

Otterbein University

## Digital Commons @ Otterbein

---

Masters Theses/Capstone Projects

Student Research & Creative Work

---

Spring 4-26-2022

# Social-Emotional Learning Strategies in Special Education: An Action Research Project on the Implementation of the RULER Approach to Support Social-Emotional Goals of Tier-3 Intervention Students

Sonya Hayes  
hayes3@otterbein.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.otterbein.edu/stu\\_master](https://digitalcommons.otterbein.edu/stu_master)



Part of the [Early Childhood Education Commons](#), [Educational Methods Commons](#), [Other Education Commons](#), and the [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Hayes, Sonya, "Social-Emotional Learning Strategies in Special Education: An Action Research Project on the Implementation of the RULER Approach to Support Social-Emotional Goals of Tier-3 Intervention Students" (2022). *Masters Theses/Capstone Projects*. 105.  
[https://digitalcommons.otterbein.edu/stu\\_master/105](https://digitalcommons.otterbein.edu/stu_master/105)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Research & Creative Work at Digital Commons @ Otterbein. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses/Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Otterbein. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons07@otterbein.edu](mailto:digitalcommons07@otterbein.edu).

**Social-Emotional Learning Strategies in Special Education:  
An Action Research Project on the  
the Implementation of the RULER Approach  
to Support Social-Emotional Goals of Tier-3 Intervention Students**

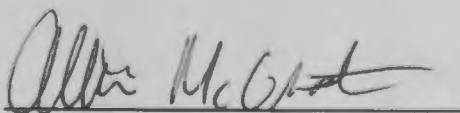
Sonya Hayes, B.A. Ed.

Otterbein University

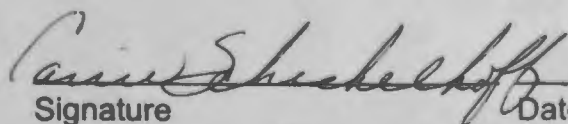
April 2022

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
a Master of Arts in Education degree.

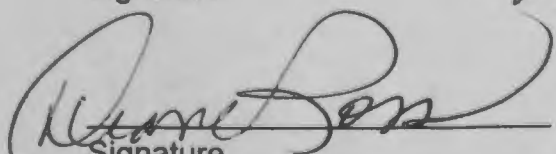
Dr. Allison McGrath  
Advisor

  
Signature 4/26/22  
Date

Dr. Carrie Scheckelhoff  
Second Reader

  
Signature 4-26-22  
Date

Dr. Diane Ross  
Third Reader

  
Signature 4/26/22  
Date

Copyright

By

Sonya Hayes

2022

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>CHAPTER FOUR</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>APPENDIX A</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>APPENDIX B</b>	<b>61</b>

**LIST OF TABLES**

<b>Table 1:</b> <i>SEL Program Comparisons</i>	25
<b>Table 2:</b> <i>Mood Check-In Feeling Words</i>	46

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Figure 1:</b> <i>Classroom Charter</i>	30
<b>Figure 2:</b> <i>Mood Meter</i>	32
<b>Figure 3:</b> <i>Feeling Words Vocabulary</i>	34
<b>Figure 4:</b> <i>Meta-Moment</i>	36
<b>Figure 5:</b> <i>The Blueprint</i>	39
<b>Figure 6:</b> <i>Growth Comparison Chart</i>	43

**ABSTRACT**

Addressing students' social-emotional development as it relates to the academic environment has become increasingly important to teachers, administrators, parents, and to the research community. The purpose of this action research study is to determine if the RULER Approach to Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) is beneficial to students with disabilities as an intensive Tier 3 Intervention as they work towards self-regulation of their emotions in order to increase participation in classroom activities. There were two second grade students with diagnosed disabilities selected to participate in this study. In addition to their defined disabilities, they have also shown to have SEL needs that include self-regulation when faced with a frustrating situation, listening and/or following directions, and using appropriate volume in the classroom. The qualitative data has been gathered through a provided rubric that was completed by the general education teachers over the span of 6 weeks to determine the effectiveness of the RULER strategies on the students abilities to accurately identify their current state of emotion as well as to self-regulate themselves to an emotional state suitable for classroom learning. The results of the study were conclusive that emotional intelligence growth was made by both students in the shortened, more intensive application of the RULER Approach; however, evidence showed that they could still benefit from more time to allow for repeated practice to build independence in the use of the anchor tools.

*Keywords:* social-emotional learning, special education, intervention, RULER, executive functioning, behavior, emotional intelligence

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

In this Instructional Inquiry Capstone, I plan to explore the RULER Approach to Social-Emotional Learning with a convenient sample of two second grade students that have been identified as students with disabilities who have social-emotional learning needs. This inquiry will be conducted as an action research project that will be conducted in three stages in which the RULER Approach will be implemented in a small group, tier-three intervention setting. Qualitative data will be collected to determine if this strategy is benefiting the students as they work towards self-regulation of their emotions in order to participate in classroom activities.

### Research Question and Significance

The last year and a half has been full of uncertainty for all American children due to the pandemic. Student's classroom environments have consisted of bedrooms, dining rooms, and kitchens as they did their best to navigate the online learning that accompanied the lockdown designed to keep them safe. Teachers were out of their element as well as to how to best meet each one of their students where they were in need of academic support. Class requirements were lessened and classroom management techniques were put on the back burner as we all struggled to do the best that we could. Now that we have begun this year in a more balanced state of academic stability, we can return to a sense of normalcy in our classrooms. However, as we return to these standard academic practices, we have begun to identify that students have a lot more mental health needs than presented before the lockdowns. A recent



study completed by McGraw Hill (2021) consisted of over 700 teachers, administrators and parents found that 53% of educators said COVID-19 and/or the shift to remote learning has caused their students emotional distress and created attendance problems. Some of these students also struggle with the stamina and focus needed to be academically successful. More than ever Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) is being accessed as a way to address the executive functioning delays that have manifested into behavioral problems in the classroom (e.g. Elias, 2004).

This is my second year working in my district as an Intervention Specialist, however, it is the first year that I have had students on my caseload with identified social-emotional goals written into their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). These needs were identified by the psychologist who assessed them prior to the Evaluation Team Report (ETR) meeting and were accepted by the child's IEP team of school professionals as well as his/her parents as needs that have developed into behaviors that impede the learning process. These needs include:

- ability to verbalize and regulate emotions in the classroom,
- the ability to use appropriate voice volume,
- ability to listen and repeat directions, and
- determining the size/severity of a problem.

Since a preferred district-wide SEL curriculum has not yet been identified to address these types of behavior needs in the classroom, we currently rely on social stories where possible scenarios that may occur are discussed to allow for processing and discussion of helpful strategies to address appropriate responses to these situations and what de-escalation strategies are available to the students. We also use

these opportunities to create visuals related to those stories to help remind the student of the strategies that were brainstormed to aid in a quicker emotional regulation in future occurrences.

This year I have five students on my caseload who have social-emotional learning goals: two that are in second grade, three in third grade. Although they all have differing goals and objectives identified for their social-emotional learning needs, they all exhibit impacting behaviors stemming from these needs that negatively affect their academic achievement. As a teacher who does not have a lot of experience in this area, I was driven to find a research based program that could aid these students in learning ways to self-regulate their emotions in order to allow them to focus more on their classwork. After speaking to the students' previous Intervention Specialists, I discovered that all of these students have been introduced to a social-emotional program in their earlier grades called Zones of Regulation. The Zones of Regulation is a framework that creates a systematic approach to teach regulation by categorizing all the different ways we feel and states of alertness we experience into four concrete colored zones in order to build skills in emotional and sensory regulation, executive functioning, and social cognition (Kuypers, 2011), so that is where I decided it would be best to start the year with a review of these strategies.

Once I began working with these students, it was clear that although they did know about the four main "zones" of emotion that are outlined in this particular social-emotional program, however, there was still something missing. One situation that comes to mind involved one of my second graders. He was having a difficult day in class; struggling to sit in his seat, yelling out answers before raising his hand, and was

showing increased frustration. He came into my room with his teacher as she was trying to encourage him to take a break and to review classroom expectations. His teacher explained that he was demonstrating highly excitable behaviors that prevented him from having control over his body and materials in class. After a 5 minute break, I sat down with him and a visual board of the four emotional zones colors to discuss his emotional state. I asked him if he could identify how he was feeling and he pointed to the red section of the chart. When pressed further for a reason for that choice, he explained that it was because he was “being bad in class”. I then asked him to explain what it means to be bad and how it made him feel. He stated that he was mad that he got into trouble. I then pressed further and asked if he knew how he was feeling before he got in trouble and he replied that he was “in red because I was being bad”. When I pointed to the other colors on the chart, I asked him if he knew what they meant. He could identify all four colors (red, yellow, blue and green) and correctly name the linked emotions to each color (ex: red=angry, yellow=excited, blue=sad, green=happy) as well as list several strategies or activities that he could use to help him to “get to green”, which was considered as the “good” zone. However, it was clear that he could not effectively identify what zone he was currently experiencing in order to be able to utilize the appropriate type of break without teacher prompts. It was a great first step to identify emotions in others, but how can I help these students to move past teacher prompting into self-regulation when they are in a stressful or frustrating situation?

This is the driving force of my capstone and the purpose of my action research project. I wanted to be able to identify how to best teach these students the strategies they need to be able to not only identify their own emotions, but how to use this

information to help them to choose what activities they could utilize to help them to self-regulate themselves to get into an emotional state needed to improve their learning outcomes in the classroom. It was clear that the program that was utilized in earlier years was no longer providing enough support to achieve this expected outcome for this small group of students experiencing greater behavioral responses to their emotion, and that they require additional support to continue the development of these skills. I knew what I wanted to teach to these students and I knew that there must be a program that was already developed to address these needs. After talking to my colleagues, I had a list of several curriculum options to explore. Before jumping into any given program, I want to be sure that the strategies I am providing to my students are tested and proven to be effective in addressing their identified social-emotional goals.

