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## Implementing Social Emotional Activities into the English Language Arts Curriculum

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Implementing Social Emotional Activities  
into the English Language Arts Curriculum:

By

Allison Sherbel

2023

Master's Project

Submitted to the College of Education

At Grand Valley State University

In partial fulfillment of the

Degree of Master of Education



The signature of the individual below indicates that the individual has read and approved the project of *Allison Sherbel* in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Literacy Studies.

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## Acknowledgments

As a teacher working in an urban first grade classroom, I quickly recognized that my students did not have the skills to understand and manage their emotions or the skills to interact effectively with their peers. Therefore, it became my mission to find a way to improve my students' social emotional skills by creating an educational environment where everyone felt safe and ready to learn. I first sought help from my colleagues. It seemed that everyone understood the fact that SEL was important, but trying to find the time to implement another curriculum was futile, no matter how helpful it could be. This dilemma encouraged me to develop this project.

Thank you to my parents for their constant unwavering support, Cody for his encouragement, and Elizabeth Stolle for her constructive feedback throughout this project.

Because of them, I am truly proud of this project.

*Emotions are a part of who we are, so this is something we must express,  
Modeling, collaboration and interactions during ELA, something all teachers must address.  
Social emotional learning into our daily routine will help students manage what they feel,  
Showing empathy, building relationships when they are young is a very big deal.  
So let's delve deeper into building literacy skills with tools students should know,  
Through valuable social emotional experiences, our students will feel supported and grow.*

Allison Sherbel

### **Abstract**

Over the last decade social emotional learning has revealed itself to be an important element in students' academic growth. Social emotional learning requires students to learn the skills necessary to effectively communicate with others as well as maintaining a positive classroom environment, where all students feel supported, safe and heard. When students become more connected to their own emotions, they are developing an essential skill that will help them inside and outside of the classroom. Research shows that implementation of social emotional lessons can improve both immediate and long-term social-emotional ability as well as academic growth. Despite this research, teachers have struggled to implement social emotional lessons into their classroom. The focus of this project is to show how social emotional learning can be seamlessly implemented into the English language arts curriculum. This paper provides strategies/lessons to achieve this objective. During English language arts instruction, providing lessons that encourage whole group discussion, collaboration, metacognitive thinking strategies, and emotional literacy, will help students improve their social emotional skills. Additionally, they are becoming more connected to the literature by developing their tier 2 vocabulary and deepening their understanding of characters' emotions within a story. The English language arts curriculum provides natural opportunities to support students in the area of social emotional learning and combining these is the missing piece for academic growth.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

### Problem Statement

Ideally, literature teaches readers about the world around them, including how to navigate through difficult emotions. (McTigue et al., 2015). If students cannot identify their emotions however, they often cannot connect to the text in terms of vocabulary, character development and problem solving. In 1994, when the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning first introduced the term *social emotional learning (SEL)*, it was a novel expression. Over the last two decades, SEL has grown as an important indicator for academic achievement (An et al., 2021). Social emotional learning is defined as how children learn to manage emotions, form healthy relationships, and handle challenging problems in life effectively (Lee et al., 2022). If students have not learned how to manage their own emotions, they are often not ready to learn or absorb information appropriately, thus, just supporting academics is insufficient for educational success (Lee et al., 2022). Problems that stem from students' past adversity can disrupt their ability to socialize and learn. When we consider SEL as an essential factor in students' lives, we can identify positive links between the SEL programs implemented and the students' self-awareness and academic performance (Lee et al., 2022). SEL activities are fundamental because they encourage students to make personal connections to the text and teach children how to express certain emotions (Coleman, 2021). To improve students' academic performance and social interactions, SEL should be implemented into the ELA curriculum.

### **Importance and Rationale of the Project**

Research shows that implementation of SEL interventions can improve both immediate and long-term social-emotional ability, resulting in academic gains and making a meaningful difference in school and in the children's lives (Dyson et al., 2019). Students can become emotionally disconnected to the classroom when they are not asked about their feelings and emotions (Coleman, 2021). Although SEL has not been studied for that long, it is a growing concept that is deemed a valid and important part of students' day-to-day life. Studies also show SEL programs are improving behavior and increasing academic achievement, most notably at early childhood and elementary levels (Dyson et al., 2019). Even providing students with SEL skills at an adolescent age has had a positive outcome in their psychosocial health and success in education (Marion et al., 2022).

Children who enter school with a better understanding and ability to use social emotional skills are more likely to receive positive teacher feedback that will encourage the student to learn (McCormick et al., 2021). Unfortunately, students that have underdeveloped social emotional skills may have negative experiences that will affect their academic abilities (McCormick et al., 2021). Students in a low income environment have a higher risk of exhibiting a lack of social emotional skills, abilities to self-regulate, and conflict resolution strategies (McCormick et al., 2021). Including SEL is thought to help close this "achievement gap" for students from economically stressed backgrounds (Humphries, 2022). Child development domains which include physical, cognitive and social emotional are all interconnected, and if one is not working to its capacity, the other areas can be negatively affected and decrease the student's overall well-being (Saitadze, 2021).

Teachers understand that students can experience emotional turmoil stemming from various social stressors (McCormick et al., 2021). The massive and systemic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic certainly affected all members of our society, especially young children who in many ways were the most vulnerable (Aburkayek, 2022). Previous psychosocial problems were very often exasperated, creating unanticipated and unique realities for which all of us, especially children, could not readily adjust (Günindi, 2022). All school personnel had to rapidly assess novel situations and provide a wide range of SEL activities tailored to the unique difficulties of each student.

### **Background of the Project**

Teachers have always observed that many students have a difficult time with self-regulation, controlling their emotions, working through problems and a lack of self-efficacy skills (Merchant, 2023). However, this is a novel revelation that has just recently been deemed an important practice to study. The past approach of children being 'seen but not heard' is no longer an adequate way to work with students (Lines et al., 2022). With modern pressures, social media, and the COVID-19 pandemic, now more than ever, students need to be heard and they need to have a deeper understanding of what they are feeling (Günindi, 2022). This includes a safe place to express their feelings and themselves. This practice does not make them weaker, but instead, will make them more resilient and caring adults.

## **The Long-Term Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Studies show that students had a more difficult time with social compatibility when they were virtual versus face to face (Günindi, 2022). Specifically, the pandemic brought a lot of changes to everyday life overnight. With social restrictions, there was an elevated level of stress, a feeling of loneliness, and a rise in anxiety (Monninger et al., 2023). If we can strengthen the students' emotional well-being, it will strengthen their academics as well (Taylor, 2023). Teachers are attempting to find a practice that can incorporate certain self-efficacy skills and self-regulation skills that will benefit the student in and out of the classroom (Merchant, 2023).

## **The Impact of Social Media**

When considering social media, students are starting to embrace online media platforms at a very young age (Pavić, 2023). When children are on social media, they are neglecting real life social interactions (Monninger et al., 2023). Additionally, there is a rising concern that social media has a negative impact on the students' mental health (Langnes, 2023). Some teachers, unfortunately, might not understand the complex way students use social media. New pedagogies are needed to show these students the positive and negative impacts of social media (Langnes, 2023).

## **Academic Expectations**

Over the last decade, what students need to know at the primary grade levels has changed (Bassok, 2016). The rigor for these lower grades has become more in depth and more complex, so expectations are high. The material that centered on play and the exploration of social interactions has been replaced by test preparation and a focus on academics (Bassok, 2016). These high academic standards could lead to anxiety and low

self-efficacy (Bassok, 2016). It was never expected that students entering kindergarten would know how to read, but in recent years, if they are not reading, they are starting at a disadvantage (Dombkowski, 2001). Unfortunately, kindergarten is no longer considered a transitional period for children into formal education; it is now a race to learn and master the emergent stages of core subjects (Costantino-Lane, 2021). Experts cautioned that a push for academics could lead to frustration and academic failure when not considering the students' social, emotional and physiological needs over the course of kindergarten (Dombkowski, 2001).

SEL should not be considered an addition to education, but as a fundamental element of it. That is, SEL provides an important role in giving students tools needed for future success, both in school and in life. The best way to help students learn is to help them feel safe and make sure their voice is being heard. In doing so, students become more confident individuals who are ready to learn and capable of setting goals for themselves. When a student is given the tools to use SEL within the ELA block, then they can apply it to the larger educational context and to other subjects.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this project is to demonstrate how adding SEL into the daily curriculum is important. Seen as a more common pedagogy in research, SEL has been identified as an essential part in the success and growth of children (An et al., 2021). When focusing on SEL development, students learn how to recognize and manage feelings, control impulses, communicate effectively, and develop empathy for others. When pairing SEL into the ELA curriculum, important literacy skills develop as well. Keeping the schools' ELA mandated curriculum in mind, adding SEL activities during the structured literacy time will help improve students' understanding of character development, enhance their vocabulary skills, and add detail to their writing.

One way to add SEL to the ELA curriculum would be similar to the 5-step process for enhancing vocabulary which was cited from Hagelskamp (2013). The introduction of vocabulary focuses on emotions and feelings as a way to help increase understanding of character development and as a way to introduce the idea of text-to-self connections. These activities will occur during the morning meeting routine and/or during a read-aloud. In doing this routine, it will improve literacy as well as students' conflict resolution skills, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The activities provided during this meeting will demonstrate how teachers and administrators can effectively and effortlessly incorporate this SEL program into their own ELA curriculum. This includes role playing, suggestions for effective read-alouds, and strategies for vocabulary selection and enhancement.

### **Objectives of the Project**

An objective of this project is to show how providing SEL activities can help students identify and manage their own emotions, show empathy for others, ask for help when needed and develop self-regulation skills. Using SEL consistently in the ELA block will give students a routine that they will look forward to. Hopefully, with a set schedule, the students will have an easier time when transitioning between academic activities. When students can understand and implement SEL skills, they can be more prepared for challenges that occur outside the classroom.

