that self-regulation, peer respect and conflict resolution are areas of concern, I have developed a two-day lesson plan on social-emotional development and self-regulation for Kindergarten students at Robert Down Elementary School in Pacific Grove, California.

Development

Emotional development is an important part of a child's development. Emotions and feelings help build close relationships with peers and adults, and form one's identity. It is crucial for young children to understand the emotions they experience on a daily basis and how to control them. If a child is unable to understand and control their emotions they will have trouble forming relationships, Which can lead to later life mental health problems. This is a critical age for children because the developmental period for understanding feelings and emotions is occurring. They are learning how and why feelings and emotions occur and they are not only recognizing their own feelings and emotions but they are learning how to identify others feelings and emotions too. These emotions vary from anger, happiness, sadness, excitement and frustration. For my project, I educated the kindergarten students from Robert Down Elementary School in Pacific Grove, California. My curriculum included helping the students in identifying emotions, demonstrating self- regulation techniques and places they can use these techniques.

Consideration of Development

My project will be conducted in a Kindergarten class at Robert Down Elementary in Pacific Grove, California. The data found on the School Accountability Report Card (SARC; 2021-22) for 2021-22 school year, total student enrolment are 442 students. Out of the 442 students 1.4% are American Indian/ Alaskan Native, 7.9% Asian, 2.7% Black/African American, .9% Filipino, 18.8% Hispanic, .7% Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander, 62.4% White, and 4.5% are two or more races. The SARC also states that 17% of the 442 students were socioeconomically disadvantaged, 4.3% English learners, and 10.9% were students with disabilities. There were 61 kindergarten students reported in the SARC for the 2021-22 school year. I conducted my project in one kindergarten class that consists of 20 students. It is my understanding that the participants in my study were reflective of the population of the school. The content covered was aimed towards younger students and would be too straightforward for older students; therefore, the content would need to be altered for their level of learning. Instead of reading the two books provided and the two worksheets provided to the kindergarten students I would show a video of how older students can practice breathing when they are feeling a certain way. I would still provide a worksheet but I would alter it so the older students can demonstrate they know when and where they might use the breathing tool.

Learning Outcomes

I provided two, 20 min lessons to the kindergarten students at Robert Down Elementary School in Pacific Grove, California.

By the end of the project, students will be able to:

1. Identify 3 emotions
2. Identify one place to use self-regulation techniques
3. Demonstrate one self-regulation technique

Method

I have created a two-day lesson on social-emotional education and self-regulation skills for 20 kindergarten students at Robert Down Elementary School in Pacific Grove, California. First I introduce myself to the students and explain that I was there to teach a lesson on emotions and conflict amongst each other. To begin the lesson, I ask the students how they are feeling and why they might be feeling that way. I then read the book, *The Color Monster* by Anna Llenas . This book explains a variety of emotions and how those emotions might make someone feel. Colors associated with specific emotions are utilized. *The Color Monster* focuses on six primary emotions that are age appropriate for Kindergarten students. I paused in between each emotion and color and let the students process the color and emotion. The end of the book shows the color pink, which is a new color and emotion. At the end of the book I asked the students what they thought pink meant. The students answered with a variety of answers, for example love, love around the world and all of the love. I brought six color stickers to match each emotion in the book. After reading *The Color Monster*, I asked the students to pick one of the six color stickers from the book according to how they are feeling and ask them to draw an illustration of that feeling on a blank piece of paper. While the students worked on the worksheet I walked around and asked the students to read their sentences and tell me about their illustration.

On day two, I asked if the students remembered what book we read the previous day. I thought this was a simple question for the students to answer because if they hadn't known or remembered what book was that we read, I could remember and inform them. I reminded the students that we read the Color Monster and they began raising their hands because they wanted to talk all about what we did that day. After we discussed what we did I told the students again

why I was there and what I was going to be doing with them on this day. I asked them if they know any ways of calming themselves down when they are feeling uneasy or worried. I read the book, *Breathing is my Superpower* by Alicia Ortego . The book is focused on feeling calm and peaceful. It gives a way to practice breathing if someone is feeling worried and describes circumstances to use this breathing tool. After reading, I practiced the tool with the students a few times, so they understand how to do it. We all stood up and put our hands out to practice our rollercoaster breathing. For the activity, I provided paper with lines and had the students write out a sentence describing how they feel when they are using the breathing tool, it looked something like this, “When I feel angry I will use the breathing tool.” The sentence the students will write provides content used from the previous day and the current day.

Results

Learning outcome one was for the participants to identify three emotions. While sitting in a circle, I asked them one by one, and each student was able to identify and share three emotions to the class. Based on the discussion, 20 out of 20 participants were able to identify three emotions verbally. By discussing emotions in a group, it allowed the students to hear everyone's ideas. Some students repeated others and some students identified other emotions that were not repeated. When a student did not know, or was unsure of an emotion, I was able to ask the class if they knew what that specific emotion was and if they could give an example of that emotion. Once a student or two demonstrated the emotion I would clarify that the student understood and then gave my example. After reading *The Color Monster*, students were given six different color stickers. They were able to choose one color of their choice depending on how they felt at that moment. If they wanted to share why they felt that way they were given the option to, if not they were able to say “no thank you, I do not want to share.” These stickers represented the colors of

each emotion in the book. This allowed the students to identify how they were feeling and allowed them to share if they wanted to. Overall, I believe that this learning outcome was met.

Learning outcome two had the participants identify one place to use self-regulation techniques. After reading, *Breathing is my Superpower*, the participants were given a paper with the top half blank and the bottom half had lines for sentences. Each participant wrote a sentence which stated, “I can breathe when I am...” then they would illustrate where it was that they used their self-regulation technique. Out of the 20 participants, 18 identified a place where they can use a self-regulation technique. Of the 20 participants, two demonstrated when they breathe. Therefore, I believe that this learning outcome was met.

Learning outcome three was for the participants to demonstrate one self-regulation technique. After reading, *Breathing is my Superpower* the participants all stood together and demonstrated the breathing technique that the book mentioned. By placing their hands in front of them, fingers spread wide, using the pointer finger of the other hand, the participants moved up the side of one finger and down the other side. The goal of this demonstration was, when moving the finger up the other the students would take a deep breath, when going down the finger, the students would exhale. Overall, I believe that this learning outcome was met because the students all stood together and demonstrated their five finger breathing method.