The Research Questions that I plan to address in my findings include:

- 1) What are the key elements needed to address social-emotional learning in elementary students?
- 2) How can self-regulation be appropriately assessed for effectiveness in an academic setting?
- 3) Can the RULER Approach, a program developed for Tier 1/Tier 2 classroom intervention, be effectively used as a Tier 3 small group intervention?

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

The incorporation of social-emotional learning (SEL) in the classroom has become a popular trend recently due to the need to establish stronger empathy in the

classrooms. Along with this popularity, there has been an incredible increase in studies developed to provide evidence to show the effectiveness of social-emotional learning programs in addressing academic achievement. Research on SEL has shown that student achievement is positively affected by SEL programming (Bond, 2020). When teachers can create a warm and open classroom environment that supports the emotions of students, students feel more connected, behave better, and are more apt to succeed in school and grow into successful adolescents and adult citizens (Brackett, 2011). SEL programs support teachers in building these types of connections.

Over the last few years, the need for SEL programming has increased due to the pandemic and the incorporation of various changes to the education platforms, but also due the growth of technology and social media. Emily Tate (2019, 0:57) noted in her podcast that students are “going through their awkward stages—the braces and bad haircuts and first crushes—on Instagram and Snapchat. And they’re trying to make friends while everyone’s noses are buried in their phones.” Some of these students struggle with the stamina and focus needed to be academically successful because of this. To some students, this experience has developed a response that is similar to those who have experienced a trauma in their lives. Students experiencing a stable yet maladaptive response to these experiences are simply surviving, not thriving; they encounter significant challenges to learning and developing (Phifer, 2016). These challenges can manifest as executive functioning delays in the classroom. Berard (2017) has found cognitive and behavioral aspects of executive functioning (EF) to be associated with the SEL concept of social understanding, such as, the abilities to sustain basic attention, keep things in mind while doing another task, and inhibit primary

responses in favor of a nondominant one are related to how well they can recognize affect in others and how effectively they can problem solve social situations, interpret social cues, and take the perspective of others. SEL programming has been used to develop attention-demanding tasks like following teacher directions, which is highly reliant on executive functioning, by developing skills like reflecting on a friend's feelings to strengthen the connection to find the deeper purpose of an activity (Immordino-Yang, 2019).

In this Literature Review, I plan to further explore the use of Social-Emotional Learning in the classroom as well as addressing the challenging increase in need due to the recent pandemic and the isolation created by virtual learning and the mandatory quarantining that many students experienced. Along with my review of the importance of SEL in schools, I also plan to review several programs that have been developed to address these SEL needs to determine which curriculum might be best suited for the students in my action research project. First, I plan to explore Social-Emotional Learning and why it is important to the students. Then I will identify the key components to a successful SEL program. Finally, I will compare multiple SEL programs to determine which program will best fit the needs of the particular students in my case study.

### **What Did Emotional Learning Look Like Before SEL?**

Before SEL became common practice in the school system, there were still students who had disabilities that impacted their behaviors and social abilities. Looking back in education prior to the 1990's, you would see conversations about character education, moral education in the school, about being a good citizen, conflict resolution programming - these were all building blocks that begin to target social-emotional

learning competencies (Tate, 2019). Although any child with any disability could also have behavioral or social needs, when looking back to see how these students were traditionally serviced using these types of intervention, I found that most of the programs were being done with students identified with emotional disabilities. In 2008, the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center conducted a survey of studies specifically on children with emotional and behavioral disorders and determined that peer-assisted learning and self management were two evidence-based practices most commonly used in addressing academic outcomes for students with emotional or behavioral disorders (Farley, 2012). The National Science of Teaching Association, states that assessment and systematic teaching of social skills through modeling, discussion, and rehearsal are frequently used to help students increase control over their behavior and improve their relations with others (Shugart, 2022). Interventions such as accessing social stories to elicit conversation about possible social situations and behavior expectations were used as a way to proactively teach reactive behaviors to situations that these students may experience during the day.

### **What is Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)?**

Since as far back as the late 1960's, there has been evidence of educators identifying the need to approach education differently and look at the "whole child" instead of just the academic piece. Dr. James Comer from Yale University, was one of the first to begin putting together specific programs into practice at a few public schools in his area to address an increase in behavior concern and a documented decrease in academic performance (CASEL, 2021). At this point there was very little research done to address this gap in education.

It wasn't until 1994 that a collaboration was developed to address these social and emotional needs that were being identified in students. This collaboration consisted of researchers, educators, practitioners and child advocates and was known as the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2021). It was this group of professionals that identified that these needs required a system of support to enable students to have access to the education system. In 1997 the term Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) was created (CASEL, 2021). It was established that the three essential principles for the SEL intervention program would be: 1.) Caring relationships are the foundation of all lasting learning. 2.) Emotions affect how and what we learn. 3.) Goal setting and problem solving provide focus, direction, and energy for learning. The main purpose of these principles were set to highlight the importance of the learning environment, the need for educators both to establish caring relationships with students and help students develop the skills they need to establish and maintain relationships with others (National Center for Innovation and Education, 1999).

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) later defined Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) as the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills they need to understand and manage emotions, set and accomplish positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2021). SEL programs are designed to enhance the learning experience for the students who do not portray these skills naturally. Research consistently indicates that evidence-based SEL programs can instill strong values, foster relationships, and provide comprehensive support for students by leveraging the



social resources of the school, family, and community (Greenberg et al., 2003).

Interventions that promote SEL may decrease bullying behaviors, increase personal growth, reduce behavioral issues in schools, and increase academic performance (Payton et al., 2008).

### **Why is SEL an Important Component in our Schools?**

SEL programs are designed to complement existing school curricula by teaching the social and emotional skills that contribute to better social and emotional adjustment and higher academic achievement (Taylor; et al, 2007). Having strong social emotional skills enables students to learn, develop healthy self-esteem, self-control, empathy, social skills and morality (Ahmed et. al, 2020). Mahoney (2018) states that a well-implemented SEL instruction translates into an 11–13 percentile-point gain in student academic achievement. Therefore the development of an effective social-emotional learning platform in an intervention setting can increase the growth of that child's academic performance. This process requires the development of trust; not just in the teachers or adults in the building, but of one's own self as well as developing trust in peer relationships. Balfanz (2019, pg.72) states that more-active learning is more-successful learning, and it is often more "social" learning, too. "To learn effectively with and from others, we need to know how to read social cues and communicate our level of understanding." A recent study conducted out of Stanford University also confirms this finding that suggest changes in growth mindset and self-management to be most predictive of positive outcomes, where the increases in achievement associated with a one standard deviation increase in SEL can be as high as an additional 25 percent of the average annual learning gains (Kanopka, 2020).

There are educators out there, like Grover Whitehurst, of Stony Brook University, that argue that SEL will take away from academics. He states that “there is little evidence that individual differences in broad personality traits and dispositions can be meaningfully affected through school-based programs” (Balfanz & Whitehurst, 2019, p.70). He also argues that “schools are not going to succeed in making shy students extroverted, careless students meticulous, or contentious students agreeable” (Balfanz & Whitehurst, 2019, p.74). However, those like Robert Balfanz, of John Hopkins University, feel that it is quite the opposite. He states that “by focusing on the ‘whole child’ through taking an integrated approach to social, emotional, and academic development does not have to come at the cost of lessening the focus on academics or decreasing vigilance regarding school outcomes” (Balfanz & Whitehurst, 2019, p.74). Greenberg also supports this approach that “children need more than the ability to read, write, and do arithmetic. They also need skills that will help them develop personal plans and goals, learn to cooperate with others, and deal with everyday challenges, setbacks, and disappointments” (2017, p.16). Simply put, if we are able to form a working connection between a student's cognitive, social and emotional development then we will have a higher opportunity of reaching that student's highest learning potential. Students who become more self-aware and confident about their learning abilities try harder, and students who motivate themselves, set goals, manage their stress, and organize their approach to work perform better (Greenberg 2003).

### **What are the Key Components of a Successful SEL Program?**

As schools begin to understand the need for a strong SEL Curriculum to use in their schools, many elements are considered. From the very beginning stages of

development of social-emotional learning, scholars indicated three key skill areas as the main source of difficulties students identified with this disability faced: recognizing emotions in self and others, regulating and managing strong emotions (positive and negative), and recognizing strengths and areas of need (Elias, 2004). To address the needs in these skill areas, social-emotional programs were developed that followed specific components. According to Peyton, et al. (2000), the following features of quality SEL programs should be considered: 1) selection of program objectives and a sequence of learning activities based on a clearly articulated conceptual framework; 2) instructions sufficient to enable teachers to implement a variety of learning strategies that actively involve students, draw on their previous experience, provide them with opportunities for skill practice and feedback, and address their diverse learning styles; 3) structures to assist teachers to infuse and apply SEL instruction across other subject areas within the school curriculum; 4) well-organized, easy-to-follow lesson plans with clear objectives and learning activities, student assessment tools, and a rationale linking individual lessons to the overall program design; and 5) tools for monitoring program implementation with guidance on how to use the tools and the data collected to improve program delivery. SEL programming developed for the classroom setting utilizes these components in different ways to best meet the needs of that particular school. It is important to consider the needs of your students when selecting the correct SEL program for your school.

### **Comparing Different SEL Programs**

In this section I will talk about the instructional framework comparison of several SEL programs that have been chosen for their effect on behavioral needs. These

programs include: Kool KIDS Whole of Class Program, SAFE program, Caring School Community (CSC), and the RULER Approach. For a visual comparison, see table 1: SEL Program Comparisons.