Another objective of implementing SEL in the ELA curriculum is strengthening the students' literacy skills throughout all aspects of ELA, including: vocabulary, writing, comprehension, and character development. By helping students empathize with characters in a story, make more text-to-self connections, and use more tier 2 vocabulary, a teacher can see how using SEL can transfer into different aspects of literacy. Additionally, these SEL skills can be reused into all of the components of ELA. When one element of literacy is reinforced, the others will follow suit.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Cross curricular learning:* An approach that utilizes teaching practices and strategies to focus on the teaching of other subject domains as these are implemented in different school subjects (Agathopoulou, 2014).

*Schema:* How individuals organize and use their prior knowledge and experiences (Auhl & Bain, 2021).

*Social Emotional Learning (SEL):* A part of education that links academic knowledge with a specific set of skills important to success in schools, families, communities, and life in general (Elias, 2003).

*Self-efficacy:* The belief people might have in their abilities to meet the challenges facing them, complete assigned tasks successfully and achieve set goals (Otieno Odanga & Odhiambo Aloka, 2022)

*Self-regulation:* Self-regulation refers to mental processes by which individuals control their attention, thoughts, emotions, and actions to improve their performance or achieve a goal (Merchant, et al., 2023)

*Text-to-self connection:* When students make connections between text and their life (Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority, 2021). Students can do this by reading the text, connecting what they read and using what they read to connect it to what has taken place in their lives (Sweet, 2021). Connections to the students personal experiences allow the reader to empathize with the content or topic (Mantei & Fahy, 2018)

*Text-to-text connection:* When students made connections to other texts such as other stories, movies or images (Mantei & Fahy, 2018).

*Text-to-world connection:* When students can make connections between a text and the world, this allows the reader to consider events and people beyond their immediate experiences and to extend their understanding of people and cultures (Mantei & Fahy, 2018).

*Turn and Talk:* The teacher pauses large-group instruction and divides children into pairs or small groups. This invites children to talk with their peers and can help develop language (Hindman, 2022).

*Zone of Proximal Development:* The space between what a child can do independently and what they can do with help of an adult or collaborating with peers (Zaretskii, 2009).

*The Zones of Regulation®:* This framework is designed to teach self-regulation skills that can be applied to real life situations (Mason, 2023).

### **Scope of this Project**

For this project, the participants will be lower elementary students, specifically students in 1st and 2nd grade. However, the project could be adapted and used in all grades by applying it to that grades' specific ELA curriculum. Giving students a foundation of SEL understanding at any age is a valuable skill that they can use in and out of the classroom. For this project, SEL instruction will be implemented during times when ELA is being addressed.

For the purpose of this project, these SEL activities will not be addressed in all core subjects. This project will be limited to SEL in the structured ELA block. Additionally, this project will not be addressing the use or implementation of these SEL activities throughout the school. Although having administrative support is essential for this project to be successful, the research written will be looking at implementing these activities solely in ELA and the benefit it has to the students.

As previously stated, SEL was not something that was introduced into class culture until after the turn of the century and even then was an unsure practice. A limitation to this project, therefore, is the lack of empirical research providing evidence of the long

term effects of incorporating SEL into the ELA curriculum. Studies have not been able to track SEL program participants through a longitudinal study so researchers cannot articulate the long-term impact of these interventions in conjunction with ELA (McCormick et al., 2021). Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic is a confounding variable that also impacts long term studies. The unusual practice of shutting down schools and moving to online learning was unprecedented (Rwodzi, 2021), and ultimately we don't know the full effect on students.

Another limitation is the time constraints teachers face when adding SEL into their daily schedule. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was passed in 2002 as a way to improve public primary and secondary schools, which created an increased accountability for schools, school districts, and states (Ngai, 2006). Teachers' roles have evolved with new demands that result, in part, from the NCLB Act. This has placed additional pressures and accountability on teachers and schools. Under NCLB, districts that fail to make adequate yearly progress become subject to increasingly serious consequences and interventions (Ransford, 2009). With state and administrative pressure, there is a lack of time to implement other important pieces to their curriculum such as SEL. Teachers report feeling strained to complete lessons within the allotted time, and they either condense or modify lessons, as a result (Hunter, 2022).

Additionally, administrators need to be supportive of teachers' interest and implementation of SEL activities throughout the school day. When administrators offer flexibility with instructional schedules to alleviate time constraints and allow the SEL lessons to replace teacher-generated morning meeting lessons (Hunter, 2022), teachers will be more likely to implement SEL into their ELA curriculum. Without a systemic approach to implementing SEL school-wide, success could be limited.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

This project explores the importance of incorporating social emotional learning (SEL) in the English language arts (ELA) curriculum. Incorporating SEL into the ELA block can be beneficial for both the students' literacy skills as well as for their social interactions (Coleman, 2021). The project begins with explaining why SEL is a novel expression and how it has become so important and influential in many schools (An et al., 2021). As previously stated, social media pressures (Pavić, 2023), the COVID-19 pandemic (Monninger et al., 2023) and the increasing pressure for academic success (Bassok, 2016) all have negatively affected students' social emotional health. In Chapter 2, this paper will delve deeper into the theories that support SEL. These theories include Sociocultural Theory, specifically Zone of Proximal Development as well as Social Constructivism Theory. Vygotsky focused on the social interactions that students have with their peers and how these interactions can build on a student's own schema. This chapter will identify ideas which highlight the importance of incorporating SEL into the ELA curriculum. These include, emotional literacy, metacognitive thinking strategies, collaborating with peers and lastly, adding play-based learning into the lower primary grades.

## **Theoretical Frame**

### **Sociocultural Theory**

Vygotsky defines Sociocultural Theory as how meaningful human interactions play an effective role in learning (Alkhudiry, 2022). This principle describes how mental and emotional behavior can be restructured as the students interact with culturally developed forms of interactions throughout the student's life. Peers, family, teachers and others share in developing an individual's cognitive learning, and sociocultural functions. This social interplay identifies and examines how people use objects and tools, both physical and psychological, to structure their communication with others, and develop their thinking process (Lantolf, 2023). This social impact that a student has can shape the student's mental and emotional abilities (Alkhudiry, 2022). An important construct within Sociocultural Theory is known as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). ZPD is defined as the space between what an individual can do independently and what an individual can only do with adult assistance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Noroozi, 2020). Scaffolding is a process within ZPD that helps support students as they become more capable independent learners by gradually decreasing the support (Noroozi, 2020).

### ***Zone of Proximal Development***

As stated, ZPD examines the students' interactions with others and the influence that it has on their potential development. ZPD also assesses readiness in leadership education and empathy development (Taylor, 2022). By using dialogue and reflection strategies, students are better prepared for potential conflict. Introducing scaffolding strategies can help elicit leadership qualities in students which they can then apply outside of the classroom.

Gehlot (2021) shares that incorporating ZPD can enhance students' performance socially and academically in a short period of time. Whether in an individual or group setting, ZPD can help to develop improvement in the students' areas of need. With modeling and scaffolding, those areas of weakness can develop into an area of strength. Gehlot suggests that initially, a teacher should implement scaffolding in a lesson, and then slowly decrease teacher assistance with the hope that students will become independent with that task. To challenge the students further, a teacher will encourage scaffolding among peers. Having students with certain academic strengths can assist those who need additional support. In doing so, the teacher will have created a strong sense of community in the classroom where everyone is feeling supported in a positive way.

### **Social Constructivism Theory**

Social Constructivism Theory focuses on the collaborative nature of learning and encourages students to take control of their own learning. Using play-based strategies, Vygotsky believed that cognitive growth occurs within social interactions (Ndlovu, 2023). By using students' prior knowledge and understanding and building upon that, students are positively impacted in their social interactions with others. When educators use Social Constructivism Theory in their teaching practices, it questions the students' answers to elicit higher order thinking. Ideally, the students should engage in these activities in collaboration with their peers. In a hybrid or virtual learning classroom, however, collaboration with other students could be a challenge. Without face-to-face opportunities, students could find it difficult to interact with one another. Yet, there are ways to achieve engagement through virtual learning. For example, a teacher could implement breakout rooms sessions or

discussion posts. Having a class community that can work together as well as recognize and accept different cultures is an essential part of creating new meaning and making meaning with their classmates.

There are various ways students learn, as well as various methods that teachers use to elicit learning (Deulen, 2013). Teachers often use an andragogical approach to their teaching. This means that the students hold the primary responsibility for their learning, while the educator is the facilitator. Differing from Ndlovu (2023), Deulen (2013) applied Social Constructivism Theory to a hybrid virtual learning classroom and still engaged in critical social interactions. Deulen's hybrid classroom gives the students opportunities to have those essential face-to-face social-interactions, while opening them up to a whole new learning environment and the benefits of being online. Learning is influenced by the social process that shapes the students' experiences. Without the context of a community, learning cannot take place.

Similarly, Aravind (2023) used blog posts through social media as an effective method to enhance Social Constructivism Theory within a virtual learning format. English language learners (ELL) benefit most from this type of virtual learning since it helps to enhance their vocabulary development. Aravind adds that by using social media, students can exchange ideas with their peers and even strengthen their knowledge on the key words given by the teacher. This idea of trading information develops their schema and builds their self-efficacy with their new found knowledge. Social Constructivism Theory is nurtured by social contact and engagement with others whether that be in person or even virtually.

## **Review of Literature**

Rae (2007) concluded that all children can benefit from becoming emotionally literate. Once they develop adequate social and emotional skills, they can modify their own behaviors. Finding this balance, is stated to be the ‘missing piece’ that students need to have self-efficacy and engage effectively with the academic material. When considering the ELA curriculum, adding SEL activities can develop important social skills such as self-regulation strategies and communication skills. As for the academic component, SEL can improve students’ tier 2 vocabulary, writing and comprehension of a text.