Discussion

Out of three learning outcomes, I believe all of them were met. The participants seemed very invested in each lesson I provided them with and appeared to really enjoy the activities that correlated with the lessons. Although some students may not have written the exact sentences I provided them, they took a different approach, which I think was appropriate for the activity. Based on the results gathered from the participants, it is clear that each student took in the

knowledge and understood how to regulate their emotions using breathing tools. Every student was able to identify and recognize each other and their own emotions along with other primary and secondary emotions including anger, fear, sadness, joy, happiness and love. In order for the students to fulfill the learning outcomes, it was necessary to identify emotions and demonstrate when and how to use the self-regulation technique. Emotional development was then evident because the outcomes were met.

In terms of diversity, I believe my project was inclusive to all students in the kindergarten classroom. The materials provided were appropriate for their age level of reading and writing comprehension allowing all students to participate. Each kindergarten student was competent enough to read and write in English.

Overall, the lesson I provided to the kindergarten students successfully developed an understanding of emotions and regulation. During the lesson activities, I evaluated each student while they worked on their activity which showed evidence that the learning outcomes were met. Something I would do differently would be providing more regulation tools. For example, I could have taught them about creating space. By providing more than one regulation tool, the students could have options. This is important in case one regulation tool is not working at the moment. I feel proud that I was able to provide early age children with positive emotional regulation tools to benefit their development.