The Kool KIDS Whole of Class Program aims to assist all children aged 8 to 12 years to recognise their strengths, understand and manage their emotions, be aware of others' emotions and develop their social and friendship skills (Carroll; et al, 2020, p.201). Lessons consist of stories and associated exercises where children can develop the skills and core concepts of the program. Other parts of the program include teaching social skills, emotion and behavior regulation through individual and group work, games, drawing and writing tasks, role plays, narrative exercises, calming exercises and behavioral challenges (Carroll; et al, 2020). He went on to discover that "students classified as borderline/abnormal on the teacher-rated SDQ total difficulties scale showed significantly greater reductions in emotional and behavioral difficulties and significantly greater improvements in social and emotional competence than students who were classified in the normal range" after receiving the program in a whole class format (Carroll; et al, 2020, p.207). Although the program has been found to be successful with children who have been identified with social-emotional and behavioral needs, its largest downfall is that it is designed as a whole-class approach to SEL and relies heavily on its' 13-week delivery of the program to develop connections and practice strategies.

Social Harmony is a K-12 SEL intervention program that is derived from concepts including nonviolent communication, restorative justice, anthroposophy, and from theories of behavioral psychology, attachment theory, and brain science (Haymovitz,

2018). Its approach is described as a restorative approach to typical SEL practices as it offers an alternative to punishments, suspensions and expulsions within schools by building relationships between school personnel and students while still addressing the behaviors or situations that resulted in punishment in the past. Restorative approaches include circle process, restorative inquiry, perpetrator and target mediation, and formal restorative conferencing. This helps build intrinsic motivation while cultivating an ability to meet challenging situations with resilience and creativity (Haymovitz, 2018). It varies from the other programs explored as it involves a community approach to social-emotional learning by involving not only teachers and students, but also school administration and family members.

Another benefit to the Social Harmony program is that it is designed to be delivered following the three-tiered model of intervention. The first tier of the program involves whole school activities such as “basic motivational principles, nonviolent communication, how to identify needs a child is trying to meet through disruptive behavior, and learn how to help students find new strategies to meet such needs,” to which 80 percent of students are expected to respond (Haymovitz, 2018, p.46-47). The second tier is designed to address the needs of about 15% of the students who require a more direct, small group environment. This tier includes lessons that focus on peer modeling techniques, workshops on responsiveness in the classroom, and restorative justice meetings as needed (Haymovitz, 2018). The third tier is considered for the 5% of students who need an individualized approach to SEL as they are not showing a response to the previous two tiers. This tier is designed as a way for teachers to address specific needs of the student in a one-on-one environment (Haymovitz, 2018).

It's important to note that Social Harmony is still considered to be a relatively newer SEL intervention program and does not have a lot of research or case studies to support its effectiveness. However, a concept-mapping evaluation of the program was conducted in 2018 found that participants reported that after the implementation of Social Harmony, they observed stronger preparedness and self-efficacy of faculty and staff members to identify and address social-emotional concerns, better relationships, more positive perceptions of self and others, and improved school climate. It was also discovered that the best way to ensure that the Social Harmony program is most beneficial is when it can be coordinated by a social worker or counselor. He states that "this person would be prepared for the role with some understanding of personality, social psychology, interpersonal dynamics, and organizational theory" (Haymovitz, 2018, p.52). This is seen as a limitation to the program due to the need for this coordinator to fully train staff prior to implementation of the intervention. Teachers and other staff utilizing the program need to obtain 13 hours of training to be effective in conducting lessons with students. Time that many schools do not always have the time readily available for their teachers to utilize in order to ensure fidelity of this program.

Caring School Community (CSC) provides whole-class instruction and three levels of individual interventions to address problem behaviors by providing "comprehensive scope and sequence to build relationships, social skills and competencies" (Collaborative, 2021, p.2). These 30 minute lessons are provided daily over the course of 30 weeks. Research completed by Battistich (2000) has found that this intervention is most effective for grades 3-6 when implemented as a whole-class to address classroom climate and school connection. According to the Center for the

Collaborative Classroom (2021), a research study was concluded in 2006 on twelve underperforming schools in San Francisco Unified School District to see if CSC would improve academic growth on State Testing. After two years of implementing the intervention, students in the schools that received CSC intervention showed a larger growth in their academic progress in both reading and math than the schools that did not provide the intervention. Although this program contained strategies that could be used to address specific needs of the students in my study, it would be very difficult to pare these programs down to an intensive small group Tier 3 intervention as their scope is just too large for what my needs are for this study.

The RULER Approach is a SEL approach that was developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. The program, which is designed as a whole-class intervention for students in K-8 grade, instills a positive social-emotional climate in the classroom as the basis for productive teaching and learning and effective classroom management (Hagelskamp, 2013). RULER is an acronym for the five skills of emotional intelligence: **R**ecognizing emotions in oneself and others, **U**nderstanding the causes and consequences of emotions, **L**abeling emotions with a nuanced vocabulary, **E**xpressing emotions in accordance with cultural norms and social context, and **R**egulating emotions with helpful strategies (Brackett, 2019). The acronym is not intended to reflect a hierarchy in which one skill precedes another in a progressive chain as the development of one RULER skill likely influences another (Brackett & Rivers, 2014). The program teaches children how to recognize emotions in oneself and in other people, understand the causes and consequences of a wide range of emotions, label emotions using a sophisticated vocabulary, express emotions in socially

appropriate ways, and regulate emotions effectively (Taylor, 2007). Through the feeling words units, RULER teaches students to both be aware of the causes and consequences of the negative emotions that they encounter, such as those that arise from being alienated or preparing for a difficult test, and how to identify resources to help them cope with their feelings, such as asking a teacher, parent, or classmate for assistance. Students who are skilled emotionally tend to experience more positive emotions and have higher psychological well-being (Brackett, 2019).

In 2010, Brackett (2010) conducted a seven month study on fifth and sixth grade students utilizing the RULER method to those that were not and found that students in classrooms using RULER had higher academic performance in ELA and work habits/social development as well as higher social and emotional competence in some areas compared to students in classrooms not using RULER. Teacher ratings indicated that at post-test, students in RULER classrooms, compared to those in the comparison group, had higher adaptability scores, which reflect ratings of behaviors related to positive relationships, leadership, and studying, and lower scores on school problems, which reflect ratings of behaviors related to attention and learning problems (Brackett, 2010). To further this study, Hagelskamp (2013) went on to conduct a similar study of the same grades to confirm that RULER's program components encourage frequent social interactions with peers and teachers, along with activities that focus on creativity, group problem solving, conflict resolution and empathy.

Having identified the "missing piece of the puzzle" for the students under my purview, I have the ability to identify key components of an SEL program that would best meet the needs of these students. Age/Grade appropriateness, adaptable for small



group instruction, Tier 3 adaptability and instruction on the identification of specific emotions and how they are experienced. Table 2: SEL Program Comparisons (below) illustrates how the four SEL programs that were explored in this literature review aligned to those requirements.

**Table 1:**

*SEL Program Comparisons*

SEL Program	Age/Grade	Group Size	Tier 3 Adaptable	Program Length	Emotion Identification
<b>Kool KIDS</b>	8-12 yrs	Whole Class	X	13 weeks	✓
<b>Social Harmony</b>	K-12	Whole Class Or Small Group	✓	Program repeats annually	X
<b>Caring School Community</b>	3-6 grade	Whole Class	X	30 weeks	✓
<b>RULER Approach</b>	K-8	Whole Class or Small Group	✓	Multi-year	✓

**Literature Review Findings**

After researching these programs, I found that the RULER Approach contained everything that was required of an SEL program to meet the specific needs of my particular group of students. RULER skills help people of all ages to use their emotions wisely, opening opportunities for us to succeed in school, at work, and in life (Brackett, 2019). As a teacher working with students who have identified social emotional needs that often result in negative behaviors that impede learning, I feel that this SEL program will fit within the context of my capstone project in order to answer the research

question: Can the RULER Approach, a program developed for Tier 1/Tier 2 classroom intervention, be effectively used as a Tier 3 small group intervention?

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Research Design / Methodology**

The students that have been selected for this action research study are second graders who have both previously received instruction using the Zones of Regulation curriculum in the past as a means to regulate their emotions and to address their identified disability in social-emotional skills and/or behavioral goals. I teach in a suburban public school district with a population of about 10,000 students enrolled according to the 2020-2021 Ohio School Report Card. In our district, students with disabilities account for 15% of the population, or roughly 1,500 students. The elementary school that these students attend is one of 12 elementary schools in the district with an enrollment of about 460 students.

The two students selected for this action research have SEL needs that include self-regulation when faced with a frustrating situation, listening/following directions, and using appropriate volume in the classroom. Although their SEL goals identified on their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) are similarly focused on self-regulation of emotions, their primary disabilities are different. Jimmy has a primary disability listed as Autism and Kyle is listed as Other Health Impaired (Minor) with the primary concern for hyperactivity, attentiveness and adaptability. I am interested to see if these disabilities affect the results of the study.

Based on the needs for a SEL program that provides a means to identify emotions in a way that can be utilized in a small group setting, I found that the RULER approach met this need better than other programs that were reviewed in my literature review. The RULER Method was designed to guide teachers to develop their own Emotional Intelligence (EI) and then incorporate it into their classroom (Nathanson, 2016). Utilizing the RULER approach allows me to focus the limited time I have to work with these students on developing their ability to identify their own emotions in order to self-regulate as well as provide them with a way to self-regulate without the need for teacher prompts.

This Action Research Study will be completed in three stages, which will be referred to in this paper as Stage One (baseline), Stage Two (first implementation) and Stage Three (second implementation). The students will meet two times every week on Tuesdays and Thursdays for their twenty minute sessions each day.