### **Emotional Literacy**

Emotional literacy is a particular SEL skill that encourages students to recognize and manage their own emotions, have a sense of empathy and adapt to situations around them (Aktepe, 2022). Specifically, emotional literacy in the school environment focuses on students learning and maturing by giving them an outlet to experience and think about their emotions during class time (Çetin, 2023). Emotional literacy is a key factor in learning achievement and leads to students being more aware of their emotions (D’Amico, 2022). Emotional literacy has several key factors that improve student success which include wellbeing, emotionality, self-control, sociability, and auxiliary facets (Andriyani, 2022).

Hagelskamp (2013) focused on recognizing, understanding, labeling, expressing and regulating emotions through the scheduled ELA block, which shows that emotional literacy skills may be a central component of the overall social-emotional quality of classrooms. Hagelskamp's study found that students were able to improve their academics across the curriculum. The curriculum provides students with both direct and indirect instruction that supports vocabulary development. Teachers first introduced the feeling

word using a personal connection. Second, students connect the feeling word to a mentor text read either during an ELA lesson or during a read aloud. Third, students demonstrate this word through a visual or performing arts activity. Fourth, students discussed the feeling word with a family member and wrote a paragraph about it. This step would have to be modified for lower elementary so instead of writing a paragraph on this emotion vocabulary word, the students only will write one sentence or draw a picture. The last step in the study, had the students discuss and evaluate the different strategies for managing that feeling. This 5-step process helps them delve deeper into the reading passages and think more critically about them. Hagelskamp suggests that a specific focus on emotional literacy training is a promising avenue for change.

To build emotional literacy, Hagelskamp (2013) encourages educators and students to analyze the emotional aspects of personal experiences, academic materials, and current events through the *Feeling Words Curriculum*. First students analyzed a reading passage within their ELA curriculum to identify the causes and consequences of a character's feelings. The students then discussed with peers their own experiences relating to the passage making a text-to-self connection. Lastly, the students learned strategies for regulating feelings in real life. This can be applied to the ELA block through read alouds, turn and talks and vocabulary instruction.

### ***Zones of Regulation®***

Another way to encourage emotional literacy is to implement programs that use emotional vocabulary language and visual support such as the Zones of Regulation®. Having visuals can lead to a better transfer of knowledge to other contexts which include a student's emotional skills. Using visuals in learning is a tool that can lead to student

engagement and enjoyment (Pritulsky, 2020). Using visuals can help students make sense of unknown material that can be built upon in their schema. Visuals through ELA gives teachers the ability to work with students with an unconventional tool that can be essential to the students' needs (Pringle, 2020). When using visuals it is important to be intentional, give reasons, explanations and a multitude of examples to better connect the material to the visual being taught. Pritulsky (2020) points out that connections can be found with visual and verbal representations.

The Zones of Regulation® is a framework that helps students develop awareness of their feelings. This curriculum provides an easy way to think and talk about how someone is feeling by using consistent language and visual support. Feelings are divided into four color zones. Ideally, students will be in the green zone, happy and ready to learn, but they could also be in the blue zone feeling sad, in the yellow zone feeling scared or in the red zone which would be feeling angry. Once students' can express their feelings within these zones, they can learn to use tools/strategies to manage their emotions and develop healthy relationships with their peers.

Ros-Morente (2022) focuses on the incorporation of emotional vocabulary. When there is an intervention of an emotional intelligence program there is an increase in emotional literacy. Having a rich vocabulary can help identify and label the world around us. When we have this emotional awareness, it can lead to the development of critical and abstract ways of thinking. Having a strong sense of emotional vocabulary implies strong conflict-resolution skills, the ability to create relationships and an improvement on self-regulation.

The Zones of Regulation® program helps students explain their feelings in a clear way, by using a bar graph to ‘size their problem’, ranging from a tiny problem to a huge one. The purpose of this graph can support students' problem solving skills as well as self-regulation strategies. Similarly, these students can use this graph when creating a story map after reading. Students can look for evidence of the problem and solution within a story. They can play an active role in determining what kind of problem the character is having, how big the problem is, and how the character could solve the problem.

When students are developing characters for their own stories, if they have a greater understanding of how feelings impact themselves and others, they can use this deeper understanding when developing their characters. If they can immerse themselves, to feel what their character feels, then their writing can be more personal and easier to connect with. When considering writing, another goal would be to extend the students' vocabulary skills beyond Tier 1 feeling words. A student can easily come up with ‘mad’ and ‘sad’, however, with these SEL activities they will hear more and be encouraged to use more purposeful language. When a student can use more extreme vocabulary described in their daily lives, then they are one step closer to using it in their writing. A few extension activities could be to write these tier 2 vocabulary words in their writing journals, create sentences, and also use the color categories found in the Zones of Regulation® combined with the tier 2 vocabulary words to create a simile.

During activities such as a read aloud, teachers are hopeful that students can adequately create a connection between themselves and the literature (Mohr et al., 2023). This is called a ‘text-to-self connection’. However, there are other connections that can be made to a text, whether that be a text-to-text or text-to-world connection. When a student

can immerse themselves into a story, fiction or nonfiction, there is a greater chance of the student understanding the text and connecting with it. Building on a student's schema, with consistent repetition and practice, can lead to quality comprehension as well as understanding how and why a character develops throughout the story (Skinner, 2023). When reading a mentor text, the teacher should pause and ask questions in regards to what the character is feeling and what zone they would be in. Applying the Zones of Regulation® into the ELA curriculum in this way can be an effective mode for building text-to-self and text-to-text connections.

## **Principles of Practice**

### ***Metacognition***

Metacognition is the process of assessing, monitoring and recognizing an individual's thought processes which is studied in Kumar's (2022) research. Metacognition is similar to cognition, in that cognition is the way we organize and store new information. Metacognition can be divided into 3 stages; planning, monitoring and reviewing. Metacognitive skills include planning, positive self-talk, self-questioning and self-monitoring. Additionally, metacognition can have a positive impact on students' problem solving skills. To optimize an individual's learning, Kumar (2022) stressed the importance of having active control of one's own thought process to elicit higher-order thinking skills. Metacognition can enhance the students' ability to approach a task effectively, monitor comprehension, assess their own progress and even practice finding deeper meaning in reading materials.

Within the larger process of metacognition is the ability to make connections. Making connections will build one's schema by connecting prior knowledge to new knowledge and new experiences (Mantei, 2022). The ability to draw connections allows students to

correlate what they have read, seen and experienced to themselves and the world around them (Mantei, 2022). As students make connections with and build one's schema through family, friends and a classroom community, making these connections provide students with a sense of contentment and self-worth (Gravett, 2020). Being connected to others is important to one's physical and mental well-being.

### ***Making Textual Connections***

This important strategy of making connections helps bridge SEL understanding in the ELA curriculum as studied in Mantei (2018). Students need to be able to connect commonalities between what is written in the text to their self (text-to self connections), what they have read in the past (text-to text connections) and what they know about the world (text-to world connections). A text-to framework helps students to develop a deeper understanding of the text by making meaningful and authentic connections that draw on their previous experiences, opinions and emotions. Mantei found that one way to engage students in literature is by making connections to a text that will transfer from the primary grade level moving forward. Mantei gave students the opportunity to think critically about a text, and then discuss it in a group setting bringing their own experiences and beliefs. Adding real world materials such as magazines, social media posts or newspapers elicit critical thinking by comparing the text to current events in the real world. Students were encouraged to speak positively of their peers' opinions so that everyone felt welcome to share. By listening to the connections that their peers made to the text, each student's own schema could be modified and helped to further develop their understanding of the text. Having the opportunity to critically think about a text, gives students the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding about themselves and their environment.

Making these text-to connections were also essential during the pandemic. Sweet (2021) implemented breakout rooms through the virtual meeting platform to better connect the students as a community while increasing their social interactions. Using a scaffolding approach, the students were encouraged to examine their physical self, their emotional self, their social self as well as combine these elements to make a connection to the text. This process encouraged students to be self-reflective in their thoughts and ideas when connecting to a text. This creates a deeper connection to the literature as well as to themselves.

### ***Collaboration***

Malikhatul (2021) defines collaboration as a strategy in which individuals work together to solve a problem. Collaboration is an essential part of students' learning and developing as a member of society. Using the strategy of collaboration, students can fill gaps in their knowledge through peer support. Some collaboration strategies include whole group instruction, think-pair-share, turn and talks and interactive read alouds. Malikhatul goes on to explain that when the teacher and the students work together, or in peer groups, to learn and complete a task, the students learn valuable academic and social skills. Communication, problem solving, decision making, and negotiations are positively affected when engaging in the strategy of collaboration. When classmates can discuss and offer a viable solution to a problem, it has been shown to improve the performance of all students involved. Students think critically when they can interact with their peers and engage in more active learning strategies. Malikhatul agrees with Vygotsky's theories of how student knowledge is directly tied to their social interactions with others (Malikhatul, 2021).

**Whole Group Instruction.** Whole group instruction, one strategy of collaboration, is a teacher-led activity in which the teacher leads and the children listen to instruction. DiCarlo (2020) claims that students learn through observation and active participation with significant and engaging experiences found in whole group instruction. There are many benefits of using whole group instruction when implemented properly. These benefits include an increase in vocabulary development, ability to practice social skills, group problem solving as well as promoting a sense of community. There are seven recommended practices to include when implementing whole group instruction; the use of materials, work space, supervision, teacher instructional strategies, transferring whole group instruction to independent activities, addressing multiple objectives, and being mindful of the length of the activity. When considering these seven practices, DiCarlo claims that when students have manipulatives to follow along with the instruction and adequate space to use these materials, they are more likely to follow directions appropriately. Also, the ability to transfer whole group instruction to other small group or independent activities provides students with the building blocks for future tasks. Lastly, it is important to be conscious of the length of time the students are in whole group instruction. Teachers need to be thoughtful of how much information is being taught and if it would be better applied to lessons throughout the day or week.