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Figure 1

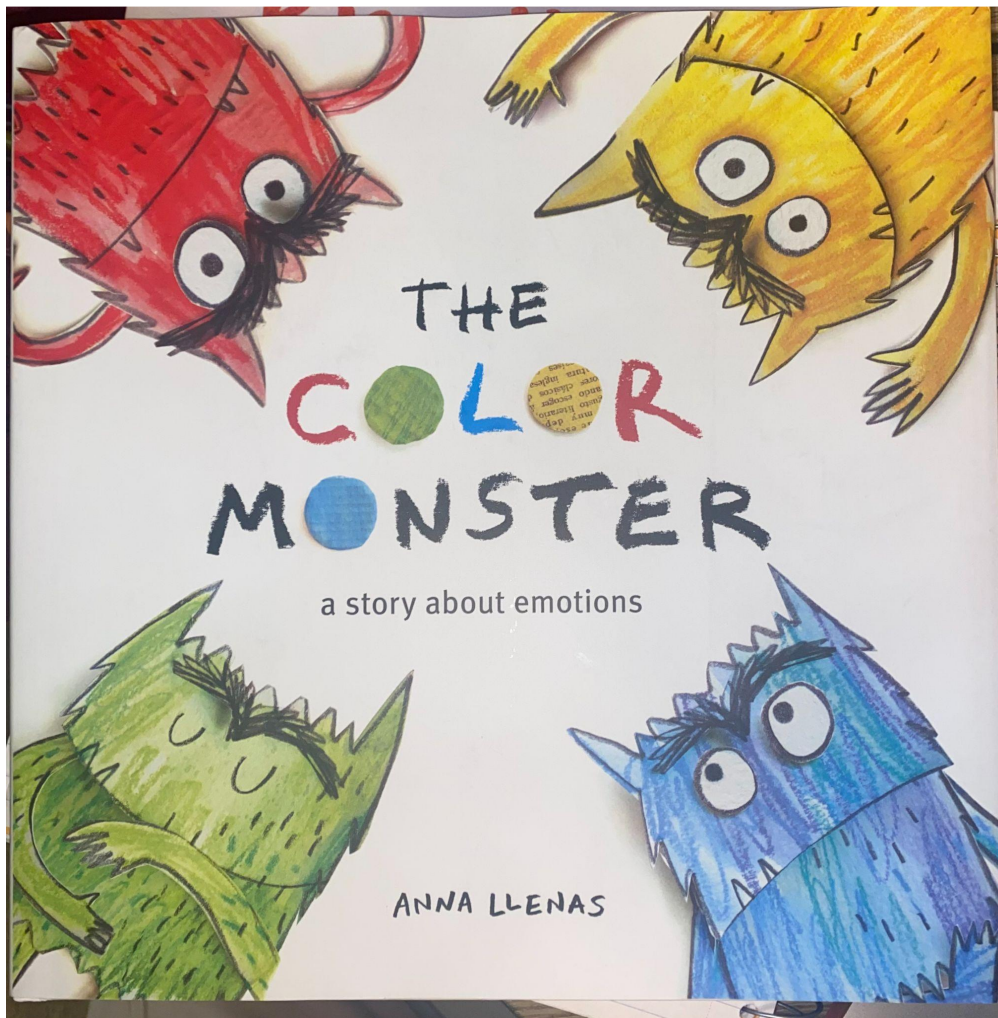


Figure 2

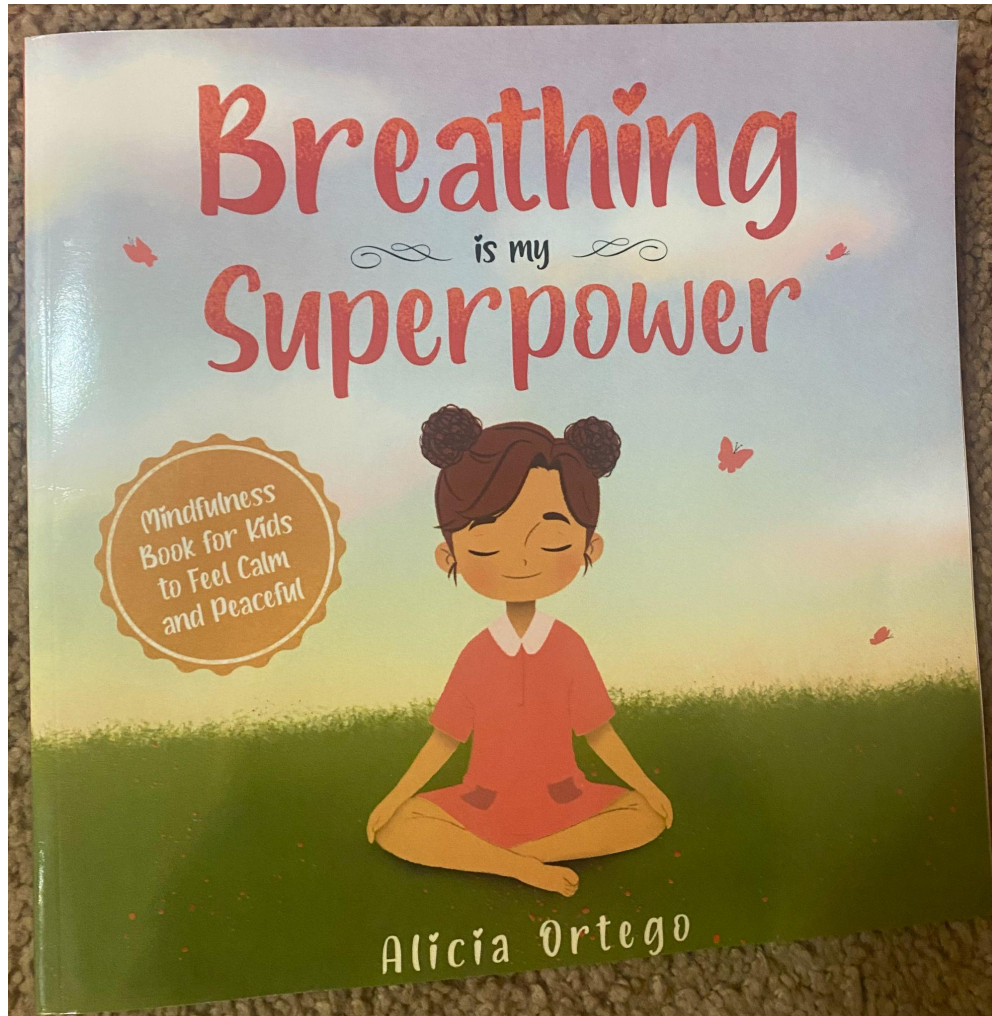


Figure 3



Table 1

List of emotions + colors from The Color Monster book

Yellow - Happy

Blue - Sad

Red - Mad

Black - Scared

Green - Calm

Pink - Love

Table 2

List of responses from day one (emotions)

Student 1	Sad, mad, happy
Student 2	Happy, joy, calm
Student 3	Happy, mad, sad
Student 4	Happy, mad, calm
Student 5	Love, happy, joy
Student 6	Sad, mad, angry
Student 7	Sad, happy, mad
Student 8	Happy, sad, excited
Student 9	Happy, sad, mad
Student 10	Joy, calm, happy
Student 11	Mad, happy, sad
Student 12	Happy, sad, mad
Student 13	Happy, sad, mad
Student 14	Love, happy, sad
Student 15	Happy, mad, sad
Student 16	Mad, angry, love
Student 17	Sad, happy, calm
Student 18	Super Happy, love, calm
Student 19	Spectacular, happy, love
Student 20	Happy, love, calm

Table 3

List of responses from sentence I can breathe when _____

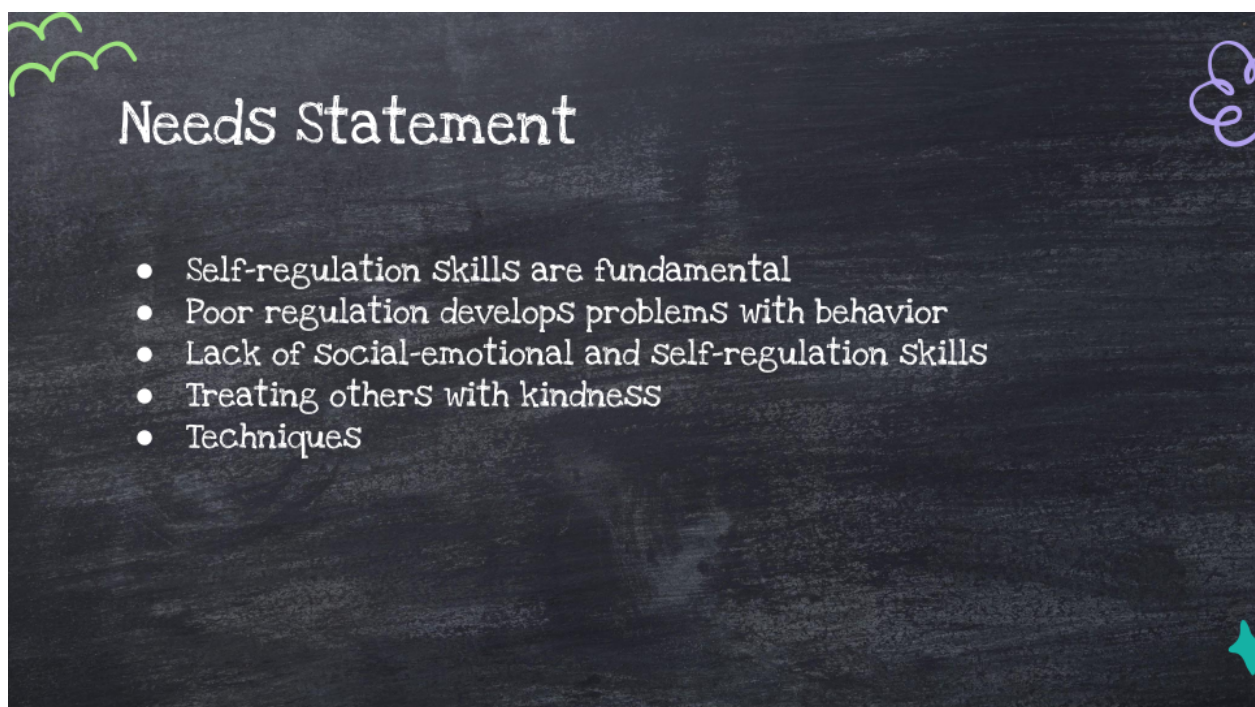
Student 1	I can breathe when I am sad.
-----------	------------------------------

Student 2	I can breathe when I am running.
Student 3	I can breathe wen mie brother bites me.
Student 4	I can breathe when I feel sad
Student 5	I can breathe when I am scared
Student 6	I am sad wen mI sister rant PlaYing with me
Student 7	I can breathe when I sleep
Student 8	I can breathe when I am mad.
Student 9	I can breathe when my friend wont lisin to me
Student 10	I can brea the when I em Jumbeen in the bul
Student 11	I can breathe when my brother is mad
Student 12	I can breathe when my brother yels
Student 13	I breath when I run
Student 14	I can breathe when my frend wont play wih me
Student 15	I can breath wen I am in the darc
Student 16	I can breathe when I feel scard
Student 17	I breath wen I do not no wat to do
Student 18	I can breathe when mom get mad
Student 19	I can breathe when I play
Student 20	I can breathe when I am mad

Table 4

Appendix A

Capstone Presentation



Development

Emotional Development

- What feelings and emotions are
- How and why they occur
- Recognizing your own and others
- Developing effective ways to manage those emotions
- Influence confidence

Participants

Robert Down Elementary School in Pacific Grove

- 20 Kindergarteners
- 9 girls
- 11 boys



Learning Outcomes

By the end of the two day lesson, students will be able to:

