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Emotional Intelligence: Benefits within the Classroom

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Author Note

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Abstract

Since the pandemic arose in 2020, schools have lived in a world of unknown. From in-school classes to online zoom meetings, teachers have had to adjust their teaching methods leaving them burnt out and frustrated. With hopes of breaking through this gray area, introducing the idea of Emotional Intelligence in schools surrounding Valley County, could greatly impact their path back to normalcy. I have created a prototype for schools surrounding my community. With the first launch happening in September, I am hopeful that this prototype can then be used in other schools as well. This project consists of a presentation, flier and a possible teacher development agenda.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Growth, Social and Emotional Health, School
Introduction to your Capstone Project

Emotional intelligence is the “ability to manage both your own emotions and understand the emotions of people around you” (What). I first learned about emotional intelligence (EQ) during a seminar with my Community Impact Program through Boise State. I found the information I learned was incredibly helpful in understanding other individuals and recognizing their emotions as well as my own. It surprised me that I had never learned about EQ before and my initial thought was that it should be taught to teachers, and possibly students, in schools around the world. I wanted to strive to build a prototype that surrounding schools in my community could use to incorporate EQ into their education system. I set out to make this possible with the question, “How might I convince teachers of the importance of emotional intelligence within the school system and create a professional development day around it for Valley County and the surrounding communities”. With school environments being rebuilt after COVID-19, Emotional Intelligence is more important than ever before.

Section 1: Innovative Approach

The lack of knowledge surrounding EQ creates a split in perspectives. Right now Emotional intelligence is not a priority within the surrounding school districts because teachers already feel as though they have enough on their plate. I learned this from a group of my closest colleagues when I asked them about the potential interest in learning more about EQ. They stated that they felt they’d find it difficult to bring something else into the classroom. The teachers I spoke with had no background knowledge of EQ, nor did they know the potential benefits. With the understanding that most teachers are on the brink of burnout, I knew that introducing the idea of EQ needed to be efficient and effective.

Everyone, including staff and students are more resentful of the school environment. From online, to in person, the educational system is living in a world of unknown. Teachers are beginning to get burnt out, leaving the district to be more of a hostile environment than ever
before. In an article from The Spanish Journal of Psychology, the authors state, “As the review of literature reveals burnout is highly tied to emotional factors. This is why we hypothesize that burnout can be related to emotional intelligence competencies such as intrapersonal or stress management” (Pishghadam). Although each school year, teachers receive different forms of training, it is always surrounding violent students and situations. This makes sense, especially with the increase of continued school shootings all around the world, but what if we could influence students in a positive way inside the classroom potentially changing their minds and paths.

It can be easy for anyone to get online and learn more about emotional intelligence, however, I knew I needed to build an approach that was easy for teachers to grasp and powerful enough to get their attention. This prototype began with the presentation I created with my Community Impact group. It is a powerful introduction to Emotional Intelligence including what it is, why it’s important in schools and our plan for a week of fun. With the stress teachers already face, I didn’t want EQ to feel like a chore or checklist item. This is why our group decided on a fun spirit week that introduced the concept to staff and students. We created a week that will be active this year within the Cascade School District. For this “Kindness week”, we plan to start the week off with a keynote speaker. Knowing that we would be on a budget, we looked to use someone who was from our community but knowledgeable in social and emotional health; this is when we found Meg Henderson. Meg is a well-known local who owns her own business as a social emotional coach. She is an admired citizen who was very willing to open the conversation about emotional intelligence. After this, the week begins. Each day is themed, with a daily activity that students and staff can participate in at lunch time. In order to separate my capstone from my previous group project, I wanted to add to this and create a layout for a teacher development day. I also continued working on fine tuning the spirit week and making it something everyone looks forward to.
This project was made possible with the help of many community members and resources. The majority of the face to face contacts were picked while setting up the idea in my CIP group which included but wasn’t limited to Meg Henderson, grant writers, Jeremy Graves, The Cascade School district and other potential partners. However, the background information and statistics were found within many reliable articles and resources from the Boise State Online Library or Google Scholar. I was very particular about the articles I used because I wanted them to directly relate to teachers and how EQ affects their position and performance. I believe that these sources are valuable in showing the benefits of EQ. I also was happy to pick individuals from our community to help make it all happen.

Section 2: Emotional Intelligence

The basis of my project surrounds the idea of awareness and how staff can be more aware in the classroom. By being more knowledgeable of the students and staff, schools will be able to create a better environment. Although the most common priority for school districts is test grades and hierarchy, emotional intelligence should be at the top of the list. Interpersonal relationships are extremely important within the classroom and EQ is even proven to go hand in hand with the success of a student. In *The Journal of Social Psychology*, a series of seven separate studies all concluded that those with higher EQ also scored highest in empathetic perspective taking, self monitoring, social skills, cooperative responses towards partners, close and affectionate relationships, marital satisfaction and greater relationships (Schutte). Although not every one of these is important to education, it is crucial to understand your students and the reasons behind their actions. This isn’t the only study that confirms this information, in fact, there are multiple studies including a study in Psicothema that proved students who scored higher in EQ tended to be more prosocial and perform better in school (Marquez). If teachers can learn EQ, they would be able to take into consideration every aspect of a situation going on with their students, rather than jumping to conclusions or becoming frustrated. Overall, these
studies show that those higher in EQ are also more likely to be better within interpersonal relationships. As of now, our school system lacks any social awareness or it is blatantly ignored. By implementing the idea of EQ into Valley County Schools, we will be able to create a more close knit community. My hope is to create more awareness on emotional and social health into the school where it is needed most.

