Promoting Social-Emotional Functioning with the Emotes Curriculum

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Agenda Today

- Introduction
  - What is social-emotional learning?
  - Benefits of SEL
  - Approaches to SEL
  - Features of a Quality SEL Program
- Overview of the Emotes curriculum
- Validation Process
  - Data collection
  - Preliminary data
  - Program considerations
- Summary
- Q & A
What is Social Emotional Learning (SEL)?

• A process for helping students develop the fundamental skills for life effectiveness.
• Skills we all need to handle ourselves, our relationships, and our work, effectively and ethically:
  • recognizing and managing our emotions
  • developing caring and concern for others
  • establishing positive relationships
  • making responsible decisions
  • handling challenging situations constructively and ethically
• Skills that allow children to calm themselves when angry, make friends, resolve conflicts respectfully, and make ethical and safe choices.

From CASEL’s “What is SEL?”
Benefits of Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

- Children with strong social-emotional skills tend to be more effective at coping with stress, regulating their emotions, displaying empathy, and socializing (CASEL, 2011).

- Students who participate in SEL programs at school have significantly stronger social and emotional skills, improved attitudes and behavior, and higher achievement than students who do not (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, Walberg, 2004).

- Children with greater levels of emotion knowledge are more prosocial, have fewer behavioral problems, and possess higher levels of social competence (Miller et al, 2005; Cassidy & And, 1992; Trentacosta & Fine, 2010; Denham, 1986; Perry, Lennie, & Humphrey, 2008; Golan et al, 2010).
Benefits of Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

• Children that have limitations in their social-emotional development often demonstrate poor social, emotional, and academic success. (Klein, 2002)

• Students with poor social-emotional development are not only at risk of academic failure, but also demonstrate difficulties with social skills such as getting along with peers and following school rules. (Wallasch, 1994)

• Emotional intelligence impacts the ability of children to control their reactions, communicate effectively, develop healthy relationships, and become successful in school, work, and life. (Elias and Weisberg, 2000)

• Social skills improve students’ academic outcomes (Sparks, 2011)
Approaches to Social Emotional Learning

• Tier 1:
  • School-wide SEL programs (ex. Second Step)
  • Safe and caring school environments
  • Classroom lessons
  • Universal screening

• Tier 2:
  • Group counseling (ex. anger management, bullying, social skills, grief, anxiety)
  • Staff and family training

• Tier 3:
  • Individual counseling
  • Mental health referrals
  • Wraparound services
Features of a Quality Program

• Evidence-based
• Developmentally and culturally appropriate
• Uses interactive methods rather than pure direct instruction
• Implemented school-wide, from pre-K through high school
• Integrated into the school culture rather than being implemented as an add-on
• Repeated opportunities to practice skills in multiple settings (classroom, home, real life situations)
• Educators receive ongoing professional development
• Home-school-community collaboration

From CASEL’s Guidelines for Effective SEL Programs (Safe & Sound guide)
Desired Outcomes of a Quality Program

- Social awareness
  - Understanding and empathy for others

- Relationship skills
  - Forming positive relationships, working in teams, dealing with conflict

- Self-management
  - Managing emotions and behaviors

- Self-awareness
  - Recognizing one’s emotions and values, as well as one’s strengths and challenges

- Responsible decision-making
  - Making ethical, constructive choices about one’s behavior

*From CASEL’s SEL Core Competencies*
Emotes:
One example of an SEL program with promising preliminary research
LMU – Emotes Partnership

• Met at CASP convention 5 years ago

• Partnership:
  • Opportunity for school psychology candidates to try out a new social-emotional learning program.
  • Opportunity for Emotes program developers to gain feedback and data about program efficacy.

• Ongoing program use and data collection for last 4 years
WHAT ARE EMOTES?
Characters make it easier to explain the abstract concept of emotions

- Engaging images and stories capture attention and imagination
- Playful presentation makes emotional expression feel safer
Emotes Materials
Goals of the Emotes Program:

1. To allow children to identify emotions
2. To allow children to interact with an external representation of internal emotional states
3. To allow children to understand emotions
4. To allow children to experience how emotions impact relationships with others
5. To allow children to express emotions in a safe manner without shaming or criticism
Emotes Curriculum

• Curriculum Guide includes:
  – Lesson plans and activities for all Emotes books
  – Specific guidance on how to use Emotes toys
  – Reading Guides for all Emotes books

• Curriculum can be tailored to meet the specific needs of the child with whom you are working

• The Emotes books can be used individually to address specific problems, or used together to create a cohesive curriculum

• The curriculum is available in Spanish if needed
LESSON PLAN: Using Boom The Anger Tamer To Learn About Anger And Anger Management.

