

Weekly Journal Reflections

Week 2/ January 29 - February 4 :

I enjoy finding a wide variety of SEL resources. There is so much research and information regarding SEL. Sometimes it feels a little overwhelming but I do feel that I am expanding my knowledge and building a great toolkit for myself and others.

With all the new knowledge and resources I am gaining, I am grappling with the best way to present this to my colleagues, parents and SEL community. I know that I will not only need to focus on SEL resources but also spend time researching how adults learn and the most effective strategies for professionally developing teachers and teacher leaders. I want to use these insights to help guide my facilitation of SEL discussions, workshops and webinars.

Week 3/ February 5 - February 11 :

This week I have had several discussions in regards to various topics about SEL. These discussions have lead to a reflection of my practices as a teacher and teacher leader. The first discussion was had vis my SEL fellowship platform. A question was raised about how has current events in our country affected the SEL of students. Surprisingly, many teachers stated that the current political events have had no effects on their students and that their school climate has not been affected.

These responses alarmed me. Were students truly unaffected or were educators unaware of these effects? I fear that the latter may be true. So it raised several questions for me as an SEL educator. How can teachers raise their daily awareness of their students' SEL needs? How can we empower teachers to have difficult discussions within their classrooms? I was able to find resources on Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility but would like to explore more resources.

Week 4/ February 12 - February 18:

My focus this week has been on how to motivate teachers to begin to implement SEL within their classrooms and once they have begun how to keep the momentum going. Based on conversations with my SEL team in my building and fellowship, I truly believe that most teachers desire to do so but need supports from school, administration, families and communities to make it possible.

I would like to further look into the obstacles that prevent teachers from implementing SEL. From conversations with my SEL fellows some themes have arose such as lack of time, not knowing where to begin, feeling overwhelmed, etc. As a result I found some resources on how to combat teacher stress and I am looking at protocols for discussions. I am also looking at SEL resources which integrate SEL directly into curriculum so that it is not viewed as a separate additional burdensome entity added onto the already long checklist of things to be accomplished by teachers.

Week 5/ February 19 - February 25:

This week I felt very overwhelmed with all the SEL resources I have come across. There is so much information available on the topic and subtopics! SEL websites like CASEL and Teaching Tolerance are amazing resources but there is so much information on there to comb through. Even the articles and research papers I have been reading, reference you to other resources. I am having an Alice in Wonderland moment trying to figure out how deep does the rabbit hole goes.

I need to find a way to organize all these resources and organize them in a manner that will not be overwhelming to other teachers. I want my toolkit to be teacher and reader friendly. Some categories that I am thinking about dividing the toolkit into are parent resources, SEL curriculum, SEL research, etc.

Week 6/ February 26 - March 4:

After speaking with my coach, I realized that I need to narrow down my focus within SEL because the research is so wide. I still have a wealth of resources I have gathered through my research and would like to find a way to organize and share them with others so it does not feel like I am hoarding that information. I was able to have a work session with Emily who is also focusing on SEL and we are able to exchange resources and ideas which was helpful for me trying to find my focus.

Based on resources I have found, topics within my SEL fellowship and my PBIS work within my school, I believe I want to my SEL focus to be supporting families with SEL and providing teachers with integrated strategies for SEL. My PBIS is focusing on two PDs. One for maintaining and increasing momentum with enforcing SEL within the classroom. We would also like to do an evening workshop with parents to (re)introduce PBIS and explore ways to reinforce these values at home. I believe the resources that I have collected can help us in this area.

Week 7/ March 5 - March 11:

I am feeling overwhelmed with annotating all of my SEL resources. I have viewed a lot of them and do not know what is the best way of making this task manageable. Or should I just focus on the top ones that I have found most helpful and annotate those?