**Interactive Read Aloud.** An interactive read aloud is a whole group instructional practice in which a teacher will read a book and pause throughout the story to ask questions and for conversation. This type of read aloud has positively affected and enhanced literacy skills. Han (2021) encourages teachers to interact with the book by using instructional strategies previously learned. Teachers should model these strategies such as making inferences, building schema, and eliciting high order thinking and questioning. When students implement these strategies, they are bringing their emotions and whole selves into the story to develop their ideas (Han, 2021).

**Morning Meetings.** Another way to encourage whole group instruction is to implement a morning meeting routine that the students can look forward to daily. Morning meetings are an engaging way to start each day and can build a strong sense of community while setting children up for success throughout the day. Cornett (2022) claims that there are four components of morning meeting that make it a successful practice, these include; greeting, sharing, group activity and morning message. A consistent routine with engaging activities creates a positive learning environment with heightened social skills and a trusting relationship between the students and with their teacher. Therefore, whole group instruction can be implemented in various ways to promote student learning.

**Think-Pair-Share.** However, Manohari (2023) argues that it is important for teachers to implement various teaching methods so students can then apply these methods to various learning styles. Think-pair-share (TPS) is a learning model that provides opportunities for students to work together, discuss and complete a task. TPS is a collaborative learning style that encourages students to actively participate more freely due to the more personal setting within small groups or pairs. Having these small groups or pairs are designed to encourage students to be more directly involved in their learning process. When students then share their findings with the whole class, this can verify what they already know or clarify any misconceptions they may have. With a positive learning environment, the students can feel free to debate, discuss and collaborate with other groups so they can come to a common understanding.

**Turn and Talk.** Another similar idea within collaboration is a 'turn and talk'. Hindman (2022) identified this as an effective strategy to engage students with one another. When a student works with others, they activate their schema with their own personal experiences. Using their schema, they can educate others with what they know, and this will deepen the other students' understanding of the topic. When engaging teacher-led instruction, some childrens' voices are not heard. With a turn and talk, they can discuss what they know with their other group members. Also, turn and talk engages students with one another in a way that builds class community and communication skills. Another added benefit of using turn and talk, is that it will strengthen the students' listening skills and help them value and appreciate differing opinions.

### ***Play-Based Learning***

Play-based learning is an approach that emphasizes the use of play to promote children's development and learning (Ndlovu, 2023). There are two primary types of play. Free play is defined as play that is child directed. Guided/structured play is characterized as play that has some level of teacher control (Skene et al., 2022). Presently, the skills that teachers expect students to demonstrate are creativity, communication skills, critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, and the ability to work collaboratively (Andriyani, 2022). These skills might be difficult for students to master if they have not been consistently practiced and modeled. This is why play-based learning is an effective tool to encourage students to attain these skills. Ndlovu (2023) used an unstructured play approach, which allowed the students to share, work in groups, resolve conflicts, negotiate, and use self-advocacy skills through their play. These objectives gradually developed through group work, questioning and answering strategies, whole group discussions and demonstrations by peers. These social emotional skills were also scaffolded to encourage these positive behaviors. To encourage writing skills, there was a writing area where various materials to support the students emergent writing abilities. Using these various modes of encouraging social emotional skills, the students were able to independently demonstrate the desired behaviors.

**Free Play.** Khasanah (2023) adds that an effective form of unstructured play, or free play is role playing. Role-playing is the implementation of a daily life activity or theme in which students play out certain scenarios. These scenarios teach students to interact with others in an attempt to collaborate with their peers, identify and solve problems according to the chosen theme. These problems can transfer over to real life situations that students may face as they engage with other students. This teaches them the necessary skills to self-regulate and monitor their own emotions. Other advantages of role-playing include active participation and engagement in the lesson, teaching students about other cultures and learning social cues that are accepted as the student plays out these different roles

**Guided Play.** Guided or structured play differs from free play in that the play is teacher-led. Activities are created with predetermined materials, rules and predictable behaviors. These activities include, for example, board games, puzzles, or organized sports (Mohan, 2022). This type of play has similar advantages to unstructured play in that students are developing their skills in collaboration, communication and working with others. A noticeable benefit of structured play is the application of a routine and 'structure' that students will see in the classroom and throughout life (Mohan, 2022).

Although free play and unstructured play have different components, Murtagh (2022) indicates that all play-based learning is an effective method for encouraging and developing social emotional skills. By incorporating play-based activities, using an active educational approach, class participation, as well as higher order thinking, overall students' performance skills improve. When students are instructed with play-based learning strategies rather than explicit instruction, the play-based learning approach enhances academic achievement. Play-based learning can improve oral language, reading, writing as

well as achieve higher test scores than students that receive only explicit instruction. Play is imperative to childrens' development and overall well-being as it supports skills like collaboration, metacognition, communication and creativity.

### **Summary**

SEL can help students better understand and identify their emotions (Coleman, 2021). Once they develop adequate social and emotional skills, they can begin to modify their own behaviors. Developing this skill within the classroom, is stated to be the “missing piece” that students need to have for self-efficacy and the ability to engage effectively with the academic material (Rae, 2007). The ELA curriculum offers natural opportunities to support students in the five areas of SEL: self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision making, and self-management. This paper has elaborated upon the idea that embedding SEL lessons within the ELA curriculum can also improve students' tier 2 vocabulary, comprehension of literature as well as improve their writing skills (Dyson et al., 2019).

When students interact with others, it molds their mental and emotional well-being (Alkhudiry, 2022). A common theme of Vygotsky's theories is that social interactions influence students' knowledge and motivation. Sociocultural theory, specifically ZPD, as well as social constructivism theory connect SEL to literacy instruction by the way students interact with their peers. Social interactions are the backbone of academic achievement when students can collaborate with others and, in doing so, meld their prior knowledge with new information (Alkhudiry, 2022).

A few ways to elicit these peer interactions and strengthen SEL skills while working through the ELA curriculum are: incorporating emotional literacy activities, providing

play-based learning strategies, and using various principles of practice that elicit high-order thinking skills. These practices include metacognitive thinking and collaborative strategies. When students make connections with the literature, they begin to develop better metacognitive thinking strategies and go beyond themselves and the four corners of a book (Mantei, 2022).

Collaborative strategies such as morning meetings, a turn and talk, TPS, an interactive read aloud, and whole group instruction all support key elements of learning and growing while having support from fellow students (Malikhatul, 2021).

Planning reading activities that promote collaboration, discussion and reflection go far in building peer relationships and making connections to the literature (Mohr et al., 2023). For example, teachers should prioritize literature that reflects different cultures, abilities, and life experiences. Through the literature, students can work on standards that ask them to engage deeply with complex and diverse elements, making connections to themselves reflected in the literature and analyzing characters' emotions and behaviors (Mantei, 2018).

This paper introduces the idea of using an SEL program called The Zones of Regulation® as a way to help students develop awareness of their feelings. This curriculum provides an easy way to think and talk about how someone is feeling by using consistent language and visual support. The Zones of Regulation® program also helps to explain feelings in a clear way, by using a bar graph to 'size a problem', measuring the intensity of the issue from a tiny, medium, or big problem. Once students have an understanding of the basic framework, these activities can be incorporated into the ELA curriculum when reading literature or creating a story map.

Ros-Morente (2022) completed a study that focuses on the incorporation of emotional vocabulary. When there is an intervention of an emotional intelligence program, there is an increase in emotional literacy. Having a rich vocabulary can help identify and label the world around us. When students have this emotional awareness, it can lead to the development of critical and abstract ways of thinking. Having a strong sense of emotional vocabulary implies strong conflict-resolution skills, the ability to create relationships and an improvement on self-regulation.

### **Conclusion**

SEL can help students better understand and identify their emotions; it can help them develop empathy, increase self-control and manage stress (Andriyani, 2022). SEL builds better relationships and interpersonal skills that serve students in school and beyond. As seen throughout the chapter, implementing SEL activities into the ELA curriculum have a list of benefits that review high self-efficacy skills and examine literature while using high order thinking skills. When students emphasize and understand characters in literature, the story exposes students to diverse internal and external character traits which can be difficult to comprehend (Han, 2021). Social emotional instruction provides students with the tools to understand different emotions, cultures, and experiences to develop and transfer these skills outside the classroom (Mantei & Fahy, 2018). Social emotional skills also build resilience while students read a new text. Literature explores adversities students may or may not have experienced, so using these SEL skills provide students with the skill set to navigate through these setbacks, accept failure and work through challenges similar to the characters in the story.

However, exploring literature cannot happen without the necessary strategies to work through the challenges students do face every day (Humphries, 2022). Mastering conflict resolution skills, monitoring emotions and maintaining a positive learning environment that encourages students to feel safe, respected, and supported. These are what students have to accomplish first before critically analyzing literature (Saitadze, 2021).

## **Chapter Three: Project Description**

### **Introduction**

To improve students' academic performance and social interactions, SEL can be implemented into the ELA curriculum. Implementing SEL can be the fundamental building block to academic success. Throughout this paper, a clear connection has been forged as to why SEL activities can be implemented into the ELA curriculum. One objective of this project is to show how providing SEL activities helps students identify and manage their own emotions, show empathy for others, ask for help when needed, and develop self-regulation skills. When a student can self-regulate, show empathy, and communicate with others effectively, they can be more prepared for social situations both inside and outside of the classroom. A second objective of this paper is to show how implementing SEL in the ELA curriculum strengthens students' literacy skills. The skills that can be improved include oral fluency, vocabulary, details within student writing, comprehension of the story, character development, and story mapping.