SYNOPSIS: When Boom (the angry) isn’t able to control his temper, his anger literally splits off from him and becomes a walking and talking fireball. This fiery character tries to speak with Boom about his anger and encourages him to confront his feelings. Through a series of failed attempts to disguise, escape from and literally “bottle up” his own anger, Boom learns that he must face his anger and “become friends” with it. By reading this story, children will learn ways to manage their anger as well as the importance of accepting all of their feelings. Anger is nothing to be ashamed of—everyone gets angry sometimes.

GRADE LEVEL: Elementary

OBJECTIVES:

1. To help children increase their emotional vocabulary.
2. To encourage emotional expression.
3. To become more aware of the triggers that contribute to the feeling of anger.
4. To learn ways to manage and control anger.
5. To better understand the additional feelings that are often “underneath” the feeling of anger.
6. To learn constructive ways to express the feeling of anger.

DIRECT TEACHING:

1. Introduce the character of Boom. Explain that Boom often gets angry when things don’t go his way. Possibly use the Boom action figure or plush toy in this introduction.
2. Discuss the emotion of anger: Ask members of the class if they can provide examples of a time when they felt angry. Normalize anger by pointing out similarities in the examples given.
3. Thank the class for sharing these examples about their feelings.
4. Introduce the book Boom The Anger Tamer. Explain that Boom gets angry sometimes too. He needs to learn about his anger, discover good ways to handle it and to let other people know about his feelings.
5. Explain the title of the book by explaining the concept of taming. To tame something is to control it—to prevent it from going wild and hurting people. For example: “A lion tamer trains a lion to control his ferocious anger so that the lion can be near people without hurting them. Boom needs to tame his anger so that he doesn’t hurt people with his feelings.”
6. Read Boom The Anger Tamer aloud to the class, pausing throughout to discuss key points [see Sample Reflection Questions] and to highlight illustrations that show emotional facial expressions. Discuss what feelings the facial expressions represent.
7. Read aloud the “All About Anger” section at the back of the book and discuss the tips regarding anger and anger management.

**Emphasize the point; “Anger is nothing to be ashamed of. It’s totally okay to express this feeling, but finding the best ways to do so is very important—ways that won’t hurt the feelings or bodies of others, and will allow others to understand why you are feeling angry.”}
Bibliotherapy

- Lessons taught through engaging students with the books
- Colorful and contemporary illustrations help make the learning process more fun and exciting
- Students can identify with characters who display emotional challenges
- Helps students develop empathy and understanding of the feelings of others by relating to and admiring characters
- Encourages students to share their personal experiences
Targeted for a wide range of children

Population: Grades 1-6

- Prevention (tier 1) – classwide, developing foundational skills
- Intervention (tiers 2 & 3) – group or individual counseling
  - Emotionally withdrawn or socially insecure
  - Children with communication difficulties (Autism, SLI, etc.)
  - Gifted children who lack social/verbal skills
Data Collection

• Data collected by SP candidates at elementary sites in the greater Los Angeles area during Practicum and Internship.

• Candidates received 2-hour training and material from program developer before use.

• Pre/Post measures (quantitative) were given to students prior to program use.

• SP candidates also keep session notes (qualitative) to document student reactions.
Instrumentation

• Overall Pre-Measure
  – Emotional vocabulary
  – Ability to express emotions through play
  – Ability to identify emotions
  – Knowledge of emotional management strategies

• Book-Specific Measure
  – Emotional vocabulary
  – Ability to use lesson content in hypothetical situations
Implementation Strategy

• Before starting: Choose which books to work with
• Session 1:
  • Overall Pre-test
  • Book Pre-test
  • Read & discuss book
• Session 2:
  • Review book
  • Reinforce skills taught
  • Book Post-test
• Overall Post-test when all books are done
Sample pre/post book measure

Cant Loses His Cool

1. If I said you are Frustrated, it would it mean that you are …
   a. Excited about something fun
   b. Wanting something, but you cannot have it.
   c. Feeling like playing with friends.
   d. Feeling hungry

2. What could you DO when you feel frustrated to feel better?
   a. Yell and scream loudly until someone hears you
   b. Eat some candy
   c. Try to find the words to talk about how you are feeling.
   d. Pretend that you don’t feel frustrated.

