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PROMOTING SELF-MANAGEMENT SKILLS AMONG STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM

A MASTER'S THESIS PROJECT
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF BETHEL UNIVERSITY

BY

ELISABETH A. PAGEL

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PROMOTING SELF-MANAGEMENT SKILLS AMONG STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM

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APPROVED

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Abstract

The purpose of this action research project was to determine how educators can promote self-management skills among students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Previous studies were used to summarize the current state of social-emotional learning in the American public-school system and to identify strategies that promote self-management skills in special education classrooms. The Delphi method was used to distinguish which of these strategies would promote self-management skills for students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Panelists ($N = 18$) generated and ranked strategies in three questionnaires, and they created consensus on the top 10 strategies with the highest potential for impact. The top five strategies were: developing a relationship with the student, engaging in early intervention, preparing students for hypothetical situations in the classroom, teaching and using calming techniques, and teaching regulation strategies. Additional research is needed to determine the efficacy of these identified strategies and whether explicit social-emotional curricula is necessary for improving social-emotional learning outcomes.

Keywords: special education, self-management, social-emotional learning, inclusion, general education

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

A free and appropriate education for all students with disabilities was enacted throughout the United States with the development of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975. Subsequent re-authorizations and amendments through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990, 1997, and 2004 have continued to expand on the initial law by providing additional measures of a free and appropriate education including a push towards more inclusionary practices (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Presently, only 63.4% of students with disabilities are included in their general education classrooms at the gold standard of 80% or more of their school day. A recent study indicated that the inclusion of students for 80% or more of their day resulted in a minimum of a 15-point increase in standardized score testing on the Indiana State Test of Educational Progress compared to students included less than 80% of their school day (Cole et al., 2020).

Although inclusion in the general education classroom has a direct impact on their success, students identified with social, emotional, and behavioral deficits are less likely than their peers to be included in the general education classroom (Mitchell, 2017). Furthermore, only 39.7% of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and 48.5% of individuals with Emotional and Behavioral Disturbances (EBD) are included in the general education classroom for more than 80% of the school day, while peers identified with specific learning disabilities are included at a rate of 71.4% (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). This discrepancy points to the importance of quality instruction in social-emotional learning (SEL) for students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Therefore, the rationale for conducting this action research project is to identify strategies for promoting self-management skills among students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Project Rationale

As teacher attitudes toward inclusion improved over the past four decades (Yoder & Shipman, 2018), the natural assumption is that inclusion of students with disabilities would directly correlate with this improvement. For students with academic needs, this has been confirmed to be true, while students with social, emotional, and behavioral needs are disproportionately represented in the general education classroom (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). A 2005 Global Monitoring Report from the United Nations asserted that education is intended to help every child to reach their fullest potential (Ahuja et al., 2005). Yoder and Shipman (2018) identified that social-emotional learning is a way to support all children in their ability to develop necessary interpersonal and intrapersonal skills in order to increase success in school, work, and life. Students struggling with social, emotional, and behavioral skills and abilities should receive quality instruction in SEL in the setting where they will be expected to display these skills; that is, the general education classroom. This project aims to determine which strategies promote SEL skills, primarily self-management skills, among students with disabilities in the context of the general education classroom.

Project Context

The history of SEL dates back to 1994 when psychologist Daniel Goleman founded the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning also known as CASEL. He solicited other like-minded individuals to join him in the establishment of the first research-based organization dedicated to the implementation of social-emotional learning within the American public-school system (CASEL, 2020; Maughan, 2018). Since its inception, CASEL has grown exponentially. Over the past 5 years, the number of states implementing K-12 social-emotional learning (SEL) standards have increased from 8 to more than 30. Additionally, all 50 states have

implemented early childhood SEL standards (Zhao, 2020, Yoder & Shipman, 2018). Currently 10 states, including the state of Washington, have grade competencies and benchmarks used to further break down the standards/competencies to help “form a common language around social and emotional development that educators across a state can use” (Yoder & Shipman, 2018, p. 2).