Chapter 2 explains what factors contribute to the success of incorporating SEL into the ELA curriculum. Emotional literacy, play-based learning and a few principles of practice such as metacognitive thinking and collaboration provide the structure to implement these activities successfully.

Implementation strategies and supplemental materials that support the students' literacy skills through SEL activities will be addressed. These activities include tier 2 vocabulary visuals, mentor texts with comprehension questions, whole group meetings and instruction, as well as collaboration with their peers. To determine the successfulness of these strategies, several evaluations have been prepared. This includes a pre and post

SEL vocabulary rating sheet, three question tier 2 weekly vocabulary assessment, a monthly review of previously taught tier 2 vocabulary as well as anecdotal records and observations. The conclusion will highlight ideas, strategies and tools to make this connection of SEL and ELA successful. After reading this piece, the reader should be able to apply these activities seamlessly into the scheduled time for literacy.

### **Project Components**

This project contains activities designed to be integrated into the ELA curriculum for 1st grade students. These activities can be immersed into morning meetings, vocabulary instruction, or during a read aloud - all standard practice of a 1st grade classroom. At this age, students are still figuring out how to interact with others and work through their difficult emotions. With repeated use of SEL activities in the ELA curriculum, the students will not only learn the literacy standards, but will be sharpening their social skills, thanks to the integration of the SEL activities.

One of the activities uses a program called the Zones of Regulation®, which is a framework that helps students develop awareness of their feelings. This curriculum provides an easy way to think and talk about how someone is feeling by using consistent language and visual support. Feelings are divided into four color zones: green, blue, yellow, and red (Appendix A). Ideally, students will be in the green zone - happy and ready to learn, but they could also be in the blue zone feeling sad, in the yellow zone feeling scared, or in the red zone which would be feeling angry. A lesson plan which introduces the Zones of Regulation® to the students is included (Appendix B). Once students' can express their feelings within these zones, they can learn to use these strategies to manage their emotions and develop healthy relationships with their peers.

### Vocabulary Instruction Activities 1-3

Two activities that build upon tier 2 vocabulary words are *Vocabulary Word of the Week* and *Strengthening Emotional Vocabulary*. For both of these activities, the teacher will focus on one vocabulary word per week. The teacher will have a predetermined list of tier 2 words to select from (Appendix C). Once selected, the teacher will introduce the word with a mentor text. A list of possible books for this activity is included (Appendix D). With the *Strengthening Emotional Vocabulary* lesson (Appendix E), the students use the zones to determine the word and its meaning by using familiar spelling patterns, synonyms/antonyms and encourage students to use their own experiences/background knowledge to decode the word's meaning. Once the students have developed an understanding of this new vocabulary word, they can apply it to its color zone. This activity can also be implemented spontaneously when there is an unfamiliar tier 2 feeling word found in literature while reading. With the *Vocabulary Word of the Week* lesson, the students will relate the tier 2 vocabulary word to their own experiences (Appendix F). This lesson provides students with the opportunity to answer WH questions in relation to their experiences with this vocabulary word as well as draw detailed illustrations to match their writing.

When the tier 2 word is reviewed the next day, the teacher will show a poster of that vocabulary word, with a matching definition and illustrations to provide visual support and solidify the students' understanding (Appendix G). An activity that accompanies the vocabulary word of the week lesson, *One Time When I was \_*, is yet another way the students can be more connected to the word (Appendix H). The teacher will use scaffolding to model how to complete this activity. First, the activity will be completed through whole

group instruction. Then the teacher will slowly release responsibility to the students for the activity to be completed independently. Once the students can complete this activity without assistance, they will “turn and talk” using this new word in a sentence. The idea of a “turn and talk” has been identified as an effective strategy to engage students with one another. When a student works with others, they activate their schema, with their own personal experiences (Hindman, 2022). Using their schema, they can educate others with what they know, and this will deepen the other students' understanding of the topic (Skinner, 2023).

A fun extension activity that can build deeper understanding of how to use feeling words would be to create similes. The book *Quick as a Cricket* addresses this very skill (Appendix I). After this book is read to the students, they can think of their own traits/behaviors/ feelings and choose an animal that they identify with from the story, or even create a new simile on their own (Appendix J).

### **Story Mapping**

Another extension activity includes redirective strategies, which are repeat, rephrase, and redirect. The Zones of Regulation® program helps to explain the students' feelings in a clear way, by using a bar graph to “size their problem”, measuring the size of the situation from a tiny problem to a huge one (Appendix K). This graph can assist students in creating a story map after reading. Students will look for evidence of the problem, the intensity of the problem, and how the character handles the situation (Appendix L). Students can play an active role in determining what kind of problem the character is having and how the character could solve the problem.

When students are creating characters for their own stories, if they have a deeper understanding of how different feelings can impact themselves and others, they can create more complex characters in their own stories. If they can immerse themselves, to feel what their character feels, their writing will reflect a better and more personal connection. When considering writing, another goal would be to extend the students' vocabulary skills beyond Tier 1 feeling words. A student can easily come up with "mad", "happy", and "sad", however, with this SEL curriculum they will hear more and be encouraged to use more purposeful language. For example, a student could describe their feelings as furious, exasperating, uncomfortable or disappointed. When a student can use more extreme vocabulary described in their daily lives, then they are one step closer to using it in their writing.

### **Role-Playing**

One example of play-based learning is role-playing. When children role-play, they have the opportunity to work out scenarios that occur in real life (Khasanah, 2023). Role-playing enables students to think more critically about actions/events/subjects, and allows them to see things from a different perspective.

One lesson which focuses on role-playing, called *Feelings Detective*, involves the teacher reading out a scenario to the students and having the students act it out (Appendix M). The teacher is supplied with a list of scenarios to choose from for the exercise (Appendix N). During the exercise, the teacher will encourage students to answer questions in order to inspire thinking about the social environment of the scenario: how the character is feeling, how do you know the character is feeling that way, and why do you think they feel that way? This activity is a fun way to engage students; it gets them up and moving and it encourages friendly interaction.

Another role-playing activity that encourages students to engage and connect to real life feelings is *Emotional Charades* (Appendix O). For this activity, the students will generate a list of feeling words that the teacher then writes on the board. Having the students generate the words used for the exercise makes them feel more involved, and, in turn, aids in maintaining their focus on the activity. Using the list on the board, Each student will have the opportunity to act out a word for their peers. Their peers will try to determine the word by watching the student's facial expressions and kinesthetic body movements.

### **Project Evaluation**

Several activities have been highlighted throughout this paper as a means of implementing SEL into the ELA curriculum. To help understand and evaluate the students' skills, the following four assessment methods are offered to track progress on the students SEL advancement: pre- and post-tests, weekly reviews, monthly assessments, and tracked anecdotal observations.

## **Pre- and Post-Tests**

Before beginning SEL activities, Implementing a “pre-test” aids in understanding the students’ starting knowledge of emotional vocabulary words; and after completion of the SEL unit, the teacher can use a “post-test” to determine their ending comprehension of the subject (Appendix P). Using these two data points, an A-B comparison can be made to quantify the students’ SEL growth over the course of the unit. This type of assessment establishes the baseline of students’ knowledge and can document gains in the areas assessed (Fitzpatrick, 1995). The pre- and post-tests use a linear rating scale where vocabulary words are rated as 1, 2 or 3. Labeling a word as 1 indicates the student has not heard or seen that word before. Indicating the word is 2 informs the teacher that the student has heard of the word, but does not know the meaning. Lastly, labeling a word as 3 means that the student knows the word and its meaning.

## **Weekly Assessment**

A three question weekly assessment can be helpful when reviewing the word previously learned that week (Appendix Q). The tier 2 vocabulary word will be at the top of the page. The students will circle which color zone this word would be classified in. Then the students will use the word in a self-generated sentence. Finally, the students will create an illustration that represents the vocabulary word. Keep in mind, this assessment can be modified and adapted throughout the year as your students’ writing and reading skills improve. For example, as their writing strengthens you can add more space for the students to write and minimize the illustration section.

## **Monthly Assessment**

Once the students have been introduced to several tier 2 vocabulary words, a monthly assessment can be implemented (Appendix R). This assessment is an important tool to ensure students are retaining previously taught information. Using five vocabulary words previously learned, the students will match the words with the correct picture representation.

## **Student Observations**

Lastly, anecdotal records and daily observations can also be useful tools to determine the effectiveness of SEL activities in the ELA curriculum by having teachers keep a log of how the students are engaging in SEL lessons (Appendix S). This log can be documented during a writing activity, think pair share (TPS), an interactive read aloud, or simply when the students are communicating/interacting with their peers.

The observation notes and completed student work will reflect students' efficacy in the material. Sending home similar books with comprehension questions and collecting data to be used as talking points during parent-teacher conferences are valuable ways to ensure the student will use SEL into their practice. All of the aforementioned assessments are useful in understanding the students' progression in SEL.

## **Project Conclusions**

Literature can assist students who are navigating through difficult emotions, especially when the students are able to connect with the text (McTigue et al., 2015). However, if not taught, students may not know how to identify their own emotions; this could limit the students' literary skills in terms of vocabulary, character development, and problem solving.

Students today have diverse needs that teachers ought to consider when developing a classroom for effective learning or when structuring lessons. With ZPD and socio constructivism theory in mind, planning reading activities that promote collaboration, discussion, and metacognitive thinking strategies go far in building positive peer relationships and developing a deeper connection to the reading material (Mohr et al., 2023).