### **Stage One - Baseline**

Stage One of the study is only one week in length and was meant to establish a baseline of the student's behavior responses and to establish a classroom charter. Throughout this week I also asked that the teachers monitor the students using the rubric found in Appendix 1. This rubric was created to explore how the students are reacting to a frustrating situation in the classroom. It's design followed Marc Brackett's five skills of emotional intelligence (2019): **R**ecognizing emotions in oneself and others, **U**nderstanding the causes and consequences of emotions, **L**abeling emotions with a nuanced vocabulary, **E**xpressing emotions in accordance with cultural norms and social context, and **R**egulating emotions with helpful strategies. The teachers were asked to

rate the students' ability to process through each step in regards to how much support they needed using a 1-3 scale; a score of 1 meant that the teacher had to provide the step for the student, a score of 2 meant that the student was able to complete that step with teacher prompting, and a score of 3 meant that the student was able to complete that step independently. The teachers were instructed how to question the students through each step of the rubric previous and given time to practice and ask questions in order to ensure that both students were assessed equitably.

After the students were given an explanation of the RULER program, the rest of this first stage centered around developing a classroom charter that would guide expectation and agreement of behavior throughout the study of this RULER program.

### ***Classroom Charter***

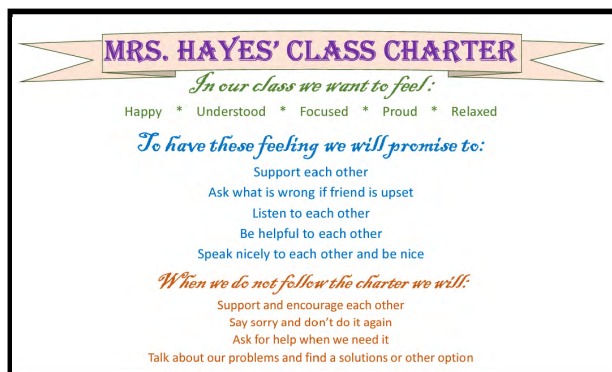
For the remainder of Stage One, the students participated in the creation of the class charter that will be referenced throughout lessons (see Figure 1). The classroom charter is the first anchor tool recommended in the RULER program as it helps to develop and support positive emotional interactions by creating a certain process for achieving the expected outcomes in a classroom by identifying how people want to feel and how they can help each other to experience those feelings (Yale University, 2022). By creating the charter we turn the roles by including students in the decision-making processes, which makes the process more meaningful to students and develops a sense of ownership of the classroom and learning. Once developed, the charter becomes a point of reference to go back in order to reinforce expectations that have been agreed upon by all members of the classroom environment (Brackett, 2020).

This is a new process for my students, and since they are not necessarily comfortable advocating for their needs yet, it was imperative to plan this step by step to help guide the students towards creation of their first classroom charter. The Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence (2021) has identified three key areas needed for the classroom charter. These areas are addressed through questions to promote participation and ownership of the charter. The first question asked to the students is “how do you want to feel in this class? What emotions do you hope to have in here?” The students will then make their own list of feelings on a dry erase board. As they share their words, the words are combined on the whiteboard. The students and teacher will use the combined list to compare the words and select five feelings that everyone agrees on for the charter. Using these words as a guide, the students will brainstorm ways to help themselves and their friends to have these feelings in the classroom to guide their answers for the second question of “how will you obtain these feelings while in the classroom?”. The last part of the classroom charter is focused on a discussion on what should be done if we do not follow the charter. Since the students I have chosen for this research are only in second grade, the question asked to spark discussion needed to be re-structures from the tools’ third and final suggested question of “what will we do when we do not follow the charter” to a question that better aligns to their current level of development, which in this case I used the question “what if you and your friend do not agree on something?” And then added “what if we do not follow these rules?” This sparked more of a conversation on creating compromise or helping their friend if they are doing something wrong.

Once we had completed our draft of the charter on anchor paper, I explained to them how I would type it out and send it to the printers for our final poster. We all put a handprint and wrote our names on the charter once it was printed and the students found a place in the classroom that they wanted to hang it. We will refer to this charter anytime we have miscommunication or conflict of ideas during our two other stages of the study.

**Figure 1:**

*Classroom Charter*



Note. Classroom Charter example created by the students in my classroom.

**Stage Two - First Implementation**

Stage Two of the study is the first implementation of the four lessons that support the development of the RULER anchor tools. The second stage involves the implementation of the lessons. The four lessons will be structured by following each of the key components of the RULER Method and mirror the goals that the students will be assessed on following each stage. This layout will allow for isolation of each concept as it builds towards emotion expression and regulation, which is the end goal of this

project. The students will complete lessons one and two the first week of implementation and then lessons three and four the second week.

The program has been designed so that each one of the recommended anchor tools are to be used in a specific order as they build on one another as the students build their emotional intelligence throughout the program.

### ***Lesson One - Mood Meter***

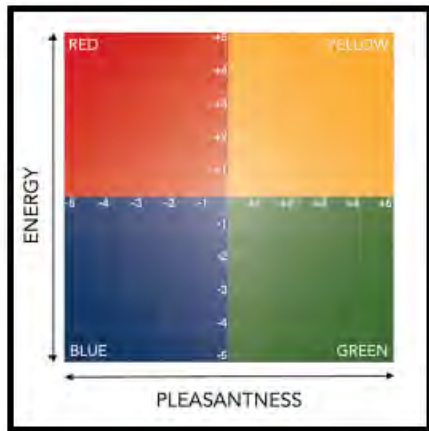
The first lesson introduces the RULER tool, Mood Meter, to establish a means for students to **R**ecognize emotion in themselves and in others around them. The Mood Meter is a visual tool that builds emotional awareness. It helps students to better recognize and label their emotions by understanding how their emotions influence how they feel, think and behave (Yale University, 2022). This tool also gives them the ability to address their feelings to better self regulate when they start to feel out of control, allowing them to choose strategies that will best meet the need for that particular emotion. Mood Meter allows students to see that their emotions are experienced in different levels of pleasantness combined with the level of energy we have (Yale, 2016). As seen in the figure 2 (below) the Mood Meter is made up of four different colored quadrants, each representing different types of feelings as it correlates to energy level and pleasantness (Yale, 2016).

The greatest benefit of the mood meter is that it shows students that there is a purpose behind every emotion and that it is appropriate for all of us to express all types of emotions. There is not a “good” or “bad” feeling or any one feeling that someone should strive to experience all the time. This tool shows that even when we have an

emotion that might be unpleasant for us during that specific situation, there is a reason behind why it is expressed.

**Figure 2:**

*Mood Meter*



Instead of assigning a single emotion name to each color, the mood meter helps the students to experience their emotions as a level of pleasantness and type of energy experienced in the body. When moving left and right on the grid, students identify how pleasant they are feeling towards a specific situation, ranging from extremely unpleasant on the far left to extremely pleasant on the far right. When moving up and down on the grid, students identify how much energy their body is needing to release at the time of the emotion, ranging from extremely low on the bottom to extremely high on the top (*Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, 2016*).

The Mood Meter is sectioned off into four quadrants that are there to help identify the different types of feelings we experience when faced with a certain pleasantness and energy level. The top left quadrant, or red quadrant, is unpleasant / high-energy emotions like anger, frustration, and fear. The top right quadrant, or yellow quadrant, is



pleasant / high-energy emotions like upbeat, cheerful, and excitement. The bottom right quadrant, or green quadrant, is pleasant / low-energy emotions like relaxed, secure, and content. The bottom left quadrant, or blue quadrant, is unpleasant / low-energy emotions like sadness, loneliness, and guilt (*Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence 2016*).

During this first lesson, students will be asked to identify where certain emotions are found on the mood meter. They will be given pictures of different facial expressions. As a group, the students will discuss how the person in the picture is feeling. But instead of identifying the emotion, they must identify how pleasant/unpleasant the person looks as well as how much energy they look like they are experiencing in that moment the picture was taken. This type of conversation will get the students to start utilizing their awareness of these features as a means to identify emotions. The students will also begin to practice using the Mood Meter Check-in (Appendix 2) adapted from the one found on Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence (2016) to practice identifying their mood at a time where they are feeling more regulated so they are better prepared in times of crisis to access their strategies. This gives us an opportunity to talk about emotions in an authentic way as it pertains directly to the students' own experiences.

The Mood Check-in will be introduced at the end of this lesson to encourage the students to practice self-identification of their emotional state. Students will be shown the worksheet and given directions on how to fill it out. The teacher will be sure to encourage the students to first identify their energy levels and pleasantness levels before selecting an emotion. Students will then be asked to label their emotion with a

word and explain why they feel that way through a picture and/or writing a sentence. Students will then be given an opportunity to practice completing the worksheet and discussing it with the teacher. This activity will be practiced at the start of every session throughout both Stage Two and 3 of the study to give insight on the student’s emotional growth and understanding of the RULER process.

**Lesson Two - Feeling Words**

Lesson two focuses on expanding the use of the mood meter by introducing vocabulary words into the equation to better guide them to **Understand** the causes and consequences of emotions and **Labeling** emotions with vocabulary, the next two components of RULER. Figure 3 (below), adapted from Marc Brackett’s book Permission To Feel (2020), illustrates the suggested words to introduce and their direct correlation to the mood meter anchor tool.