The core vision of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) research organization is to establish, “evidence-based social and emotional learning as an essential part of preschool through high school education” (CASEL, 2020, About CASEL section). In a 2011 study of social-emotional learning, Durlak and colleagues found that adequate instruction in social-emotional learning showed reductions in emotional stress of students as well as decreased conduct problems. They also found that the use of an evidence-based social-emotional curriculum increased student academic achievement, social-emotional awareness, positive behavior, and heightened self-esteem. In a follow up study, Jones and Kahn (2017) found the effects of SEL instruction continue to impact student achievement years after the instruction occurred. Even 3.5 years after instruction in SEL, students continued to show academic achievement at a rate of 13% higher than their peers who received no SEL instruction.

Since the creation of CASEL, the organization has identified five core competencies integral towards promoting SEL in schools. CASEL also continues to support research vital in understanding the current state of SEL in America. According to a study conducted by Jones and Kahn for the Aspen Institute, more than 80% of teachers reported that SEL is implemented on some level, whereas only 44% of teachers reported that SEL occurred school-wide. The same study demonstrated that more than 75% of the teachers believed in the importance of SEL due to the positive effects on attendance, academic achievement, postsecondary employment, and

college preparedness. However, they are poorly equipped to teach these skills to students without guiding principles, established benchmarks, and steps for implementation. Without the proper tools to teach SEL skills, this study found that nearly half of all schools within America are neglecting the social and emotional needs of their students (Jones & Kahn, 2017).

In 2011, CASEL took the core competencies into the field and began partnering with local school districts to implement the competencies in classrooms. CASEL partnered with districts in Alaska, Texas, and Ohio to develop the Collaborating Districts Initiative (CDI). The initiative focuses on bringing SEL instruction to large, urban school districts, and since its inception, 20 other large urban districts have joined the initiative. Grants help fund the implementation of the initiative within these districts as they work to integrate SEL into every subject and every hour of the school day. The CDI comprises three main components to fully integrate the core competencies into districts. These components include overall climate, academic integration, and classroom environment. Although CDI supports large urban districts, Randall-Garner emphasized that SEL is for every employer, school, and community who desires their citizens to be caring, compassionate, and involved (Maughan, 2018). As Gardner told Maughan (2018), “Education cannot just be about academic achievement—it has to be the holistic look at what is a well-functioning citizen for a well-functioning society” (p. 33). Social-emotional competencies provide an outline for strategically and systematically implementing research-based practices within the classroom.

Social-emotional learning has become a focal point of the American education system. Within the past five years, a spotlight has been cast on SEL as the race to implement SEL standards began. In states across the country, official SEL standards are being adopted, primarily due to and based on the research conducted by CASEL. Schools and districts are working

diligently to identify best practices for implementing these standards using benchmarks and indicators (Zhao, 2020; CASEL, 2020; Maughan, 2018; Yoder and Shipman, 2018) in special education classrooms across the country, yet research is limited on implementing these standards among students with disabilities in general education classrooms (Cole et al., 2020; Sandojo et al., 2018; Schulze, 2016).

Project Purpose

The purpose of this action research project was to assemble a group of panelists, who are experts in their respective fields of education, to identify best practices toward solving the current problem facing our education system in America; that is, students with disabilities being excluded from their general education classrooms due to social-emotional deficits combined with a lack of proper social-emotional instruction and intervention (Ahujan et al., 2005; Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2017). The guiding research question was: How can educators promote self-management skills among students with disabilities in the general education classroom?

Conceptual Definitions

Delphi Method

The Delphi method is a process where expert experiences and opinions are collected through multiple rounds of questionnaires to gain consensus on a specific research question (Skulmoski et al., 2007).

Disability

There are 13 different disability categories according to IDEA: intellectual disability, hearing impairment, speech or language impairment, visual impairment, emotional and behavioral disturbance, orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health

impairment, specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities (IDEA, 2004).

Inclusive Classroom

An inclusive classroom is where special education services are provided alongside general education instruction (Reading Rockets, 2020).