L01
Identify three emotions

L02
Identify one place to use self-regulation techniques

L03
Demonstrate one self-regulation technique

Method

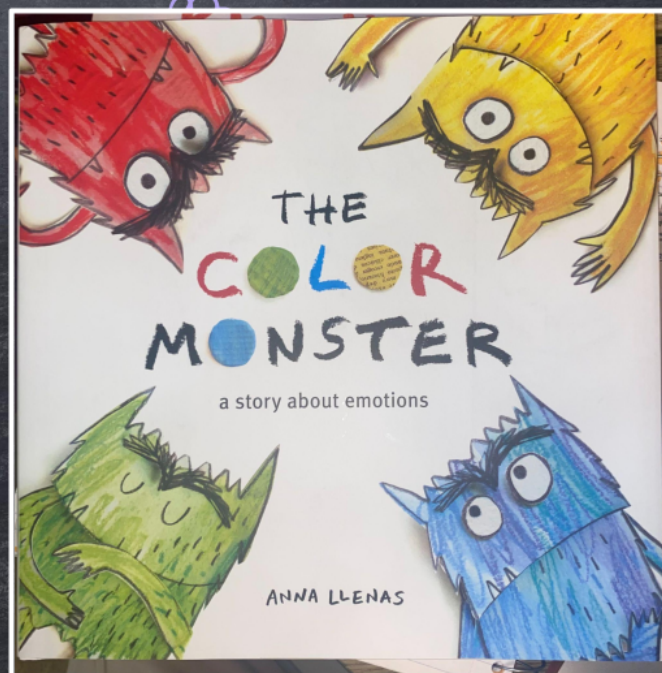
Day 1

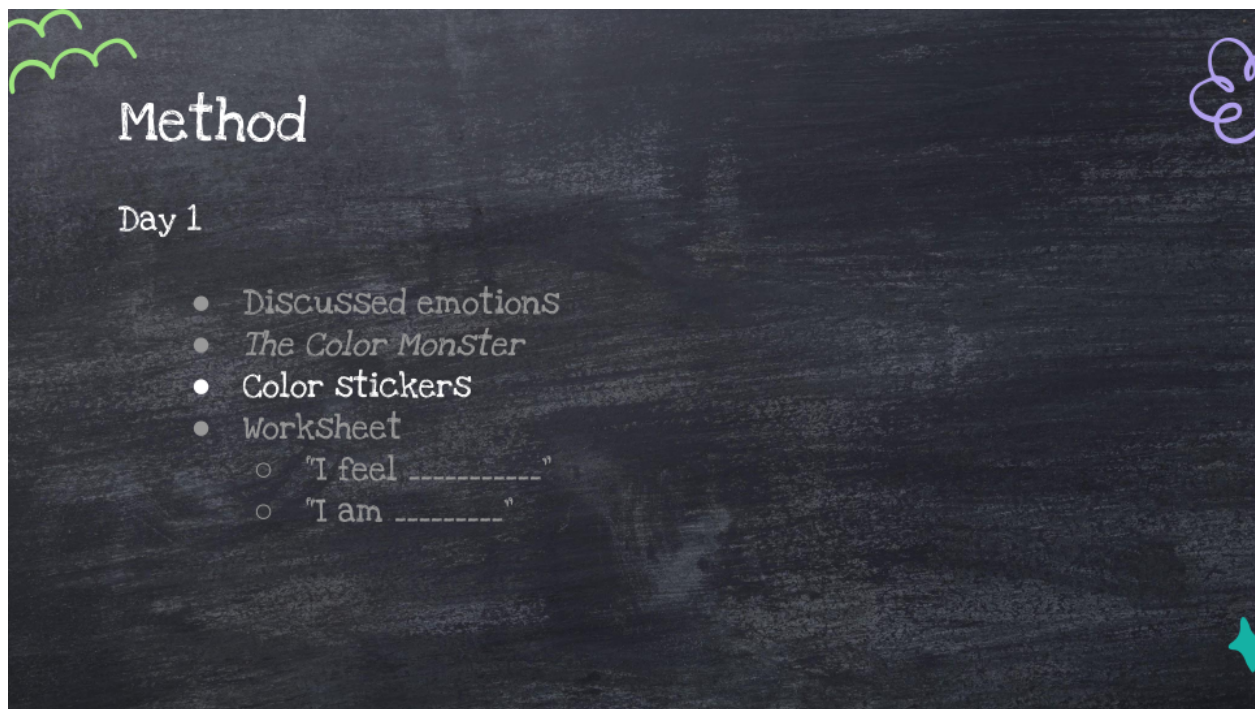
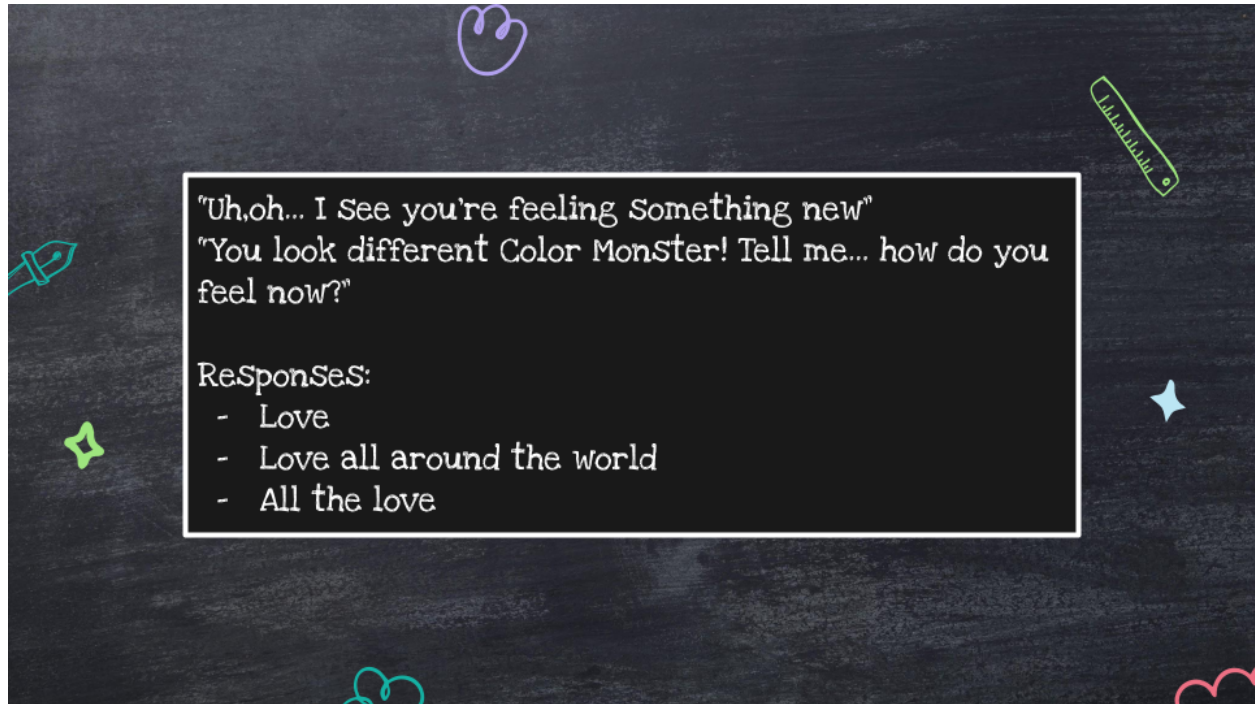
- Discussed emotions
- *The Color Monster*
- Color stickers
- Worksheet
 - "I feel _____"
 - "I am _____"