Also, I am concerned with my original plan of having a SEL/PBIS PD for teachers or a parent workshop. Due to schedule conflicts, my PBIS team has met without my principal for 2 weeks. We have been brainstorming and planning ideas that we have for both a teacher PD and parent workshop. I have buy in from my team. They are even willing to stay afterschool to have an evening workshop for parents. We do not know when both of these PDs will happen because our principal has not been able to be present.

The ELA state exam is at the end of March and there will be lots of schedule changes. Spring break is also mid April. I am beginning to fear that I will not be able to complete either before our capstone presentation. If it is not possible, I do not know if a SEL toolkit is an acceptable alternative.

Week 8/ March 12 - March 18:

Today I was able to hold a PBIS meeting. Both administrators were present which rarely happens so I tried to squeeze in as much as possible onto the agenda. We agreed that next Wednesday's PBIS meeting would be dedicated solely to planning the professional development for staff. That eased some of the concerns I was having. My principal set 2 tentative dates for us to have the PD with the staff, March 28 and April 25. I am concerned about those dates because that is the first day of ELA State testing, which means there is a great chance of the schedule changing. The other date is after the Capstone presentations so I would not be able to present that work but I could add it to my portfolio.

I am leading this week's SEL Fellowship discussion. The topic focuses on embedded SEL instruction. The dancer in me wanted to create a discussion that was active and had the ability to move beyond the discussion platform. I challenged the fellows to experiment with one of the embedded SEL strategies from the reading resources I provided. I hope that one week is enough time for the fellows to actually test this out within their setting and reflect on the process.

Week 9/ March 19-25:

The SEL Fellowship discussion is going well. I am happy that the fellows responded positively to experimenting with various SEL strategies within their classrooms. There is a lot of great information being shared within the discussion thread and I would like to find a way to organize all of it into another document that is easily accessible. I think that I will screenshot highlights of the conversations to add into my Capstone presentation.

The PBIS team did not meet this week due to schedule changes. We won't be able to meet next week due to the ELA State exam. I doubt at this point the PBIS team will be able to facilitate a staff or parent professional development on SEL. I think I will definitely need to kick Plan B into gear. A SEL toolkit seems to be a better option at this point.

Week 10/ March 26-April 1:

This week has been a very hectic week at work and personally. State testing and schedule changes has led to little time to work with my SEL team. I have also been moving into my new apartment. Next week I will be able to refocus and I also have 1.5 weeks off for Spring Break and will be able to accomplish.

Week 11/ April 2-April 8

My biggest challenge this week is editing and refining the SEL webinar PowerPoint presentation. Emotional Intelligence is such a vast topic. I want to make sure to provide sufficient information (especially since I don't know where everyone's prior knowledge is) but also allow enough time for discussion. The webinar is only for an hour and that time usually flies by. We were able to secure a guest SEL expert who will speak to us and answer any questions. We have allocated 10 minutes for this portion, which is really quick. I fear that if it is a rich discussion and we run over 10 minutes, how that will affect the rest of the presentation. I don't want to spend 1-2 minutes of each slide so I will be giving quick summaries of the information. I think that embedding the discussion prompts throughout the slides may be more effective than saving everything for the end. My concern with this however is what if we get into a deep discussion and I'm not able to get through all the slides.

Week 12/ April 9 - April 15

On Wednesday April 12th, I facilitated my first webinar. It was an hour long discussion on Emotional Intelligence: Empathy, Positivity and Confidence. I spent a great amount of time preparing for the webinar and also had a ton of support from my SEL coach but still experienced a mixture of emotions, including feeling extremely nervous. Overall, I think that the webinar went well and received feedback from both my coach and advisor. I can't help but wonder if the participants felt the same. I wish I could have had a way to receive feedback from them as well. Glows: securing a SEL expert to speak with the fellows, information and resources provided in Google Slides and having both my mentor and advisor present. Grows: providing more time for discussion and encouraging quiet participants to speak. Regardless of my mixed emotions, I do feel a sense of accomplishment and I feel that the webinar was a nice conclusion to my Capstone project.