The research within my project is valuable because it could really impact the social and emotional behaviors of the students, teachers and other staff. As a result of covid, the teacher burnout rate is at an all time high. However, EQ is a proven method of reducing this rate and could help teachers’ mental overall health. This also shows the power of EQ which helps the school board better understand the concept and adjust their professional development days and how they want the school to be. Students also benefit from this research because it allows staff to better understand them and why they may deal with situations a certain way. EQ can provide someone with so much information about others and just having a basic understanding could change the perspectives of many.

Section 3: Creative Thinking

I wanted my project to be appealing to teachers and students alike. I used my knowledge and first hand passion about EQ to create something that doesn’t only present facts but a real life opinion about the importance. By including real life examples and background, it allows others to see the facts in a way that is relatable. By learning and thinking about my audience and what is missing in the school system, I was able to come up with a project that is not only important to me but also those directly involved with the school.

By creating a prototype, it is more unique then someone just presenting an idea with nothing to back it up. By bringing in a series of materials, I am able to show that I truly believe in EQ and others should also. This is also unique because it isn’t already present within the school.
system. I'm not trying to improve something that is already established but rather bring something completely new in.

**Section 4: Your Innovative Solution**

The idea behind my project is to provide education and knowledge about EQ into the surrounding school systems. After learning about EQ, I was shocked that I hadn’t learned about it before and my group and I agreed that it was important enough to want to bring into the classroom. EQ allows teachers and students to have a better understanding of each other and why they act the way that they do. By introducing this idea and concept to the classroom, there are many benefits not only to the students but the teachers as well. One of the biggest I hope to touch on is teacher burnout and how EQ can help this rate in a now high tension environment. The process I have taken so far is really digging deeper into the information I had already gathered and advancing the idea of a teacher development day. I also have been working on a schedule, an agenda, and picking out the more important things, considering there is a lot of information to cover. The outcome I am hoping to achieve is to have more teachers and staff on board to learn about EQ and want to include EQ into the school system. If we can get one school on board, I see it being easier to bring others on board as well.

I think that this solution is more innovative because it is a hands-on approach. You can learn about and read about EQ all day long but until you see EQ in action and see real results, it is hard to understand the importance. By having the opportunity to actually present our work to a school nearby, we have the chance to create a prototype for other schools. This will allow us to show other surrounding schools how important or effective EQ is. As of now, I think our way of showing off EQ is more innovative than I have seen thus far. Like I stated earlier, someone can read about EQ multiple different ways but until they actually get to experience the impact, it doesn’t feel as important. This is a hard topic to explain to teachers and staff and while about
half are on board, the other half need extra explanation and real life examples. I think it could have been slightly more innovative looking into other ways to present the idea but I do love the hands on idea because teachers get to see it all play out.

**Section 5: Results**

There are many benefits for the stakeholders, the teachers, when incorporating emotional Intelligence into the surrounding school systems. Right now, as a result of covid, there is an extremely high teacher burnout rate. One of the key benefits I emphasize is EQ’s ability to reduce teacher turnover and burnout. This is an important benefit because teachers feel extremely stressed out, so if this can be reduced in any way, it would benefit the teachers and school systems. Not only does EQ reduce teacher burnout, but it also reduces team stress, conflict and builds relationships between staff and students. These are just a few of the main highlights of emotional intelligence that can improve the school environment.

My project is extremely important and has a positive impact on the stakeholders involved. Each of the stakeholders are impacted positively in different ways. For instance, teachers are impacted by their new knowledge and ability to use that knowledge in the classroom. This allows them to have a more smooth flowing system. The students are positively impacted due to the better relationships with their teachers and the teachers want to be there. The community and school board can proudly stand by their school and the student teacher bonds that they hold. Each stakeholder is impacted differently but all in a positive way. There are no negative impacts to bringing emotional intelligence into the school system, rather a huge amount of positive influence.

This capstone project has allowed me to better understand the importance of EQ in the school system and create a prototype that could possibly be used within school systems
surrounding Valley County. I will use what I have created and learned, to further help with my CIP groups event at the Cascade school district in September. Although we already had an introduction video into EQ, I have created a flier, budget and possible EQ teacher development agenda that could be used to further our process. Throughout the years, teachers have begun to repeat or walk through the motions they are used to, which disrupts their want to teach. With the new knowledge of EQ, hopefully teachers will get back to enjoying their professions and see EQ as an important and essential part of the school environment.

**Section 6: Conclusion**

The method I chose for this project was to take action. Working in the school system this last year, I saw so much tension between teachers and their students. By creating and providing school districts with an introduction to emotional intelligence and a prototype to learn from and evaluate, I believe more will be willing to jump on board with the idea of introducing EQ into the school systems. Through this, I learned how emotional intelligence can directly impact school environments as well as how others have found EQ beneficial to students and staff. There is so much information available to back up the idea of EQ in schools, which directly shows that so many people believe in the benefits of it. Cascade School District will be the first to benefit from this project and after them, hopefully other schools surrounding my community. I look forward to using my individualized approach and project to introduce the idea of EQ into the community.

The ending physical aspects of my project include a teacher development day agenda and a flier for within the schools for the spirit week. I also included the EQ presentation, script and budget created within my CIP group. I’m hopeful that through this project and the information I can present with the materials I have gathered and built, that schools will be more willing to take
on bringing EQ into their classrooms. I am looking forward to seeing how Cascade School
District responds to the material, and having a real-life experience to show other districts
including McCall-Donnelly and Meadows Valley. If successful, I could see schools finally
taking a turn in the right direction after suffering the consequences of the 2020 Pandemic.
References