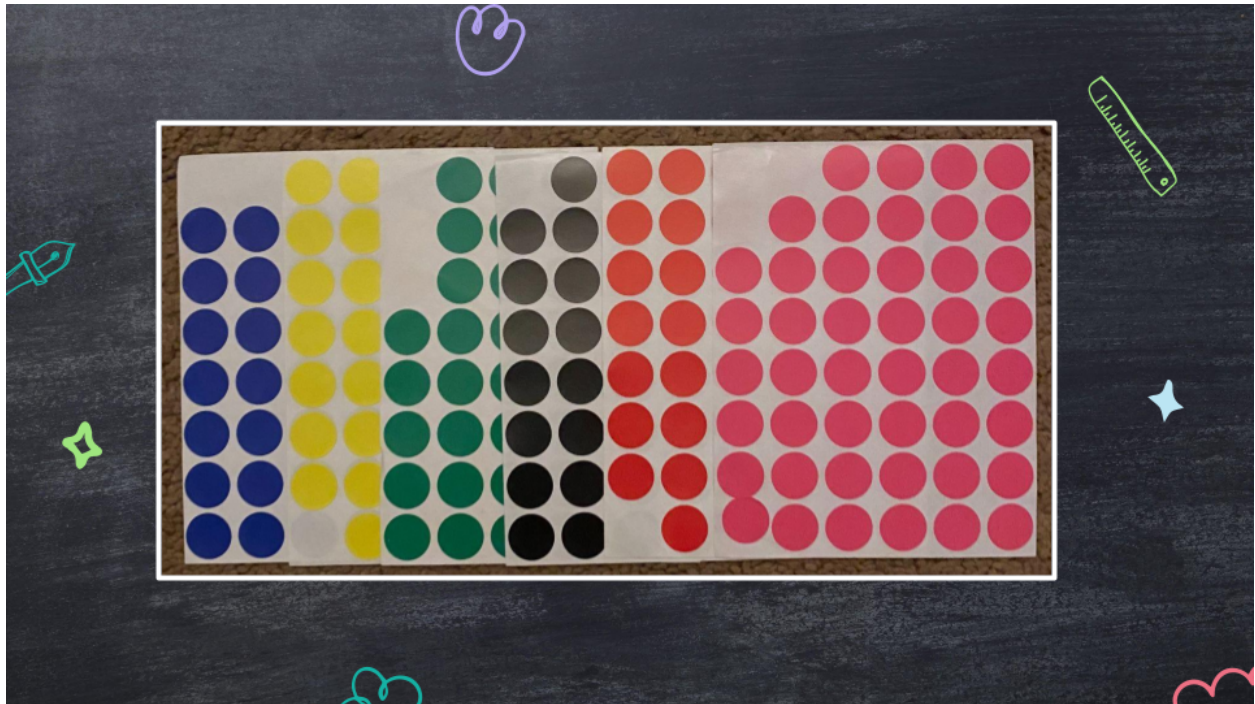
Method

Day 1

- Discussed emotions
- *The Color Monster*
- Color stickers
- Worksheet
 - "I feel _____"
 - "I am _____"







Method

Day 1

- Discussed emotions
- *The Color Monster*
- Color stickers
- Worksheet
 - "I feel _____"
 - "I am _____"