Promoting SEL in the classroom involves the teacher modeling these skills and giving the students ample opportunities for them to practice and improve upon their skills in various situations. Self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, communication abilities, and responsible decision making are some of the skills students improve on daily when interacting with SEL activities/strategies. All of these skills tie into the underlying success of the student because these capabilities are an important part of their overall growth. If the activities are successful, the students will show significant growth in their social and literacy skills, and this growth can be quantified through the four assessment methods.

In conclusion, students' literacy skills can improve when specific SEL activities are incorporated into the ELA curriculum. SEL is based on building skills that help students manage their emotions, develop stronger peer relationships, and resolve conflict effectively. By integrating SEL into the ELA curriculum, students are encouraged to engage more deeply with the literature, see themselves reflected in the literature, and analyze the characters' emotions and behavior. Thus, promoting SEL strategies is a key factor in students' academic success (An et al., 2021).

## **Project Implementation**

These activity sheets, lessons, and assessments provided can be adapted for any K-2 school setting. However, the provided sample lessons, student work, and ELA standards are specifically for a 1st grade classroom. The work created by the students was from a Title-1 charter school in Detroit, Michigan. Regardless of demographic or school setting, SEL is an important component necessary for student achievement and must be implemented in the ELA curriculum.

The ELA curriculum provides natural opportunities to support students in the area of SEL. Repetition, a consistent routine, and setting expectations for the students are all effective tools for success. As with all learning, teachers have to be diligent and observe how students are absorbing the lessons and monitoring if these strategies are being applied into their reading, writing, and/or communicating. To determine students' growth, teachers set achievable goals and implement low stress assessments. Teachers also need to lead by example; modeling how to use these SEL skills in everyday life.

Incorporating SEL activities into the ELA curriculum will take some time to master. However, teachers are resilient and open minded. Teachers are eager to use new tools, strategies, and activities, if it means supporting their students' academic growth. Once a teacher has a strong hold on applying these SEL activities into ELA instruction, the teacher can support other colleagues with the implementation process and share the integral concepts of SEL highlighted throughout this project. If every teacher in the school supports an SEL-integrated ELA curriculum, the result will be a stronger school community.

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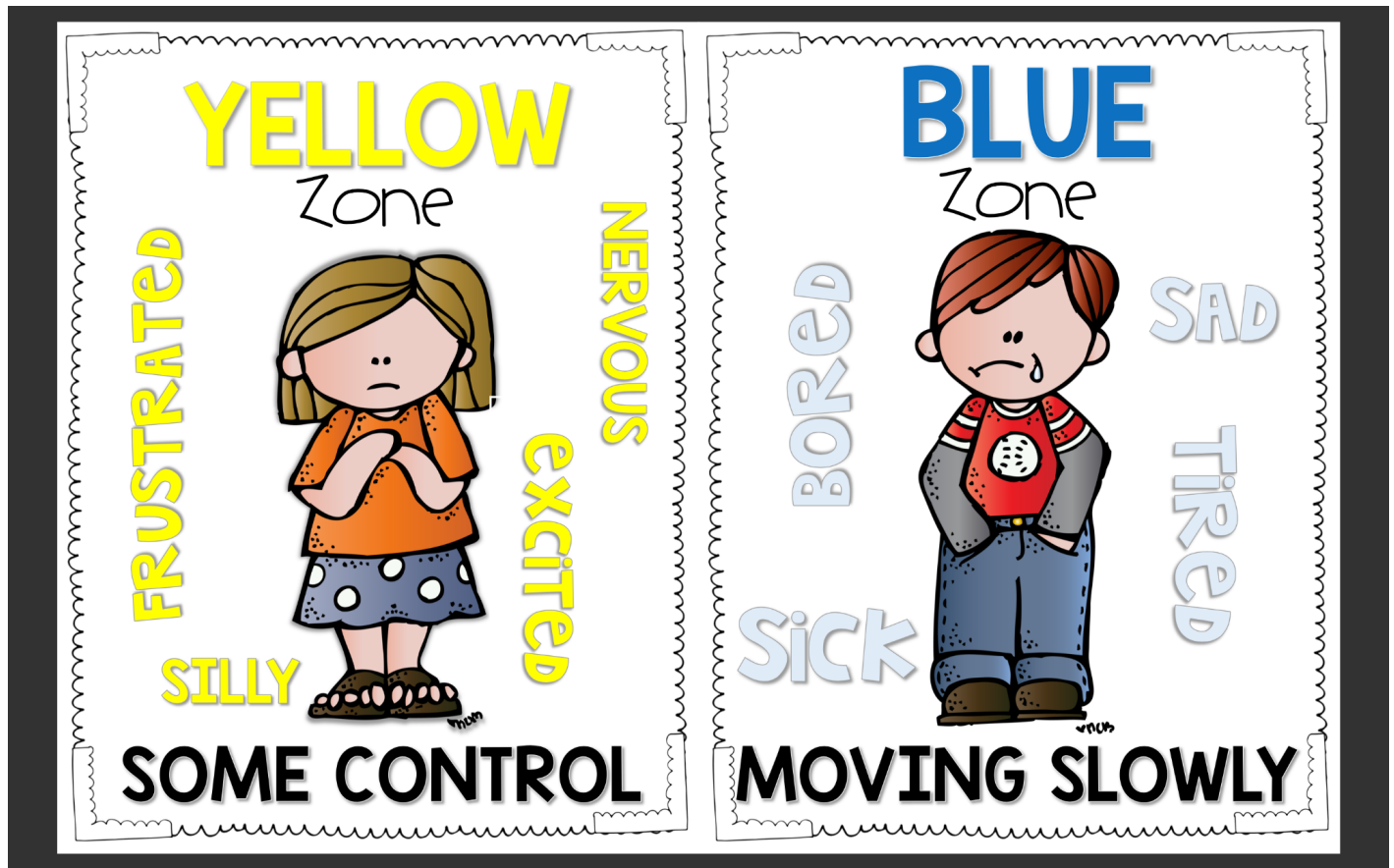
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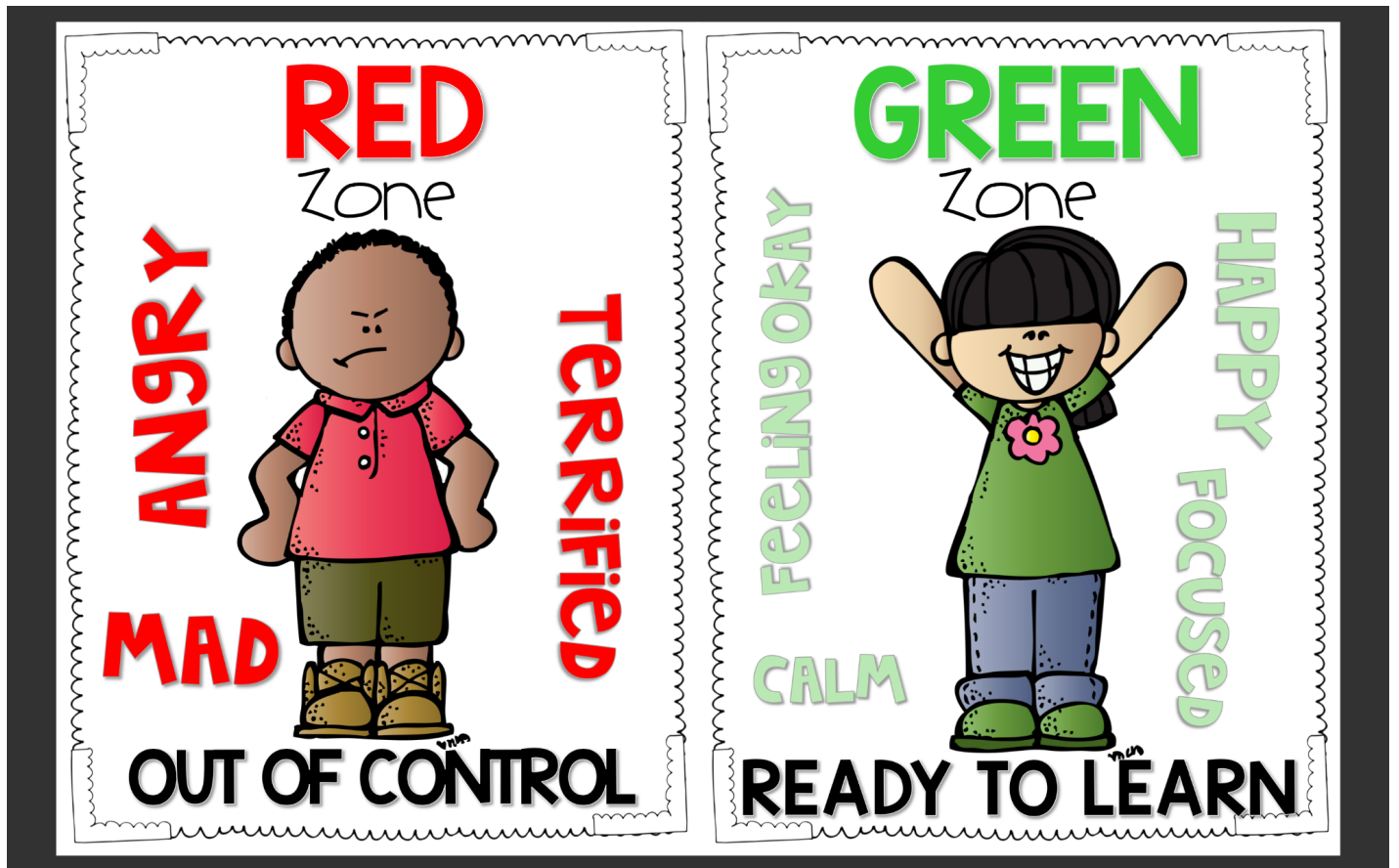
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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A**