**Figure 3:**  
*Feeling Words Vocabulary*

		MOOD METER									
		LOW PLEASANTNESS				HIGH PLEASANTNESS					
HIGH ENERGY	ENRAGED	PANICKED	STRESSED	JITTERY	SHOCKED	SURPRISED	UPBEAT	FESTIVE	EXHILARATED	ECSTATIC	HIGH ENERGY
	LIVID	FURIOUS	FRUSTRATED	TENSE	STUNNED	HYPER	CHEERFUL	MOTIVATED	INSPIRED	ELATED	
	FUMING	FRIGHTENED	ANGRY	NERVOUS	RESTLESS	ENERGIZED	LIVELY	EXCITED	OPTIMISTIC	ENTHUSIASTIC	
	ANXIOUS	APPREHENSIVE	WORRIED	IRRITATED	ANNOYED	PLEASED	FOCUSED	HAPPY	PROUD	THRILLED	
	REPULSED	TROUBLED	CONCERNED	UNEASY	PEEVED	PLEASANT	JOYFUL	HOPEFUL	PLAYFUL	BLISSFUL	
LOW ENERGY	DISGUSTED	BLUM	DISAPPOINTED	DOWN	APATHETIC	AT EASE	EASYGOING	CONTENT	LOVING	FULFILLED	LOW ENERGY
	PESSIMISTIC	MOROSE	DISCOURAGED	SAD	BORED	CALM	SECURE	SATISFIED	GRATEFUL	TOUCHED	
	ALIENATED	MISERABLE	LONLEY	DISHEARTENED	TIRED	RELAXED	CHILL	RESTFUL	BLESSED	BALANCED	
	DESPONDENT	DEPRESSED	SULLEN	EXHAUSTED	FATIGUED	MELLOW	THOUGHTFUL	PEACEFUL	COMFORTABLE	CAREFREE	
	DESPAIRING	HOPELESS	DESOLATE	SPENT	DRAINED	SLEEPY	COMPLACENT	TRANQUIL	COZY	SERENE	

REMIXED BY ERIK  
 ADAPTED FROM PERMISSION TO FEEL  
 BY MARC BRACKETT, Ph.D

In this lesson, students will be focused on understanding and labeling their emotions. This lesson will begin with a mood check-in warm-up as stated earlier. Students will then have the opportunity to further explore the mood meter using feeling words. In this lesson, students will start with feeling words printed on cards and laid out on the table. The students will take turns selecting a word, sharing what they know about the feeling word and demonstrating a facial expression. The teacher will encourage the students to think about whether they feel that the word is a pleasant word or unpleasant word. She will then ask the student if a person having this feeling would typically be high energy or low energy as this will identify where the word should be placed on the mood meter. Using a pocket chart that resembles the mood meter, students will then place the feeling word card in a place that the emotion would fall on the mood meter. This activity is meant to guide the students to using more focused vocabulary to describe the emotions they are feeling. For example, rather than saying that they feel “happy”, a student could say that they are feeling “joyful” or “excited”.

Once the students start to build an understanding of the emotions, then we can start the work on developing strategies to address those feelings, which leads us to the next lesson, which focuses on the third RULER tool: the Meta-Moment.

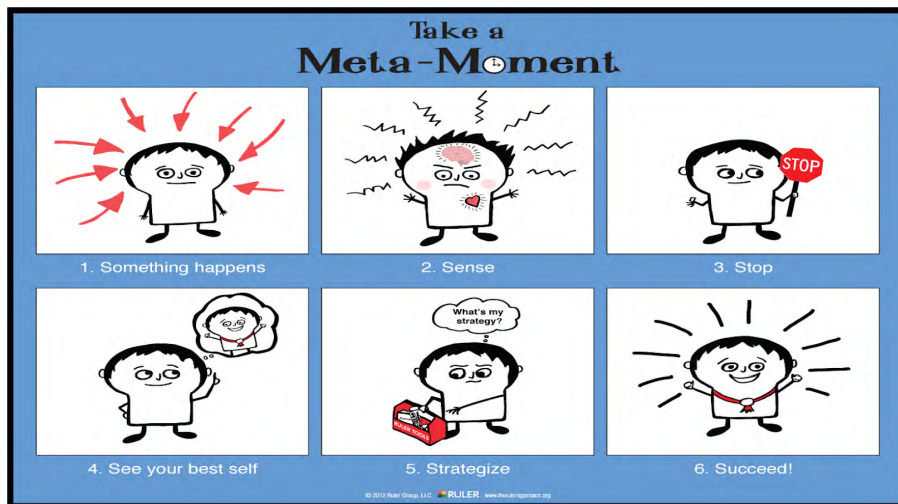
### ***Lesson Three - Meta-Moment***

Lesson three focuses on the introduction and practice of the third anchor tool, Meta-Moment, which encourages the development of **E**xpressing emotions in accordance with cultural norms and social context. This anchor tool is designed to provide a process for responding to emotional situations with strategies that align with one’s best self and that support healthy relationships and personal well-being. The

Meta-Moment is a six-step process that helps students regulate their emotions. The process is based on our desire to act in ways that are aligned with qualities that we view as our best selves (Yale University, 2022).

**Figure 4:**

*Meta-Moment*



Note. This visual will be provided to the students to keep at their desk. The Meta-Moment is a process created for the RULER Approach that allows us

to prolong the time from when we are triggered to when we respond (Yale, 2016).

Figure 2 (above) was created by Brackett to provide a simple visual to walk students through the 6 steps of a meta-moment (2020). Over time, the goal is for students to internalize the process so that they can apply it when needed. According to Brackett (2020), to begin a meta-moment, you must first

1. Identify what has triggered you. It might be something as simple as your shirt getting wet, or something more apparent such as frustration building from an argument with a friend. Once you have identified it, you can then purposefully

2. Sense the changes that the trigger has caused in your body and the changes it caused in the way you think about yourself and others.
3. Take a pause or time out to take a few deep breaths
4. Reflect on your “best self”. Brackett (2020) recommends that you think about the question “how would your ideal self respond to this situation in a way that would make you feel proud about that response later?”.
5. After visualizing what your “best self” would do, decide on a strategy you want to use to move forward. By making a list of helpful strategies ahead of time, you can ensure that you have options for yourself to best meet your needs in that particular situation.
6. Once you are self regulated enough to return to your previous activities you have successfully applied your strategy to the specific situation and ended the meta-moment!

In this lesson, students will be focused on expressing their emotions. The lesson will begin with a mood check-in warmup and then the students will be introduced to the book Lilly’s Purple Plastic Purse by Kevin Henkes. The book tells about a time Lilly felt angry and expressed herself by drawing a mean picture of her teacher. She gave her teacher the picture and then felt bad about it and tried to make it right. Students will use questions outlined in the Meta-Moment Action Plan steps to talk through what Lilly could have done when she was mad to regulate herself so that she could avoid the unpleasant feelings that she felt when she chose to draw that hurtful picture of her teacher. To expand the lesson and to allow for the students to make a connection to their own lives, the teacher will provide a piece of paper and crayons and ask the

students to draw a picture of themselves. Once complete, they will write four-five words that describe the best qualities of themselves on the paper around the self portrait. This will be introduced to the students as a portrait of their best self. The students can hang this in the classroom wherever they choose and refer back to it as they practice the Meta-Moment. The teacher will end the lesson with a review of the Meta-Moment visual (figure 4 above) and students will reflect on a time where they might have been able to use it to help them through a frustrating or upsetting situation.

It is the goal for these students to eventually use this meta-moment process automatically when they are faced with a situation that is triggering frustration, anger or other non-pleasant emotions. The first times practicing these steps will be utilizing them in a social story or other fictional situation. Then the steps will be reviewed during time of reflection on past situations or behaviors that the students have identified as unpleasant to instill a sense of what to do in the future. As they progress in their automaticity of this skill, they will benefit from the visual provided to them or prompting to talk through the steps as they work towards self-regulation.

#### ***Lesson Four - The Blueprint***

The fourth and final lesson in Stage Two introduces the final anchor tool, The Blueprint, in order to encourage practice in **Regulating** emotions with helpful strategies. The Blueprint is a RULER tool that uses a set of questions to prompt self-reflection and help us resolve conflicts (Yale, 2016). These questions are designed to help an individual to process through a situation or conflict effectively by supporting the development of empathy and conflict resolution skills by serving as a guide for reflecting on conflict and restoring affected communities (Yale University, 2022). To provide

guided practice in using this tool, interactive read alouds using books that depict conflict between a character and either themselves or another person in the story. At the conclusion of the read aloud, the teacher will utilize The Blueprint worksheets, similar to Figure 5 (below), from Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence (2016), as a roadmap to guide reflection. Since the story focuses on another person's conflict, students often have an easier time recognizing details to help them answer the problem-solving questions such as; how the character is expressing their emotions, how it affects others, and what they should do differently in the future. The Ruler Family Connections says it best "just like learning to play a musical instrument, this can feel awkward at first. It takes practice! If we regularly ask ourselves these questions when conflicts arise, the process becomes more habitual." (2016, pg.1).

**Figure 5:**

*The Blueprint*

Solve problems with The Blueprint		
Describe	What happened?	
RULER Skill	Me	Other Person
Recognize & Label	How did I feel?	How did ____ feel?
Understand	What caused my feelings?	What caused ____'s feelings?
Express & Regulate	How did I express and regulate my feelings?	How did ____ express and regulate his/her feelings?
Reflect & Plan	What could I have done to handle the situation better? What can I do now?	

In this lesson, the students will focus on regulating their emotions using the Blueprint anchor tool. They will begin with a mood check-in and then the teacher will introduce this tool with an interactive read aloud of the book There is no such thing as Dragons by Jack Kent. The book shows what happens when emotions are ignored and that small emotions can turn into bigger, more destructive emotions if ignored. Its final message is that if you understand your emotions they are more manageable and less scary. Students will make connections with the different emotions that the characters felt in the story, why they felt that way and where it would fall on the mood meter. They will then use Blueprint Worksheet to facilitate questions.

There will be a week in between Stages 2 and 3 to allow for the second set of behavior data to be gathered by the classroom teachers using the rubric outlined in Stage One. During this week, students will not be provided any additional instructions related to the RULER program.

### **Stage Three - Second Implementation**

After the collection of data following Stage Two, I will reflect on the results of the rubrics done by the classroom teachers and observations made by myself based on the student's responses on their mood check-ins and lesson participation in order to make adjustments to the strategies implemented in the second two weeks. Stage Three will follow the same basic outline as Stage Two, just with a few minor alterations based on the data collection and reflections made after Stage Two.