Method

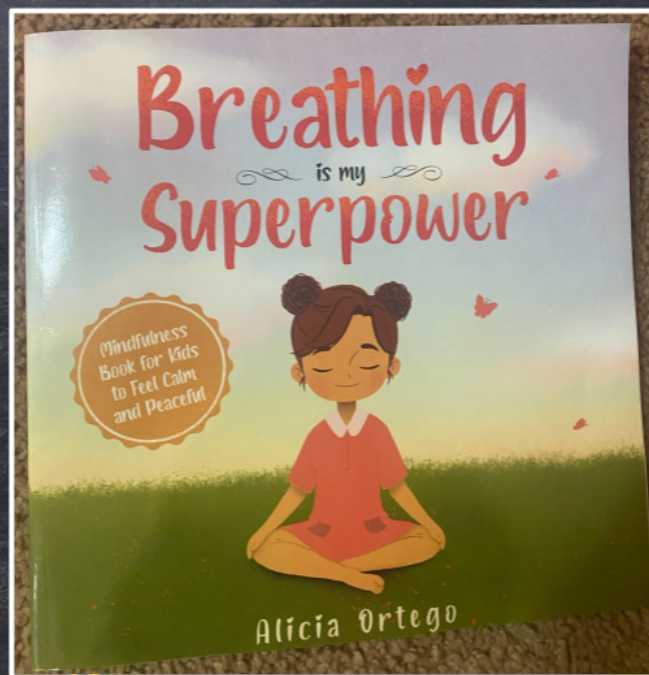
Day 2

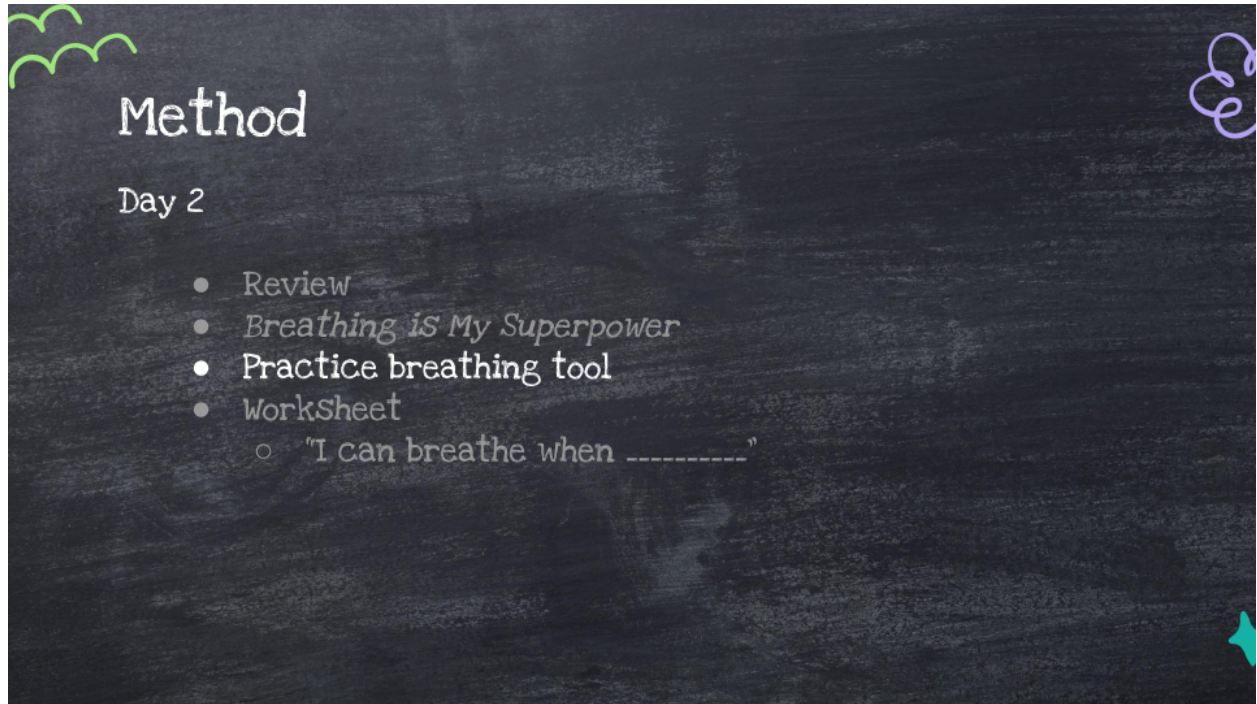
- Review
- *Breathing is My Superpower*
- Practice breathing tool
- Worksheet
 - "I can breathe when _____"

Method

Day 2

- Review
- *Breathing is My Superpower*
- Practice breathing tool
- Worksheet
 - "I can breathe when -----"

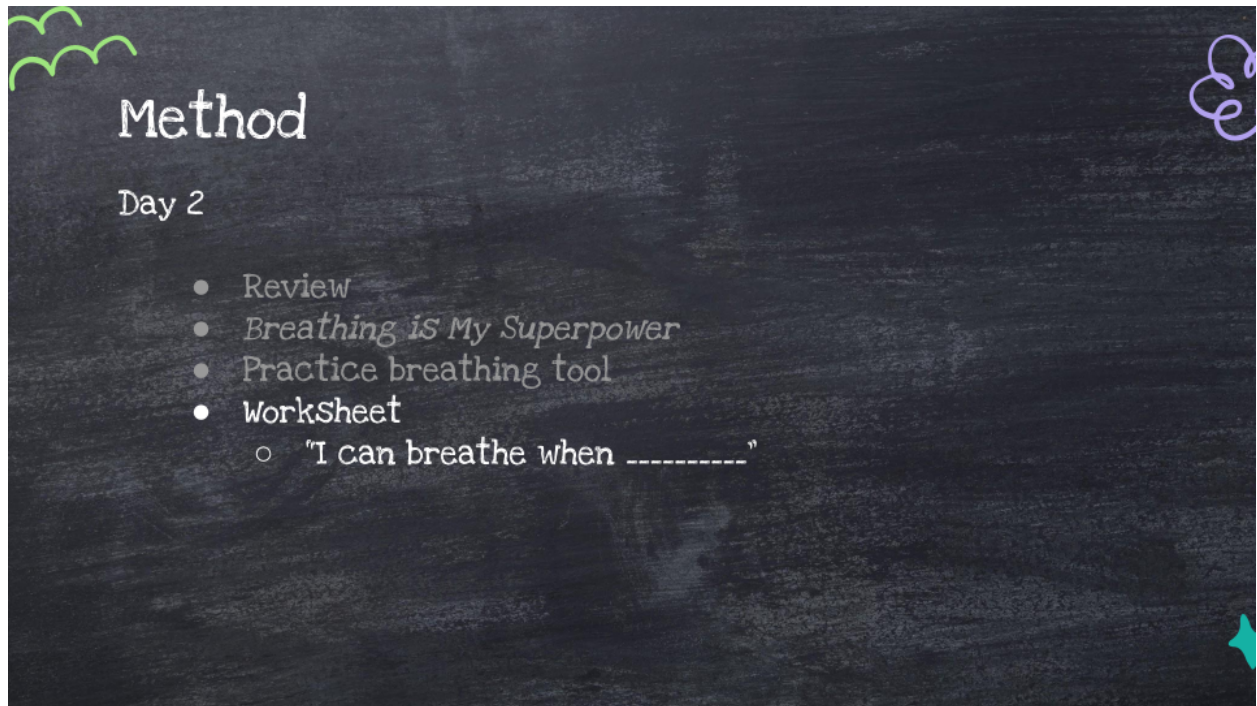


A chalkboard-style graphic with a dark grey background. In the top left corner, there are three green, curved lines resembling birds or waves. In the top right corner, there is a purple, swirling line. In the bottom right corner, there is a small teal starburst. The text is written in a white, chalk-like font.

Method

Day 2

- Review
- *Breathing is My Superpower*
- Practice breathing tool
- Worksheet
 - "I can breathe when -----"

A chalkboard-style graphic with a dark grey background. In the top left corner, there are three green, curved lines resembling birds or waves. In the top right corner, there is a purple, swirling line. In the bottom right corner, there is a small teal starburst. The text is written in a white, chalk-like font.