3. Could you give me an example of a time when you felt frustrated? What is something that you could do to feel better the NEXT time you feel frustrated.
   “I felt frustrated to my mom because I wasn’t doing what my mom said. My abuelita asked me to do something. I told my mom that I was going to do what my abuelita said. My mom said, ‘No, you have to do what I say.’ I felt frustrated.”
   “Take a deep breath. That’s what my rita said.”

4. A Temper-Tantrum means when someone…
   a. Tries to make someone else do something that they don’t want to do.
   b. Teases and makes fun of someone else.
   c. Yells and cries in a loud voice when they can’t do something they want to do.
   d. Feels excited about trying something new.

5. If someone is having a temper-tantrum, something that will help them to feel better is to…
   a. Take a deep breath, and count to 10.
   b. Pretend that they aren’t having a temper-tantrum.
   c. Yell louder until someone tells them to stop.
   d. Eat some candy.

6. If you are having a temper-tantrum, a good thing to say might be…
   a. I feel frustrated.
   b. I never get my way
   c. It isn’t fair
   d. Get out of here.
Participants

• 25 School Psychology candidates helped to collect data during Practicum and/or Internship.

• Current data include 45 elementary aged students who used Emotes.
Current Sample - Demographics

• Age range: 6-12
• 73% male, 27% female
• 39% Latino, 28% White, 26% African-American, 5% Asian, 3% Mixed Race
• Primary language: 87% English, 10% Spanish, 3% both
• 66% free/reduced lunch
• 97% Special Education
• 37% Autism, 32% SLD, 26% OHI-ADHD, 3% SLI, 3% TBI
Overall Findings

• Overall quantitative results
  • Students increased emotional vocabulary
  • Students increased ability to express themselves through play
  • Students increased knowledge of emotional management techniques

• Overall qualitative results
  • Students understood and remembered concepts from session to session
  • Students were highly engaged
Preliminary Data - Quantitative

• Overall Program Effectiveness
  • Students increased emotional vocabulary:
    • Average number of emotions identified changed from 5.5 (pre) to 7.8 (post)
  • Students increased ability to express emotions through play:
    • Rating of child’s ability to use toys to correctly express emotions increased from 2.1 to 2.7 pre to post (on a scale of 1-3)
  • Students increased knowledge of emotional management techniques:
    • Ratings for dealing appropriately with anger, fear, confusion, boredom, and lacking confidence all increased
  • All above findings were statistically significant at the .000 level
Preliminary Data - Quantitative

• Book-Specific measures
  • 10 out of 12 post measures showed improvement in number answered correctly
  • All book measures showing improvement were statistically significant at the .000 level
Data on students with Autism

• Students increased emotional vocabulary:
  • Average number of emotions identified changed from 4.7 (pre) to 7.7 (post)
• Students increased ability to express emotions through play:
  • Rating of child’s ability to use toys to correctly express emotions increased from 1.9 to 2.7 pre to post (on a scale of 1-3)
• Students increased knowledge of emotional management techniques:
  • Ratings for dealing appropriately with anger, fear, confusion, boredom, and lacking confidence all increased
• 10 out of 11 book measures showed improvement from pre to post
• All above findings were statistically significant at the .01 level
Preliminary Data - Qualitative

• Students were highly engaged with Emotes material
  • “Coming to counseling has never been this fun!”
  • Several students asked many questions about the characters and books, and wanted to learn all about them
  • Many quiet/shy students came out of their shell and participated
  • Student came to interns’ offices during recess/lunch to read other Emotes books
  • Interns noted books worked well with students with ADHD-like behaviors – kept them attentive and focused

• Students understood and remembered concepts
  • After time lapses, students were able to remember the stories, discuss the messages, and talk about strategies to solve problems and manage emotions.
  • Students remembered concepts and provided definitions in own words
Next Steps in Data Collection

• Over-sample select populations:
  • Female students
  • General education students

• Collect data on Spanish books
• Focus on transfer of learning
• Explore differential use of material, or in combination (e.g. Girls – plush toys, Boys – figurines).
• Increase sample size
Emotes Considerations

- Emotes is showing great promise in supporting elementary aged students, including those with special needs, to develop positive ways to deal with feelings.

Feedback from users:
- 45 min is ideal per session
- Dedicating 2 sessions per topic works best
- Some students get really into the figurines, might want to limit to one figurine per session
Summary

• The need to remove social emotional barriers to learning is great.

• As importantly, the need to promote healthy social-emotional development in children is even greater.

• A multi-tiered model of delivery exists with SEL.

• Key features exist within quality SEL programs.

• Research shows a link between increased SEL skills and higher academic, social, and emotional functioning.
References