### ***Lessons One and Two***

In the first week of Stage Three, there was not a lot of change needed to address the goals as the students still benefit from the repeat practice. Each lesson continues to



begin in the same process with the completion of the mood check-in warm up. Lesson one will be repeated just as it was in Stage Two. The only change in Lesson two was made as an accommodation to address the students current reading abilities. Instead of having cards with just the feeling word listed, it was modified to include a picture of the facial expression to accompany the feeling word. This was to allow for independent reference to the pocket chart as it is left out for the students to refer back to throughout the study to help them to identify the emotion they are trying to indicate in the activity or on their mood check-in sheet.

### ***Lessons Three and Four***

The second week of Stage Three contained more internal processing and reflection and, therefore, needed some modifications. In lesson 3, students will be given a different read aloud book to give them another perspective to practice using the meta-moment. For Stage Three I used the book Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day by Judith Viorst. In this book Alexander is met with several situations where a Meta-moment would be beneficial to the outcome of his day. The students were asked to reflect on one of the situations and come up with possible strategies that he could utilize in his Meta-Moment to help him to de-escalate the problem. Also, since the students have already created their “best self” portraits, this was not repeated in this stage. Instead, the teacher provided scenarios to elicit discussion on the process and to practice the steps using the visual. The same situation held true for lesson 4 as a new read aloud was needed to encourage the practice of using the Blueprint anchor chart. I chose the book Enemy Pie by Derek Munson as its main focus surrounds friendship, conflict resolution and point of view.

The students chose a character to use to answer the facilitated questions on the The Blueprint Worksheet. Repeated practice allows the students to review the tools in similar, but different situations as they take on the roles of the characters in the story.

At the conclusion of Stage Three with the second implementation, behavior data will be collected a third time for a week to analyze growth or areas of continued focus.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Data Findings and Analysis**

The qualitative data has been gathered through the rubrics completed by the general education teachers as well as the observations that I have made of the students in my field journal from Stage One: baseline, Stage Two: after the first implementation, and Stage Three: after the second implementation to determine the effectiveness of the RULER strategies on my students' abilities to accurately identify their current state of emotion as well as to self-regulate themselves to an emotional state suitable for classroom learning. As detailed in Chapter 3, teachers were asked to use a rubric (Appendix B) to rate their students' response to stressful or frustrating situations that caused disruptive behaviors that prevented the student from participating in a classroom activity. The rubric that was used was designed following Marc Brackett's five skills of emotional intelligence (2019). The rubric used the scores gathered for each skill to compile a total score out of 15 for the emotional response. After the completion of all three stages, I tallied the results of data gathered at each stage for each child individually to compare their growth after receiving this program in a more focused,

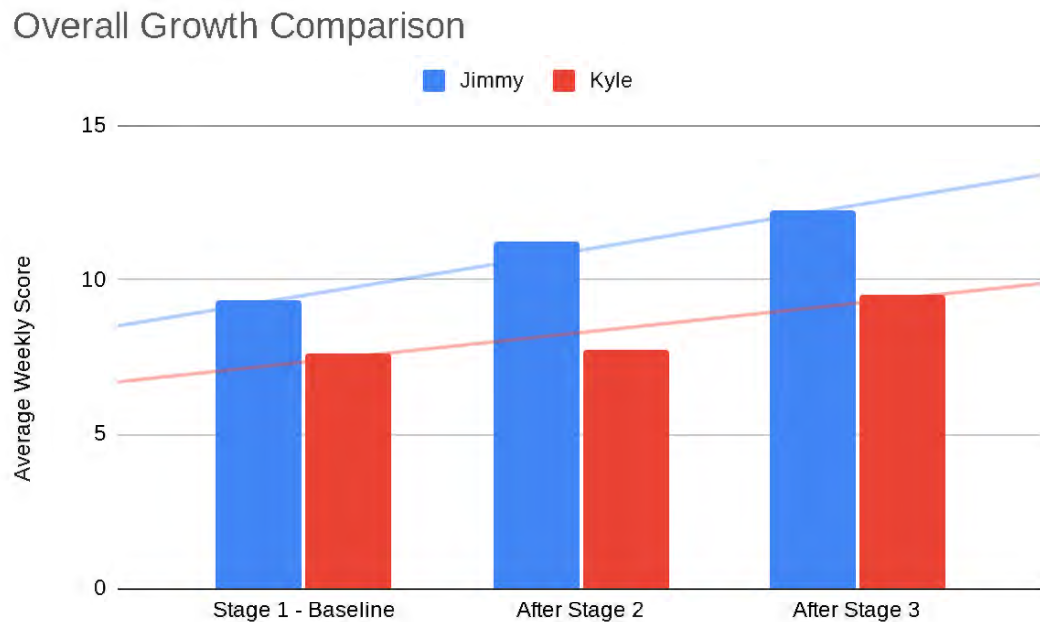
purposeful way to address their specific behavior concerns related to their identified disabilities.

## Findings

Figure 6 (below) shows the collective totals for the average scores gathered for each student after each Stage of the study.

### Figure 6:

#### *Growth Comparison Chart*



It is clear from the trendline depicted on the chart that both students showed improvement from their baseline data to their Stage Three data. This is evidence that an intensified, directed approach to this method can show improvements in behavior issues due to SEL needs with children identified with a disability when provided in short, small group settings. It also shows that although it is showing improvement, the length

of time provided in this study is not long enough for the children to consistently meet the goal of independent use of this method.

However, this chart and data gathered also shows that each boy is responding to the RULER approach differently. Jimmy's growth started right away after Stage Two, but Kyle needed to have the material presented a second time in Stage Three and given time for repeated practice before he started to show improvement in his approach to his emotions and the behaviors they caused in the classroom. Kyle showed more resistance to the new RULER approach method. He did want to openly talk about how he was feeling and WHY. He enjoyed the activities and had a lot to say about analyzing the emotions in other people or scenarios we discussed, however, he wanted to move from the activity to the transition break he earned at the end of each session without talking about himself. Asking to talk about emotions appeared difficult to him and he often responded with "I don't know" when pressed to share more about how he was feeling. As the study progressed, he started to open up more. He relied a lot on Jimmy and often let him take the lead when sharing about our own emotions towards a situation, which is actually opposite to what I had hypothesized at the start of the study. Kyle is typically more outgoing in the group than Jimmy, but this shift in roles leads me to conclude that this was out of his comfort zone. Throughout Stage Three and then for the week following, Kyle still showed more teacher support and prompting for recognizing, understanding and labeling his emotion when met with a frustrating situation. In turn, once an emotion was identified, Kyle excelled with expression and regulation and was on his way towards independence in finding a strategy to address

what the emotion needed in order to return to the class activity by the end of Stage Three. In Kyle's situation, Stage Three was essential to his success in this study.

Jimmy, on the other hand, responded to this new method right away and continued to develop through Stage Three. Jimmy has always struggled to find the words for how he was feeling, so establishing a way to measure his emotions BEFORE assigning a word for it proved to be very beneficial to him. After the first couple of days he started to get the hang of the process and even started to ask other peers if they were high-energy or low-energy. This approach gave him the words that he did not have before. He could recognize, understand, label and express his emotions very well, but struggled with regulating without teacher support. He could identify helpful strategies, but at the moment he would often rely on "I don't know" as his answer. After Stage Three, this did improve to him being able to select a strategy from several options given by a teacher, but needs more time for this to become an independent act.

What's interesting about this study is that, as the Figure 6 chart (above) shows, both boys do show that the RULER Approach is an SEL program that has helped them to develop their emotional intelligence, just in differing ways. It also shows that continuing this program will only continue this growth and enable them to be on a path to independence in self-regulation.

While both students showed overall growth, the premise of the RULER program primarily relies on the students' ability to first identify their current emotional state prior to responding to the needs that he/she requires to address that emotion. Therefore, the second set of data points was gathered using the Mood Check-in warm-up activity that the students completed at the start of each session throughout the study in order to

assess the development of the feeling words used by each student. This allows for the ability to understand if the students are considering their emotions in the way in which the mood meter was developed - through energy levels and pleasantness rather than just “good/bad”. Table 2: Mood Check-in Feeling Words (below) not only identifies what word each student chose to identify with on a particular day, but also the color that they selected on the mood meter in regards to this emotion.

**Table 2:**

*Mood Check-In Feeling Words*

Mood Check-in Feeling Words				
Stage 2				
	Tues 2/22	Thur 2/24	Tues 3/1	Thur 3/3
Jimmy	happy*	hyper	happy	tired
Kyle	good*	good*	happy	good
Stage 3				
	Tues 3/15	Thur 3/17	Tues 3/22	Thur 3/24
Jimmy	hyper	worried	excited	wiggly
Kyle	disappointed	excited	angry	calm

Note. \*identifies a student mismatch of words and mood meter color. Purple line indicates when feeling word vocabulary was introduced.

From Stage One to Stage Three, it is evident that their knowledge of feeling words have grown. At the start of the study, both students were very quick to identify their place on the Mood Meter as being in the green. This makes sense as they have been previously taught in the Zones of Regulation program that “green is good” and that everyone should aim to be in green everyday. It is important to note that in the RULER

Approach, “happy” and “good” are actually considered yellow words due to how they correlate with energy levels and pleasantness, but the boys identified them as green words on their check-in charts early in Stage Two. The mood meter check-in was completed before the associated vocabulary was introduced, as indicated by the purple line in Table 2, so this was still a fairly new concept to them.

Jimmy and Kyle both typically enjoy coming to my room for intervention time and are usually higher energy and pleasant in nature. However, it was interesting to me to see how their approach to this activity changed throughout the study. At first they were quick to complete the worksheet and put down what they thought I wanted to hear. I even noted on the first day that Jimmy asked me to show him what he should put down for his feeling word. They are showing that they want the teacher's approval, even when it comes to their own emotions. Thinking about their feelings is not something that they are comfortable with or willing to accept at the beginning.