Method

Day 2

- Review
- *Breathing is My Superpower*
- Practice breathing tool
- Worksheet
 - "I can breathe when -----"

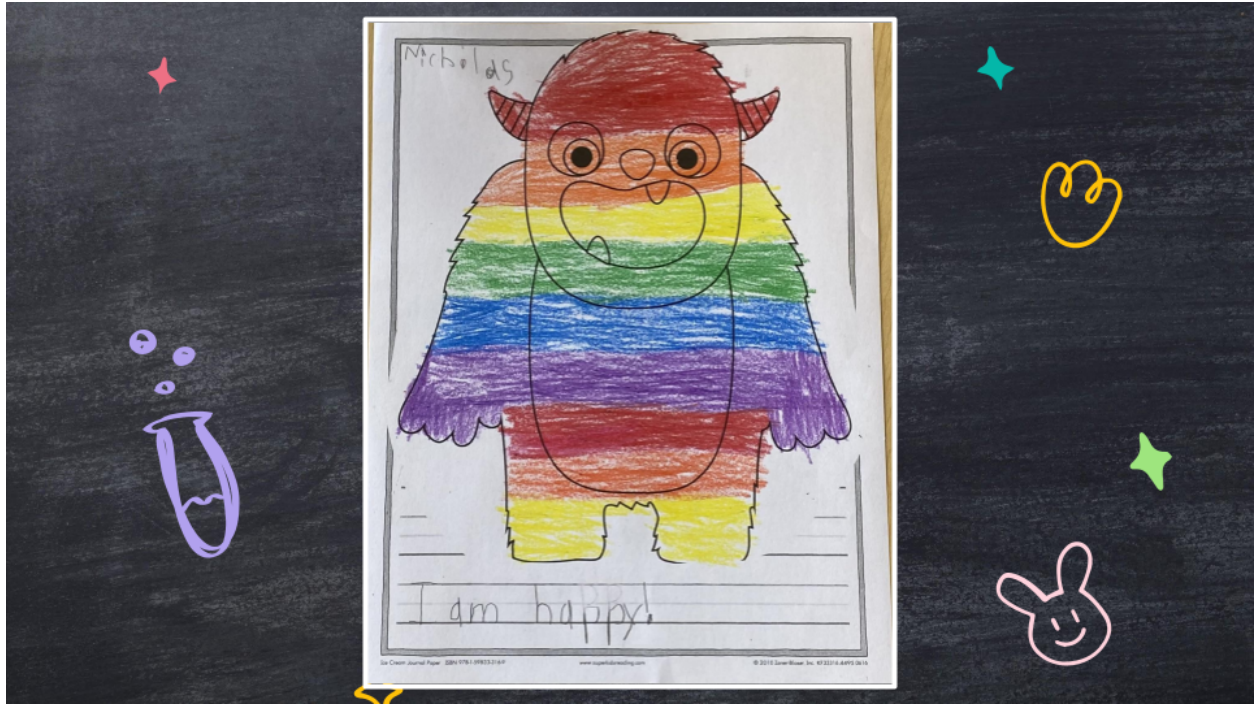


Results

Learning Outcome 1:

- Identify three emotions
- Successfully met





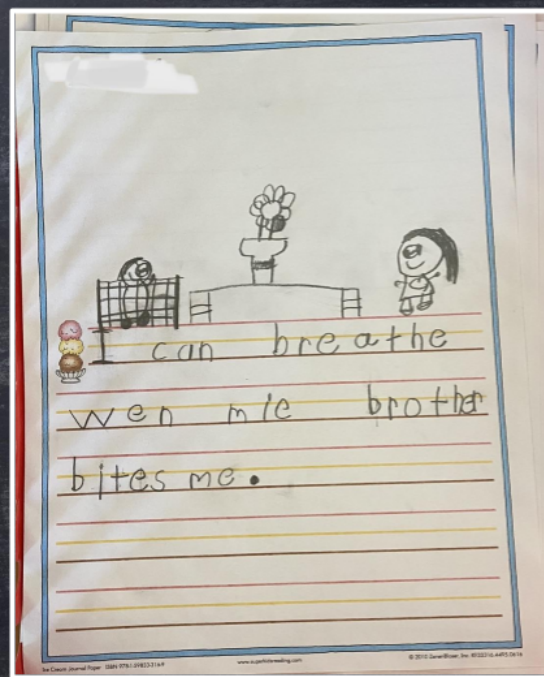
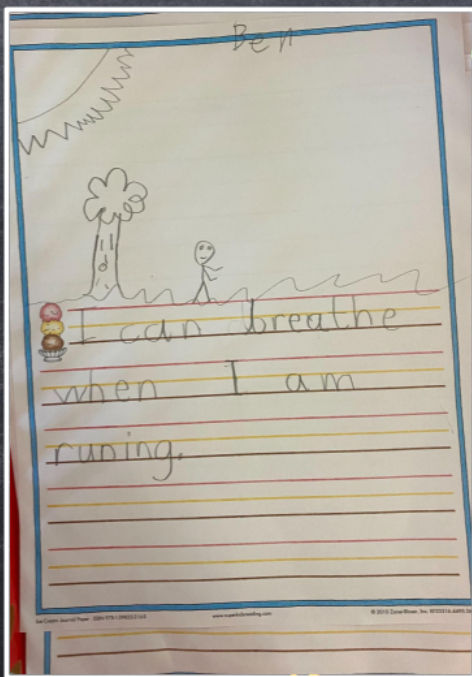
Student 1	Sad, mad, happy
Student 2	Happy, joy, calm
Student 3	Happy, mad, sad
Student 4	Happy, mad, calm
Student 5	Love, happy, joy
Student 6	Sad, mad, angry
Student 7	Sad, happy, mad
Student 8	Happy, sad, excited
Student 9	Happy, sad, mad
Student 10	Joy, calm, happy