General Education

General education is a setting in which the primary curriculum is provided to students (Morin, 2020).

Special Education

Special education is education provided to students who qualify based on the 13 disability categories, whose disability affects access to the general education classroom requiring specialized instruction in one or more areas (IDEA, 2004).

Social-Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is instruction provided to support students in their knowledge and management of emotions, ability to set and achieve goals, ability to take the perspectives of others and show empathy, ability to establish and maintain relationships, and ability to make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2020).

Specially Designed Instruction

Specially designed instruction is the adaptation of the content, methodology, or delivery of content to make the materials and learning accessible to students with disabilities and those identified as needing special education (IDEA, 2004).

Chapter I introduced social-emotional learning, provided context for the project including the history and importance of social-emotional learning, discussed the purpose of this project, and highlighted conceptual definitions. Chapter II reviews the current state of social-emotional

learning, criticisms of social-emotional learning, and provide a comparison of social-emotional learning standards identified by the Collaborative for Academics, Social, and Emotional Learning and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction in the state of Washington. The chapter also introduces self-management as a focus and review empirical research on current self-management interventions.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is a review of current research related to self-management skills among students with disabilities. An overview of SEL, the current state of SEL standards, and the CASEL framework of SEL standards are included. The results of this review will be used to answer how educators can promote self-management skills for students with disabilities within the general education classroom. The review was conducted by searching educational research databases (example: EBSCOhost) for key terms such as “inclusion,” “special education,” “disabilities,” “social-emotional learning,” and “general education.” The parameters for the literature review included studies dated between 2015 and 2020. The results of the initial search were then refined based on their relevance to the research question: How can educators promote SEL among students with disabilities in the general education classroom?

Current State of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

Social-emotional learning has been renamed over the years under the umbrellas of twentieth century skills, character education, soft skills, lifelong learning skills, and more (Jones & Doolittle, 2017). Social-emotional learning is designed to help students learn about and manage their emotions, behaviors, and relationships (Jones & Doolittle, 2017). In their research, Jones and Doolittle (2017, p. 5) identified numerous SEL skills which are “vast in number and varied in nature,” making it difficult for educators to narrow down which skills to teach. For years, researchers have been combining and distilling the many SEL skills into conceptual frameworks. Within the different frameworks, similar skills have been placed under different competencies or standards. For example, in the CASEL framework, self-control is placed under the competency of self-management. However, in other frameworks, it is placed under

interpersonal relationships, and yet in others it is a stand-alone concept (Jones & Doolittle, 2017).

Teaching social-emotional skills is not only beneficial to improving classroom climate and culture, but can help decrease the rate of suspensions and discipline towards students of color as well as improve rates of graduation, future employment, and lower rates of future poverty (Jones & Doolittle, 2017; Mitchell, 2017). Zuckerbrod (2018) attributed the increased interest in social-emotional learning to “a mounting body of evidence showing it [social-emotional learning] works.” He asserted that the evidence continues to show that, “students exposed to SEL programs have healthier attitudes and behavior, improved social and emotional skills, and better academic performance” (Zuckerbrod, 2018, p. 1). Mahoney, Durlak, and Wiessberg (2018) reviewed four meta-analyses on different school-wide social-emotional learning curriculums and their impact on student achievement. In reviewing the meta-analyses, they reviewed over 459 interventions including more 400,000 students. After reviewing each of the meta-analyses, they found that students participating in a school-wide social-emotional learning program showed greater positive academic and social-emotional outcomes. The researchers also found that students participating in these social-emotional learning programs showed an 11% increase in academic achievement. A foundation in social-emotional skills is integral in the successful acquisition of academic core competencies (CASEL, 2020; Jones et al., 2017; Mahoney et al., 2018; Zuckerbrod, 2018). Each of the studies reviewed for this project support SEL as a vital component to the academic success of all students, including students with disabilities. However, SEL has not been without critique from researchers, writers, and experts in the field of education.