As the study progressed, so did their understanding of their own range of emotion. This is evident in the increase of the variants of color and vocabulary present in Stage Three. Instead of the typical response of “I’m fine”, I noted them both using the pocket chart of feeling words, heard them talking about their energy levels and whether they thought it was a good feeling or one they wanted to change. I also noted that this warm-up process began taking more time as the students processed their current moods. The focus shifted from quickly labeling a feeling word to truly considering where they were on the mood meter before deciding what word correlates to the position selected. This became a time of reflection and even problem solving on ways to address their newly identified emotions. They were starting to show understanding and

acceptance that their emotions do not always have to fall on one color and that other factors are in play in regards to how they are feeling each day. This growth is a key step towards the development of self-regulation as they have to be aware and accepting of their own emotions before we can start to ask them to think of strategies to address the emotion.

On the last day of the study, Jimmy completed his mood check-in and identified that he was high energy and feeling pleasant. He then used the word “wiggly” as the feeling word for the day. When discussing his word choice, I tried to get him to understand that the word he chose was not considered a feeling word and was more of an adverb to describe his energy level. Jimmy was not willing to change his word as he kept protesting that “wiggly” was how he was feeling that day. Situations like this are strong indicators that the student is still requiring additional repeated practice to fully gain an independent understanding of how to identify feelings by using both factors of the mood meter and not just energy levels.

It is important to note that the identification of feeling words is only the start of the process, and these results were gathered in an isolated and focused environment. The goal is to build their confidence in their abilities to do this in other less controlled situations. Jimmy is showing more growth in this area than Kyle. Even after Stage Three, the RULER rubric shows that Kyle is still requiring support and prompting from his teachers to recognize and label his feelings where Jimmy has started coming to his teacher more independently for help. Especially in situations where he is met with frustration or anger, Kyle will respond with refusal or say “I don’t know” when asked about his feelings, energy levels, etc. Continued repeated practice will be needed to



build autonomy, but results from this initial study shows promise of success for these students.

### **Research Questions Revisited**

With the study completed, it's imperative that we look back to the start of the process to ensure that the project met its initial purpose. Social-Emotional learning needs are on the rise in America, for a number of reasons. Schools from all walks of life are searching for answers on how to best meet the needs of their students.

With so many programs available, it is important to ensure that the program you select meets all the requirements of a strong SEL program. This leads us to our first research question: *What are the key elements needed to address social-emotional learning in elementary students?* This question was developed as the starting point to this inquiry. Social-Emotional learning is growing in popularity and with this popularity comes options. There are many different programs available to address the large variety of SEL needs that present as a barrier to academic growth. With these programs comes a plethora of research studies to evaluate their effectiveness. A literature review found that although the programs all vary, the key elements remain the same. As mentioned earlier, scholars indicated three key skill areas as the main source of difficulties students identified with this disability faced: recognizing emotions in self and others, regulating and managing strong emotions (positive and negative), and recognizing strengths and areas of need (Elias, 2004). To address the needs in these skill areas, social-emotional programs were developed that followed specific components: 1) selection of program objectives and a sequence of learning activities based on a clearly articulated conceptual framework; 2) instructions sufficient to enable

teachers to implement a variety of learning strategies that actively involve students, draw on their previous experience, provide them with opportunities for skill practice and feedback, and address their diverse learning styles; 3) structures to assist teachers infuse and apply SEL instruction across other subject areas within the school curriculum; 4) well-organized, easy-to-follow lesson plans with clear objectives and learning activities, student assessment tools, and a rationale linking individual lessons to the overall program design; and 5) tools for monitoring program implementation with guidance on how to use the tools and the data collected to improve program delivery (Peyton, et al., 2000). The literature review of several programs also concluded in identifying that RULER held the elements that best met the needs of my students for this instructional inquiry project.

Once it has established which SEL program is best fit for the students, the second research question must be addressed to ensure that the needs of your students are being met with the program of choice. *How can self-regulation be appropriately assessed for effectiveness in an academic setting?* In the literature review it was discovered that Payton (2008) stated that interventions that promote a successful SEL program may decrease bullying behaviors, increase personal growth, reduce behavioral issues in schools, and increase academic performance. But how does one assess these areas? Bracket (2019) found that by focusing on each of the key skills of emotional intelligence independently, you can best meet the needs of the student. These items correlate into the acronym that he chose for his SEL Program - RULER: recognize emotions in oneself and in other people, understand the causes and consequences of a wide range of emotions, label emotions using a sophisticated

vocabulary, express emotions in socially appropriate ways, and regulate emotions effectively (Taylor, 2007). By assessing each of these areas, one can begin to assess the growth of a student in a matter of a few weeks. However, in order to fully see the benefits as it affects academic performance, these students should be given more time for greater exposure and repeated practice of the tools provided to them through the program.

The final question posed at the beginning of this study is *Can the RULER Approach, a program developed for Tier 1/Tier 2 classroom intervention, be effectively used as a Tier 3 small group intervention?* Based on my data, the RULER Approach has been found effective for these students. The RULER Approach was designed as a year-long program to address SEL needs in the general education setting. This study was set to assess the feasibility of its success when used in a small group, intervention setting with children with diagnosed disabilities. Of the four programs that I researched to address this issue, the RULER Approach met all four required components to enable me to test this theory.

In this short action study, both of the students showed collective growth in their emotional intelligence over the course of the time they were exposed to this program and its tools. Not only did their knowledge of feeling words develop, but also the awareness of these types of feelings grew. Being aware of their emotions and being able to identify them develops a strong foundation for these students who are already met with difficulty in school due to their identified disability. Establishing a way to focus an SEL program to build their emotional intelligence while targeting their individual needs as they develop will give these students the opportunity to catch up to their

typical peers and lessen the need for time out of class to address behaviors caused by frustrating situations.

The results of the study were conclusive that although some growth was made from both students, they could still benefit from more time for repeated practice to build independence in the use of the anchor tools. Future studies over longer periods of time and with students of differing ages/grade levels as well as differing disabilities would be needed to definitively answer the full success of this as an intervention practice for these students. As for this inquiry, the program was seen as effective in shortened, more intensely focused lessons in a small group setting.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusion

This instructional inquiry into the RULER Methods effectiveness to be used as a tier three intervention has found that social and emotional learning plays an important role in improving students' overall social-emotional competences regardless of type of disability. By creating specific lessons that tune in to the five key competencies of Social Emotional Learning: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills and Responsible Decision Making, students are given an opportunity to participate in activities to obtain accurate feedback of their emotion in very specific ways. For example, their mood check-ins develop their abilities to plot their current mood on the mood meter to determine their level of pleasantness and arousal or energy level, which is something that both students struggled with at the start of this study. By working in small groups, students are given the opportunity to work together to build self

regulation as well as relationship management skills. This also added an additional layer to their learning that, by engaging with their peers in a safe space, the effectiveness of skill development increases due to comfort and familiarity.

The RULER Approach has highlighted the importance of the integration of SEL programs in our academic settings. It is important to give students the abilities to build on these skills to ensure that they reach their full potential in school not only academically, but also social emotionally.

### **Limitations**

Although this study did find positive results in the students' self regulation, which resulted in better behavior and more time in the classroom, there were some limitations that accompanied this study both with the students as well as the program methodology.

The most apparent limitation was with the subjects themselves. Since there were only two subjects in this study, we relied heavily on their participation. Outside variants such as illness, how much sleep they had the night before, peer conflicts, etc could affect these second graders and cause distraction during the sessions. For example, Jimmy got sick at the end of the first week of Stage Two, which resulted in him being distracted and "tired" as he identified it in his mood check-in and this affected his participation during the lesson.

The largest variant is that Jimmy and Kyle had different disabilities, which may or may not have affected their results in the study. They were selected for their similar delays in attentiveness, adaptability and inability to independently self-identify their emotions, but the root cause for these delays are primarily due to different disabilities. Both students responded to the RULER program in very different ways, which may have

been due in part to this. Another problem that was unforeseen at the start of the study was that Kyle started ADHD medication halfway through the study, specifically, the week between Stage Two and Stage Three. Although the medication was not considered at therapeutic levels until after the study, there was noted change in his attention and frustration levels during Stage Three. A larger sample size of students from various grades and disabilities would prevent these minor differences from affecting the results of future studies in this program.

This study was conducted over the course of 6 weeks, with the actual lessons only spanning a two week implementation and then repeated for another two weeks. These students were selected due to their identified disabilities and it is known that individuals with disabilities often need more time than their typical peers to be able to show progress in a new skill. The RULER program is designed as a year-long program for typical peers to build emotional intelligence. It is possible that this study was not long enough to truly represent the growth that targeted intervention can achieve when given more time for the student to process. Looking at the future studies of this program in an intervention setting, it would be recommended that data be gathered over a longer period of time to see if that impacts results.

### **Dissemination**

Following the completion of this project, it is my intention to share the results of this study with other Special Education professionals who are looking into possible programs to address social-emotional learning goals for their own students. There is a lot of research that supports SEL practices in a classroom of typical developing peers. This study looks further into how it can be applied to students with disabilities and

delays that benefit from repeated practice, small group instruction, direct feedback and require a more intense application practice of the tools. As the need for effective SEL methods grows, so will the need for evidence-based studies that show results in these types of intervention settings for students with disabilities.

The RULER method requires training and time to execute the program with fidelity. It also requires the purchase of the curriculum, which can be costly. By involving the members of the school district administration and sharing my research and results, it is my hope to have their support to reach more teachers who are interested in learning about the program through developing a Professional Development on my findings or establishing further curriculum training.

### **Next Steps**

Moving forward, I plan to continue to develop my SEL program using the RULER Method. Next school year brings a new caseload of students. These students will be coming with new disability needs that require all types of academic and behavior interventions. It is my plan to offer this to any student who is showing an inability to self-regulate due to some disconnect with understanding emotions. Some of these students will be coming to me with past experiences in other types of SEL approaches, but this study has shown that students with previous experience with another type of SEL approach can successfully transition to using the RULER Method.