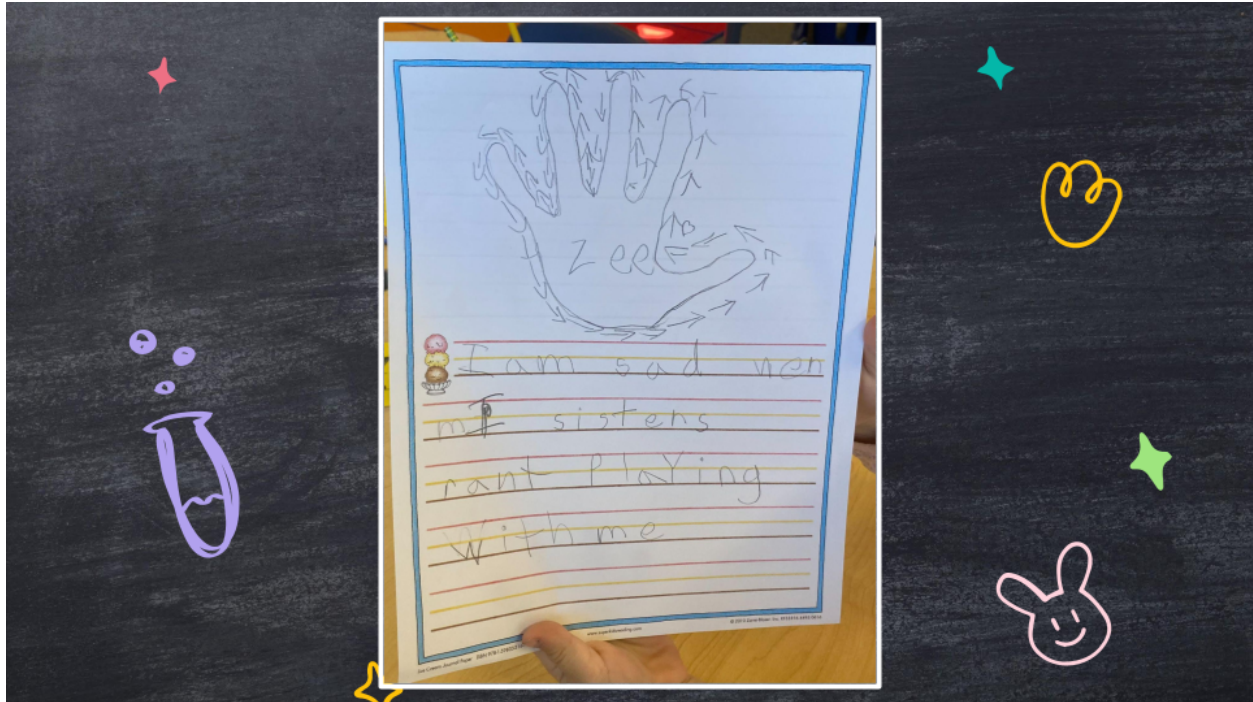
Student 11	Mad, happy, sad
Student 12	Happy, sad, mad
Student 13	Happy, sad, mad
Student 14	Love, happy, sad
Student 15	Happy, mad, sad
Student 16	Mad, angry, love
Student 17	Sad, happy, calm
Student 18	Super Happy, love, calm
Student 19	Spectacular, happy, love
Student 20	Happy, love, calm

Results

Learning Outcome 2:

Identify one place to use self-regulation techniques
- Successfully met





Student 1	I can breathe when I am Sad.	Student 11	I can breathe when my brother is mad
Student 2	I can breathe when I am running.	Student 12	I can breathe when my brother yels
Student 3	I can breathe wen mie brother bites me.	Student 13	I breath when I run
Student 4	I can breathe when I feel Sad	Student 14	I can breathe when my frend wont play wih me
Student 5	I can breathe when I am Scared	Student 15	I can breath wen I am in the darc
Student 6	I am Sad wen mI sister rant PLAYing with me	Student 16	I can breathe when I feel scard
Student 7	I can breathe when I sleep	Student 17	I breath wen I do not no wat to do
Student 8	I can breathe when I am mad.	Student 18	I can breathe when mom get mad
Student 9	I can breathe when my friend wont lisiin to me	Student 19	I can breathe when I play
Student 10	I can brea the when I em Junbeen in the bul	Student 20	I can breathe when I am mad

Results

Learning Outcome 3:

Demonstrate one self-regulation technique
- successfully met

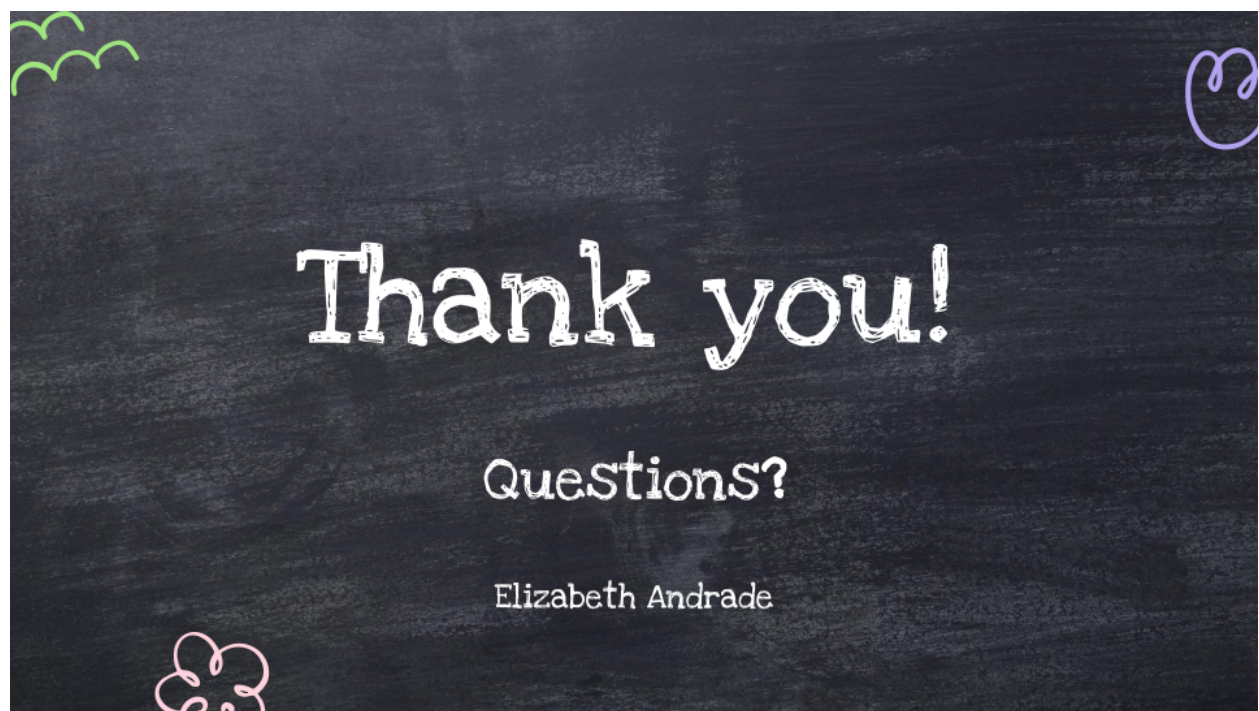
Student 1	SUCCESSful
Student 2	SUCCESSful
Student 3	SUCCESSful
Student 4	SUCCESSful
Student 5	SUCCESSful
Student 6	SUCCESSful
Student 7	SUCCESSful
Student 8	SUCCESSful
Student 9	SUCCESSful
Student 10	SUCCESSful

Student 11	SUCCESSful
Student 12	SUCCESSful
Student 13	SUCCESSful
Student 14	SUCCESSful
Student 15	SUCCESSful
Student 16	SUCCESSful
Student 17	SUCCESSful
Student 18	SUCCESSful
Student 19	SUCCESSful
Student 20	SUCCESSful



Discussion

- Thought projects was successful overall
- Something I'd do differently
 - Provide more self-regulation techniques



Thank you!

Questions?

Elizabeth Andrade