Criticisms of Social-Emotional Learning

Social-emotional learning has long been criticized since it was given a seat at the academic table through the passage of the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The ESSA is a federal law that allows the usage of nonacademic standards as well as academic standards to measure student success. CASEL, a notable leader in the pursuit of SEL, used the passage of the ESSA to help promote their identified core competencies and support states in developing their standards. From 2016 to 2019, participation in SEL has dramatically grown. As of 2019, 30 states have adopted some form of SEL standards compared to 8 states in 2016. The stark increase in participation has been met by an equal increase in criticism (Zhao, 2020).

Critics of social-emotional learning have chided the movement as nonessential, a fad in education, and a manipulation of student psychology (Gorman, 2016; Zhao, 2020). In 2019, the Pioneer Institute, a public policy research institute, published a 44-page critique of the SEL movement concluding that there are eight major concerns regarding nation-wide implementation of standards including the morality of universal SEL implementation, mixed results of research on the efficacy and benefits of SEL, a severe lack of teacher preparedness for implementing SEL, misdiagnoses of students and overmedication of students due to school-based mental health screenings, and potential for sensitive student data to be mined and exposed. The paper detailed how the new focus in SEL has led to changes in government funding for education, lowered privacy of student data including student privacy laws such as FERPA, and misplaced expectations for teachers to become experts on behavioral and mental health. One of the heaviest critiques of the SEL movement was over new technology platforms being used to track student behavior and the lack of privacy protections within these platforms precipitating a high risk of this information being either sold or stolen. Additionally, the authors cited several clinical

psychologists who shared heavy concern regarding teachers being asked by the government to help diagnose and treat student mental health. The psychologists agreed that teachers are not trained, nor should they be trained, to be able to effectively support or diagnose students with severe mental and behavioral health needs. They concluded that child and adolescent mental health should be left to the field of psychology while education should continue to focus on rigorous academic standards such as reading and math (Effrem & Robbins, 2019). The critics agree, SEL is the new hype in education focusing too heavily on the ideology of those tasked with creating the new curriculum. For these naysayers, the movement is simply the next swing of the education pendulum (Zhao, 2020).

These critics and researchers are not the only individuals with doubts about the movement, even those promoting it have their own concerns regarding the efficacy of the programs and curriculums being implemented in classrooms across America. Major criticisms include the ambiguity of SEL, the narrow focuses of curricula implemented by schools, and the ideological biases of those teaching these SEL standards to students (Zhao, 2020). As districts across the country are working to implement SEL curriculums and standards as a way of supporting student success in school and life beyond the classroom (Yoder & Shipman, 2018), many policymakers have begun asking states to standardize social and emotional learning. However, due to the complex nature of social and emotional learning, this precise level of standardization is improbable according to Yoder and Shipman (2018), two researchers from the American Research Institute tasked by the Washington State Department of Education to provide a national SEL environment scan. Based on their research they found that, “the adoption of standards... provides educators guidance on what social and emotional competencies could look like as individuals grow and change in a culturally responsive manner inside and outside of the

school context” (Yoder & Shipman, 2018, p. 2). The core competencies identified by CASEL and other agencies are not meant to standardize social and emotional learning into a narrow and finite set of skills. Rather, their research and competencies identify core skills that students should be taught in order to succeed while allowing for variability of student expression and culturally responsive education.

When implementing these standards, many districts and schools narrow their focus to one standard and one curriculum. Popular among schools and districts are Carol Dweck’s Growth Mindset curriculum (Dweck, 2008), programs for classroom management, mindfulness, and programs that focus on bullying prevention (Jones & Doolittle, 2017). Many districts and schools across America continue to focus on singular components of SEL, even as CASEL, the leader in social-emotional research, defined SEL as five broad core competencies (Zhao, 2020). By failing to teach all five core competencies, districts are missing the target and failing to meet student needs. Jones and Doolittle (2017) found that the broad scope of SEL has pushed some states and researchers toward ingenuity and new best practices while others suffer clouded misperceptions of the domain. Social and emotional learning cannot be minimized to bullying prevention, growth mindset, or classroom management. While these each have their place within the core competencies, a focus on one curricula or intervention strategy compromises the efficacy of SEL. SEL is a whole child approach to a holistic education promoting not only academic success but also interpersonal and intrapersonal success.