#### **Zones of Regulation® Visual**





## **Appendix B**

### **Introduction to the Zones of Regulation® Lesson Plan**

Activity	Introducing Zones of Regulation
Description	Students will learn to identify and use the Zones of Regulation
Objectives	<p>Students can identify their feelings through colors  Students can brainstorm strategies to support each feeling they have</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.1.5.C → Identify real-life connections between words and their use</p>
Time Needed	20 minutes every day for 2 weeks
Materials Needed	- Zone chart
Instructions	<p><b>During the Activity:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduce each zone and give examples and visuals for each</li> <li>2. Listen to <a href="#">Zones Songs for Kids</a></li> <li>3. Turn and talk → when has your partner been in one of these zones? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What were they doing?</li> <li>b. Where were they?</li> <li>c. Who was there?</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p><b>Extension Activity:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Think of strategies to support each zone. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. How can we move through the zones to get to the green zone where we are ready to learn <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Taking deep breaths</li> <li>ii. Talking it out</li> <li>iii. Taking a break</li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> </ol>
Assessment	Teacher should observe and take notes of behaviors during activity

## **Appendix C**

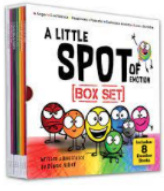
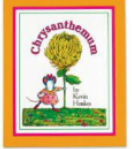

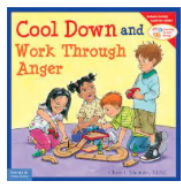


### **List of Tier 2 Feeling words for Vocabulary Instruction**

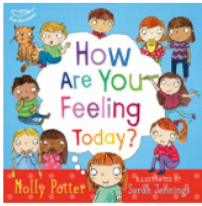

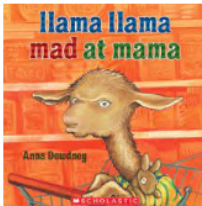
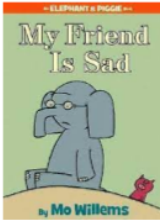
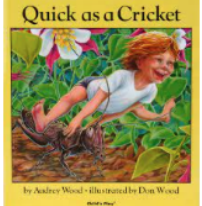

List of tier 2 feeling words for vocabulary instruction				
surprised	shocked	loved	disappointed	generous
afraid	helpful	lonely	brave	nervous
bullied	accepted	uncomfortable	irate	petrified
homesick	shy	frantic	frightened	frustrated
relaxed	excited	ecstatic	unhappy	joyful
focused	embarrassed	terrified	confused	impatient



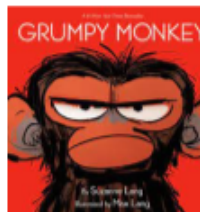
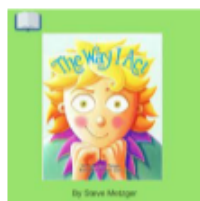

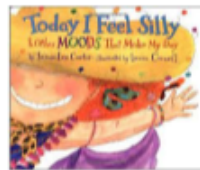
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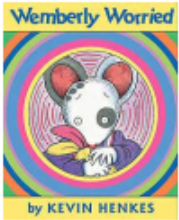

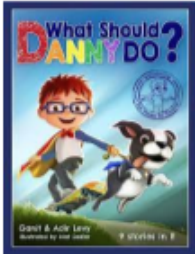

## **Appendix D**

### **Mentor Text/Interactive Read Aloud Examples**

1	A Little Spot of Emotion (book set) by Diane Alber		Each book focuses on different emotions. The series can be used when taking a deeper look into specific emotions.
2	"Chrysanthemum" by Kevin Henkes		This book is one which teaches about the blue zone. The main character is teased by her classmates about her name which makes her feel sad. Her teacher helps her feel better and get into the green zone.
3	"Clark the Shark" by Bruce Hale and Guy Francis		This book is great for the Yellow Zone. The main character shows silly/impulsive behavior.
4	"Cool Down and Work Through Anger" by Cheri J. Meiners		This book talks about being angry and being in the red zone. Children learn that it is okay to feel angry but it is not okay to hurt anyone with actions or words. The book also provides ideas for coping with one's anger.
5	"Dealing with Feelings" Book Series by Isabel Thomas		This series helps readers identify their emotions, provide tips and advice on how best to express and deal with these emotions.
6	"Fergal is Fuming" by Robert Starling		This book gives students some ideas for getting back into the green zone.

7	"How Are You Feeling Today?" by Molly Potter		This book teaches young children different emotions and offers ways to manage them.
8	"I Can Handle It" by Laurie Wright		This is good book for working on sizing the problem and understanding reactions to the problem
9	"Llama Llama Mad at Mama" by Anna Dewdney		The main character has different emotions throughout the book. It's a nice way to show children how someone can have different emotions.
10	"My Friend is Sad" by Mo Willems		Sometimes we're just sad. Great cast of familiar characters helping each other throughout the book.
11	"Quick as a Cricket" by Audrey Wood, illustrated by Don Wood		Fun story about how we have so many different emotions and traits that make us special.
12	"Ravi's Roar" by Tom Percival		The main character usually controls his anger, but one day he lets it out. He will need to control it, if he wants his friends to play with him.

13	"Ruby's Worry" by Tom Perciva		This book shows children that we all have worries and it helps to talk with others.
14	"The Food Group" book series by Jory John		This series is a fun way to show that people are not always as they seem. Valuable life skills are addressed throughout the series.
15	"The Grumpy Monkey" by Suzanne Lang and Max Lang		Sometimes we feel grumpy and you need a friend to cheer you up. Fun book for showing facial features can let us know how someone is feeling.
16	"The Way I Act" by Steven Metzger		This book is about what it may be like to behave in certain ways. Opens up discussion about consequences of behaviors.
17	"The Way I Feel" By Janan Cain		Great introductory book to emotions that we all experience.
18	"Today I Feel Silly and Other Moods that Make my Day" by Jamie Lee Curtis and Laura Cornell		Fun book for identifying which emotion is associated with which zone.

19	"Wemberly Worried" by Kevin Henkes		In this book the main character is worried. How will he cope with his anxiety?
20	"What if Everybody Did That?" by Ellen Javernick, Colleen M. Madden		Great way to reinforce how one person's behaviors impact others.
21	"What Should Danny Do?" by Ganit and Adir Levy		This book is a great way for students to work on identifying zones. It shows students how the choices they make affect the way their day goes. It also has the bonus of different endings depending on the choices the character makes.
22	"When Sophie Gets Angry—Really Really Angry..." by Molly Bang		This book is a good way to discuss triggers and different strategies that students can use to calm down.

## **Appendix E**

### **Strengthening Emotional Vocabulary Lesson Plan**

Activity	Strengthening Emotional Vocabulary
Description	The students will sort out an unfamiliar word using decoding strategies
Objectives	<p>Students can decode words using familiar context clues  Students can find synonyms to tie 2 words that they are familiar with</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.1.3 → Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.</p>
Time Needed	20 minutes
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mentor Text or sample sentence</li> <li>- Zone chart</li> </ul>
Instructions	<p><b>Before the Activity:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review the zones in the Zones of Regulation</li> </ol> <p><b>During the Activity:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Read mentor text or sample sentence that provides an unknown word with context clues in a sentence <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Use familiar spelling patterns</li> <li>b. Synonyms/antonyms</li> <li>c. Encourage students to use their own experiences/background knowledge</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Apply the word to the correct color zone</li> </ol> <p><b>After the Activity:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Write word and place it near the correct zone</li> </ol> <p><b>Extension Activity:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Turn and talk to brainstorm a way of using this vocabulary word in a different sentence</li> </ol>
Assessment	Teacher should observe and take notes of behaviors during activity

## **Appendix F**

### **Vocabulary Word of the Week Lesson Plan**

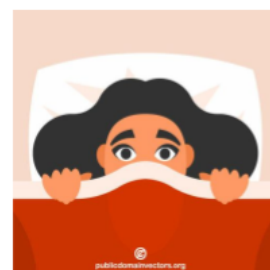
Activity	Vocabulary Word of the Week
Description	<p>Students will work in a whole group, pairs or independently to write about a time they felt a tier 2 emotion</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.8 → With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.</p>
Objectives	Students can answer WH- questions words
Time Needed	30 minutes
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Worksheet</li> <li>- Zones of regulation chart</li> </ul>
Instructions	<p>Before the Activity:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review the zone of regulation colors</li> </ol> <p>During the Activity:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Review the tier 2 vocabulary word of the week (ex. Lonely, afraid, helpful, angry).</li> <li>3. Discuss the definition and strategies to support that feeling</li> <li>4. Read a mentor text that either has a character that feels this emotion word, or uses the vocabulary word in the story</li> <li>5. After the story, review word and in a whole group or (once practiced) independently. Then have the students work on an activity sheet “one time when I was ___...”</li> <li>6. Once completed students will either turn and talk or think pair share with a partner.</li> </ol>
Assessment	Teacher will evaluate work completed by the student

## **Appendix G**

### **Posters of Tier 2 Vocabulary Examples**

# Afraid ●

A feeling triggered  
by the possible  
danger, real or  
imagined.



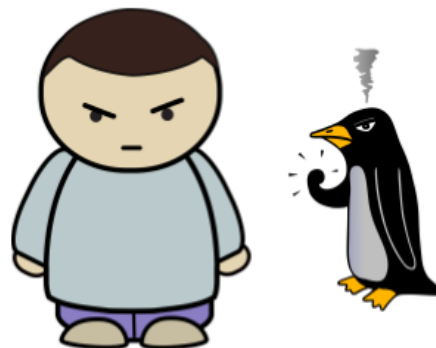
# Lonely ●

Sad or unhappy  
because you're not  
with other people.



# Angry ●

Having strong feelings about something you dislike very much or about an unfair situation. Anger is a way to express negative feelings.