## REFERENCES

- 2021 Social Emotional Learning Survey. *McGraw Hill*. (2021).  
<https://www.mheducation.com/prek-12/explore/sel-survey.html>.
- Advancing Social and emotional learning. *CASEL*. (2021, October 14). CASEL.org.  
<https://casel.org/>.
- Ahmed, I., Hamzah, A. B., & Binti Abdullah, M. N. L. Y. (2020). Effect of Social and Emotional Learning Approach on Students' Social Emotional Competence. *International Journal of Instruction*, 13(4), 663–677.
- Balfanz, R., & Whitehurst, G. J. (2019). Should Schools Embrace Social and Emotional Learning? *Education Next*, 19(3), 68–74.
- Battistich, V. (2000). Effects of a school-based program to enhance prosocial development on children's peer relations and social adjustment. *Journal of Research in Character Education*, 1, 1-17.
- Berard, N., Loutzenhiser, L., Sevigny, P. R., & Alfano, D. P. (2017). Executive Function, Social Emotional Learning, and Social Competence in School-Aged Boys with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology*, 32(3–4), 265–281.
- Bond, J. B. (2020). Social-Emotional Learning in a Time of Chaos. *International Dialogues on Education: Past and Present*, 7, 87–92.
- Brackett, M. A. (2020). *Permission to feel: The power of emotional intelligence to achieve well-being and success*. Celadon Books.
- Brackett, M. A., Bailey, C. S., Hoffmann, J. D., & Simmons, D. N. (2019). RULER: A Theory-Driven, Systemic Approach to Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning. *Educational Psychologist*, 54(3), 144–161.



- Brackett, M. A., Reyes, M. R., Rivers, S. E., Elbertson, N. A., Salovey, P. (2011). Classroom Emotional Climate, Teacher Affiliation, and Student Conduct. *Journal of Classroom Interactions*, 46(1), 27–36.
- Brackett, M. A., & Rivers, S. E. (2014). Transforming students' lives with social and emotional learning. *International Handbook of Emotions in Education*.
- Brackett, M. A., Rivers, S. E., Reyes, M. R., & Salovey, P. (2010). Enhancing Academic Performance and Social and Emotional Competence with the RULER Feeling Words Curriculum. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 22(2), 218–224.
- Carroll, A., Houghton, S., Forrest, K., McCarthy, M., & Sanders-O'Connor, E. (2020). Who Benefits Most? Predicting the Effectiveness of a Social and Emotional Learning Intervention According to Children's Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties. *School Psychology International*, 41(3), 197–217.
- Collaborative Classroom. (2021). *Caring School Community*. Alameda, CA.  
<http://online.fliphtml5.com/srupx/siuu/#p=4>.
- Elias, M.J. (2004). The connection between social-emotional learning and learning disabilities: Implications for intervention. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 27(1), 53-63.
- Farley, C. (2012). Evidence-Based Practices for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: Improving Academic Achievement. *Beyond behavior*, 21(2), 37-43.
- Greenberg, M. T., Domitrovich, C. E., & Weissberg, R. P. (2017). Social and Emotional Learning as a Public Health Approach to Education. *Future of Children*, 27(1), 13–32.
- Greenberg, M. T., Weissberg, R. P., O'Brien, M. U., Zins, J. E., Fredericks, L., Resnik, H., & Elias, M. J. (2003). Enhancing School-Based Prevention and Youth Development through Coordinated Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning. *American Psychologist*, 58(6–7), 466–474.

- Hagelskamp, C., Brackett, M. A., Rivers, S. E., Salovey, P. (2013). Improving classroom quality with the ruler approach to social and emotional learning: Proximal and distal outcomes. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 51*(3-4), 530–543.
- Haymovitz, E., Houseal-Allport, P., Lee, R. S., & Svistova, J. (2018). Exploring the Perceived Benefits and Limitations of a School-Based Social-Emotional Learning Program: A Concept Map Evaluation. *Children & Schools, 40*(1), 45–54.
- Immordino-Yang, M. H., Darling-Hammond, L., & Krone, C. R. (2019). Nurturing Nature: How Brain Development Is Inherently Social and Emotional, and What This Means for Education. *Educational Psychologist, 54*(3), 185–204.
- Kanopka, K., Claro, S., Loeb, S., West, M. R., Fricke, H., & Stanford University, P. A. for C. E. (PACE). (2020). What Do Changes in Social-Emotional Learning Tell Us about Changes in Academic and Behavioral Outcomes? *Policy Analysis for California Education, 22*.
- Kuypers, L. (2011). Learn more about the zones. THE ZONES OF REGULATION: A SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING PATHWAY TO REGULATION.  
<https://www.zonesofregulation.com/learn-more-about-the-zones.html>
- Mahoney, J. L., & Weissberg, R. P. (2018). SEL: What the Research Says. *Educational Leadership, 76*(2), 34–35.
- National Center for Innovation and Education. (1999). Lessons for life: How smart schools boost academic, social, and emotional intelligence. Bloomington, IN: HOPE Foundation.
- Nathanson, L., Rivers, S.E., Flynn, L.M., & Brackett, M.A. (2016). Creating Emotionally Intelligent Schools With RULER. *Emotion Review, 8*, 305 - 310.
- Payton, J., Wardlaw, D. M., Graczyk, P. A., Bloodworth, M. R., Tompsett, C. J. (2000). Social and Emotional Learning: A Framework for Promoting Mental Health and Reducing Risk Behavior in Children and Youth. *Journal of School Health, 70*(5), 179–185.

- Payton, J., Weissberg, R. P., Durlak, J. A., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., Schellinger, K. B., Pachan, M., & Collaborative for Academic, S. and E. L. (2008). The Positive Impact of Social and Emotional Learning for Kindergarten to Eighth-Grade Students: Findings from *Three Scientific Reviews*. Technical Report. In *Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning*. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning.
- Phifer, L. W., & Hull, R. (2016). Helping Students Heal: Observations of Trauma-Informed Practices in the Schools. *School Mental Health, 8*(1), 201–205.
- Shugart, E. (2022). *Behavioral disorders*. NSTA. <https://www.nsta.org/behavioral-disorders>
- Tate, E. (Host). (2019, May 7). *Why social-emotional learning is suddenly in the spotlight*. [Audio Podcast] EdSurge News. <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2019-05-07-why-social-emotional-learning-is-suddenly-in-the-spotlight>
- Taylor, R. D., & Dymnicki, A. B. (2007). Empirical Evidence of Social and Emotional Learning's Influence on School Success: A Commentary on "Building Academic Success on Social and Emotional Learning: What Does the Research Say?," a Book Edited by Joseph E. Zins, Roger P. Weissberg, Margaret C. Wang, and Herbert J. Walberg. *Journal of Educational & Psychological Consultation, 17*(2–3), 225–231.
- Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. (2016). *Ruler Anchor - The Blueprint Overview*. Family Connections. (2020). [https://www.bridgeportedu.net/cms/lib/CT02210097/Centricity/Domain/901/Blueprint\\_Overview\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.bridgeportedu.net/cms/lib/CT02210097/Centricity/Domain/901/Blueprint_Overview_FINAL.pdf)
- Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. (2016). *Ruler Anchor - The Charter Overview*. Family Connections. (2020). [http://www.rulerapproach.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Charter\\_FC\\_Edited.pdf](http://www.rulerapproach.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Charter_FC_Edited.pdf)
- Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. (2016). *Ruler Anchor - The Meta-Moment Overview*. Family Connections. (2020). [https://ct02210097.schoolwires.net/cms/lib/CT02210097/Centricity/Domain/901/MetaMoment\\_Overview\\_FINAL.pdf](https://ct02210097.schoolwires.net/cms/lib/CT02210097/Centricity/Domain/901/MetaMoment_Overview_FINAL.pdf)

Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. (2016). *Ruler Anchor: The Mood Meter Overview*. Family Connections. [https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1584462163/highlineschoolsorg/zueeccgyqconomyqrwms/MoodMeter\\_FC\\_Grade2.pdf](https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1584462163/highlineschoolsorg/zueeccgyqconomyqrwms/MoodMeter_FC_Grade2.pdf).

Yale University. (2022). *What is Ruler?* RULER Approach. <https://www.rulerapproach.org/about/what-is-ruler/>

APPENDIX A

**Student ( ) Checklist**

Date/Time of Behavior:	
Type of Behavior:	
Length of Time to Regulate:	

	3 (High Quality)	2 (Adequate Quality)	1 (Poor Quality)
<b>Recognizes</b>	Child recognizes emotion on own	Child recognizes emotion with adult prompting	Adult recognizes emotion
<b>Understands</b>	Child can identify what caused the emotion on own	Child can identify what caused the emotion with adult prompting	Adult tells the cause for the emotion
<b>Labels</b>	Child can name the emotion on own	Child can name the emotion with adult prompting	Adult names the emotion for the child
<b>Express</b>	Child can express what they need to address their emotion on own	Child can express what they need to address their emotion with adult prompting	Adult provides a way to address the emotion
<b>Regulate</b>	Child can use a preferred strategy to adjust the emotion on own	Child can use a preferred strategy to adjust the emotion with adult prompting	Adult suggests strategy to adjust the emotion

TOTAL SCORE \_\_\_\_ out of 15

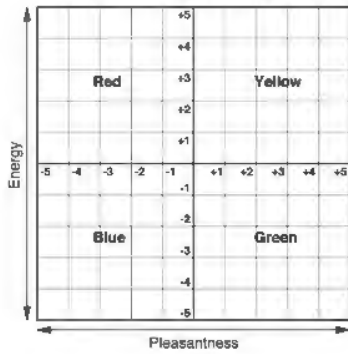
APPENDIX B

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**MY DAILY MOOD METER CHECK-IN**

How are you feeling right now?  
Color in the square.



Draw a picture to show what happened to cause this feeling.



I am feeling low / high energy. I am feeling unpleasant / pleasant.

I am feeling in the \_\_\_\_\_ square right now because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_