Social-emotional learning is vital in supporting the skills students need to actively participate in and contribute to society such as organization, friendship, conflict resolution, and conversation skills (CASEL, 2020; Jones & Doolittle, 2017; Yoder & Shipman, 2018; Zhao, 2020). The breadth of social-emotional skills has proven challenging to narrow down to a few

important standards. This lack of clear direction for districts and schools continues to obscure perceptions of SEL and confuse those attempting to implement the standards in their classrooms. Without better direction given to our teachers, SEL continues to be an elusive ideology rather than a readily implemented practice that will continue to be touted by critics as the newest fad in education - one that will fade as quickly as it began (Jones & Doolittle, 2017).

Current Research on Social Emotional Learning Standards

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) Core

Competencies

According to CASEL (2020), the leader in SEL development, there are five core competencies every student should learn in order to succeed not only in school, but in life after graduation. CASEL organizes important SEL skills into five types of competencies: (a) self-awareness - the ability to identify emotions, beliefs, and thoughts; (b) self-management - the ability to successfully regulate emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations and google-oriented behavior; (c) social awareness - the ability to take the perspective of others; (d) relationship skills - the ability to make and maintain friendships, listening skills, and conflict resolution; and (e) responsible decision- making - the ability to make choices for individual and collective safety and security based on ethical norms (Jones & Doolittle, 2017). These core competencies identified by CASEL have been the basis for states as they begin to identify their own social and emotional learning standards (Maughan, 2018). Each of these competencies builds upon the previous competencies in a manner similar to the standards identified by OSPI. These competencies are well researched, clearly defined, and continue to stand as the gold standard states look to when developing their own standards for SEL.

Washington State Social-Emotional Learning Standards

In the state of Washington, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is the governing body of public-school instruction. The state is one of 30 states with adopted SEL standards. These standards, benchmarks, and indicators were developed and officially adopted in January 2020 (OSPI, 2020). These standards, benchmarks, and indicators are now expected to be implemented within classrooms state-wide using various adopted curricula and intervention strategies. The website for the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction provides examples of adopted curricula and implementation guides for districts to help ease the demand of teaching these core competencies within classrooms across the state. The six standards identified by OSPI with the support of the American Research Institute are well researched and compiled from various sources including CASEL and studies related to SEL conducted within the past 20 years (Nolan et al., 2018). The standards identified by the state of Washington for SEL include self-awareness, self-management, self-efficacy, social awareness, social management, and social engagement (OSPI, 2020). The standards progress from the development of the internal skills and awareness of the individual to the ability of the individual to manage and interact within the social world. The framework in the state of Washington was created according to the four guiding principles of equity, universal design for learning, cultural responsiveness, and Trauma Informed Practice (OSPI, 2020).

The first standard identified in the core standards is self-awareness, further defined as, “the ability to identify their emotions, personal assets, areas for growth, and potential external resources and supports” (OSPI, 2020, p. 3). This standard is broken down into three benchmarks focusing on the understanding of emotions and their influence on behavior, awareness of personal and collective identity, and an understanding of external supports such as the

community, family, and school. Each three benchmarks include three indicators for each age group of students from early elementary to high school. Some of the elementary indicators for this standard include identifying emotions, identifying personal interests, growth mindset, being part of a cultural group, and setting goals. These skills increase in complexity from early elementary to high school (OSPI, 2020).

The second standard identified by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) in the state of Washington is self-management, which is further defined as “the ability to regulate emotions, thoughts, and behaviors” (OSPI, 2020, p. 3). This standard features many skills needed to be successful within the classroom, including regulating emotions, controlling one’s thoughts and impulses, and maintaining control over one’s behavior based on the setting the student is in. This standard is broken down into two benchmarks each featuring multiple indicators for each age range. Some indicators include understanding consequences, self-control, identifying school expectations and promoting a safe environment, following rules and routines, and problem solving (OSPI, 2020).