# Helpful ●

A helpful person assists others. They give aid and show kindness.



## **Appendix H**

### **One Time When I was\_ Activity Sheet Examples**

# One time when I was Afraid...



WHAT was the situation:	WHO was there:	WHERE were you:
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Stop



Think



Reflect



Draw a picture of the time you were afraid:

## One time when I was lonely...



WHAT was the situation:

---

---

---

WHO was there:

---

---

---

WHERE were you:

---

---

---

Stop



Think



Reflect



Draw a picture of the time you were Lonely:

# One time when I was Angry...



WHAT was the situation:

---



---



---

WHO was there:

---



---



---

WHERE were you:

---



---



---

Stop



Think



Reflect



Draw a picture of the time you were angry:

## One time when I was Helpful...



WHAT was the situation:	WHO was there:	WHERE were you:
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Stop



Think



Reflect



Draw a picture of the time you were helpful:

## **Appendix I**

### **Introducing Similes**

Activity	Introducing Similes
Description	Students will generate similes that match a feeling word
Objectives	<p>Students can use poetry as a way to describe their feelings</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.4 → Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.</p>
Time Needed	30 minutes
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mentor Text: <i>Quick as a Cricket</i></li> <li>- Zones of Regulation chart</li> </ul>
Instructions	<p><b>Before the Activity:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review Zones of Regulation</li> </ol> <p><b>During the Activity:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Explain the meaning of a simile</li> <li>3. Read <i>Quick as a Cricket</i></li> <li>4. Brainstorm feeling words, the teacher will write them on the board</li> <li>5. Students will use a template to complete the simile.</li> <li>6. Students will add an illustration to match</li> </ol> <p><b>After the Activity:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Students present their simile with the illustration to the class</li> </ol>
Assessment	Teacher will look at completed simile statements and illustrations

## **Appendix J**

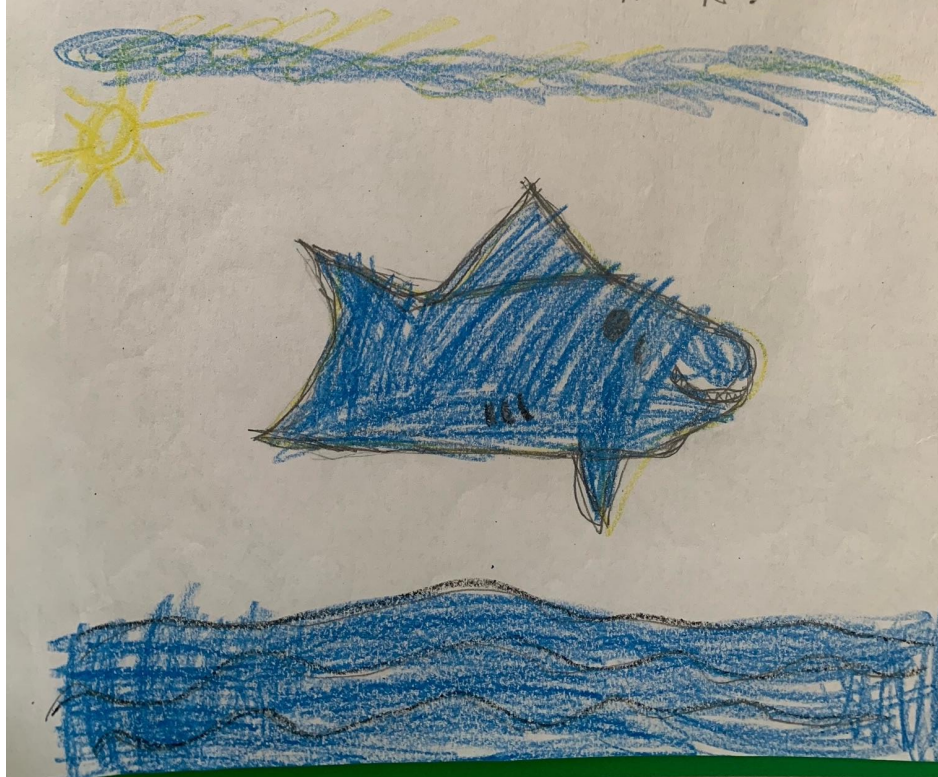
### **Introducing Similes Student Examples**

I am brave  
as a tiger



# I'm as...

Mean as a Shark!



# I'm as...

lazy as a lizard



## **Appendix K**

### **“Sizing the Problem” Chart**

The **SIZE** of your **REACTION**  
should match the **SIZE**  
of the **PROBLEM.**



**Tiny**  
**PROBLEM**

**Little**  
**PROBLEM**

**Medium**  
**PROBLEM**

**Big**  
**PROBLEM**

**Huge**  
**PROBLEM**

## **Appendix L**

### **“Sizing the Characters’ Problem” Lesson Plan**

Activity	Sizing the characters' problem
Description	The students will listen to a mentor text and determine the problem, size the problem and how the problem was solved
Objectives	Students can complete a story map identifying key elements  CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.3 → Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.
Time Needed	25 minutes
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mentor Text or sample sentence</li> <li>- Zones of Regulation chart</li> <li>- Sizing the problem chart</li> </ul>
Instructions	<p><b>Before the Activity:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review Zones of Regulation &amp; the sizing problem chart</li> </ol> <p><b>During the Activity:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Read mentor text</li> <li>3. Identify main character and the problem of the story               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Apply how the character feels to the correct color zone</li> <li>b. Determine the problem                   <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Size the problem</li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Does it have a solution?               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ii. Could we create an alternative solution?</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p><b>After the Activity:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Create a story map with the main character, setting, problem and solution.</li> </ol>
Assessment	Teacher should observe and take notes of behaviors during activity

## **Appendix M**

### **Feelings Detective Lesson Plan**

Activity	Feelings Detective
Description	The students will act out various scenarios the teacher reads to them. While the remainder of the class, describes how the characters are feeling
Objectives	CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.4 → Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.
Time Needed	20 minutes
Materials Needed	- Several short narratives
Instructions	<p><b>During the Activity:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher will read the short story.</li> <li>2. Then the teacher will select students to act out the scenario. The role-playing students needs to consider: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. How is this character feeling? How can I project those feelings so the rest of the class understands?</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. While the other students watching think of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What the problem is</li> <li>b. How is that character feeling <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. How do we know this character feels that way?</li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> </ol>
Assessments	Teacher should observe and take notes of behaviors during activity

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## **Appendix N**

### **Feelings Detective Short Story Examples**

1.

One day, Lisa was walking her dog Arnie down the street. When she looked down, she found a dollar! She picked it up and smiled. Just then, she heard the ice cream truck, she licked her lips and walked towards it.

2.

Cody was sitting at the edge of the pool. He had his arm floaties on and goggles strapped tight. His friends told him to jump in and play, but Cody looked down at the deep water, bit his lip and covered his face.

3.

Alli and Brandon were excited about Sunday. They had plans to go to the park! They were looking forward to playing tag and going on the swings. On Sunday morning, Alli leaped out of bed and looked out the window, her shoulders slumped and she frowned.

4.

One morning at school Jason bent over to pick up a crayon and his pants ripped! Everyone saw his batman underwear, his face turned bright red.

Created by Allison Sherbel, 2023

## **Appendix O**

### **Emotional Charades Lesson Plan**

Activity	Emotional Charades
Description	Students will use facial expressions and kinesthetic movements to express a tier 2 vocabulary word
Objectives	<p>Students can express a feeling with non-verbal actions</p> <p>Students can identify a feeling with non-verbal cues</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.4 → Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.</p>
Time Needed	30 minutes
Materials Needed	White board or smart board
Instructions	<p>During the activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The students will create a feelings word list and the teacher will write them on the board</li> <li>- The teacher will select one student at a time to choose a word from the list and act out the emotion while considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are your arms and legs doing?</li> <li>- What does your face look like?</li> <li>- What is the intensity of this emotion?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Assessment	Teacher should observe and take notes of behaviors during activity

Created By Allison Sherbel, 2023

## **Appendix P**

### **Pre/Post Vocabulary Rating Scale**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Vocabulary Rating**

**1- I have never seen or heard of this word before**

**2-I have heard of this word before but I do not know what it means**

**3-I have heard of this word before and I can tell someone what it means**

	Beginning of the year			End of the year		
Word:	1	2	3	1	2	3

## **Appendix Q**

### **Three Question Weekly Review**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Example: Weekly Tier 2 Vocabulary Assessment

Word: *Joyful*

Circle the color of the zone that represents *joyful*



Use *joyful* in a sentence

\_\_\_\_\_

-----

\_\_\_\_\_

-----

\_\_\_\_\_

Draw a picture of a time you were *joyful*

A large empty rectangular box for drawing.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Blank Weekly Tier 2 Vocabulary Assessment

Word: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle the color of the zone that represents \_\_\_\_\_



Use \_\_\_\_\_ in a sentence

\_\_\_\_\_

-----

\_\_\_\_\_

-----

\_\_\_\_\_

Draw a picture of a time you were/felt \_\_\_\_\_



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## **Appendix R**

### **Monthly Assessment**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Draw a line to match the picture to the feeling word!



petrified



unhappy



joyful



irate



frustrated

## **Appendix S**

### **Anecdotal Record/ Observation Sheet**

Anecdotal/Observation Sheet

Name:	Date:	Observation:

## **Appendix T**

### **Copyright Permission Forms**

Dear Allison,

Thank so much for reaching out and for your patience with our response. We are honored you are referencing The Zones and very much appreciate your support. You may use the referenced materials for your thesis but it may not be commercially produced or sold. We ask that the copyright on each document list the year as it currently does along with copyright The Zones of Regulation, Inc.

Please let me know if you have any further questions.

Best regards,

David