The third standard identified for the state of Washington is self-efficacy, further defined as, “the ability to motivate themselves, persevere, and see themselves as capable” (OSPI, 2020, p. 4). This standard is essential in helping students intrinsically motivate themselves and view themselves as learners. This standard builds upon the previous standard of self-management in which students are able to identify and manage their emotions and actions. Now, students are expected to engage in self-management in order to develop higher level thinking skills of goal-oriented behaviors and find ways to motivate themselves to learn and accomplish their established goals. The three benchmarks of this standard are broken down into indicators

including responsibly using the belongings of others, responsible problem solving, understanding healthy and harmful relationships, and self-advocacy (OSPI, 2020).

The fourth standard identified in the state of Washington's SEL standards is social awareness, which is defined further as, "the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures" (OSPI, 2020, p. 4). The standard focuses on the ability of the individual to think critically about the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of others. This standard is heavily influenced by the success of the individual in mastering the standard of self-management. Only when the individual is able to successfully manage their own thoughts and emotions will they be able to move towards understanding the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of those around them. The indicators of the three benchmarks include identifying the various verbal and nonverbal cues of others, and identifying the perspectives of other individuals and cultural groups (OSPI, 2020).

The fifth standard identified by OSPI is social management, or "the ability to make safe and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions" (OSPI, 2020, p. 4). Again, this standard relies on a foundation of solid self-management skills, where now the student is able to manage their internal world of emotions and is able to use those skills to engage in higher level thinking about how their behavior and thoughts impacts their ability to make and keep friends and acquaintances. The indicators for the three benchmarks include listening skills, being part of a group, resolving conflict peacefully, and constructing meaningful friendships (OSPI, 2020).

The final standard identified by OSPI is social engagement, defined further as "the ability to consider others and show a desire to contribute to the well-being of school and community" (OSPI, 2020, p. 4). This standard is the culmination of the previous five standards. The student is

now able to understand internal thoughts, feelings, and experiences and how those experiences cause them to relate to others around them. The student is also able to show empathy towards the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of others in their community. The individual is now ready to use the skills learned to begin enacting change within their community. Students begin to see injustice and how their actions can affect the wellbeing of their direct community. They are able to use planning and goal-oriented behavior skills to affect change in their community. The indicators associated with the three benchmarks of the standard include identifying what the individual can control and how they can contribute to their community, valuing other perspectives, identifying the rights and responsibilities of a group, nurturing the natural environment, and utilizing digital resources appropriately (OSPI, 2020). The standards, benchmarks, and indicators identified by OSPI (2020) are vital to the successful implementation of SEL in the state of Washington.

The Intersection of CASEL and State Learning Standards

While the state of Washington has identified six standards for SEL (OSPI, 2020), the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning has identified five core competencies for SEL. Both OSPI and CASEL agreed on the definitions for self-awareness and social awareness. They also agreed on the definitions of the final two standards, with minor changes in the verbiage of the labels. CASEL (2020) identifies the competency as relationship skills, while OSPI (2020) identifies the standard as social engagement. Both standards focus on the student's ability to make and maintain friendships and engage with the social world around them. Similarly, CASEL (2020) labels responsible decision making as the competency focused on the ability to make choices integrating information from the world around them. This

competency is similar to the standard of social management identified by OSPI (2020). The definition of this standard is nearly identical to that from CASEL.

One main difference delineates the CASEL core competencies from the OSPI standards. CASEL (2020) identified five core competencies while OSPI (2020) identified six core standards. This discrepancy exists due to the competency of self-management (CASEL, 2020) having been split into two standards by OSPI (2020): self-management and self-efficacy. OSPI and CASEL maintain similar definitions for their competencies and standards relating to self-management. However, the core competencies identified by CASEL maintain a broader approach to self-management including both the management of personal emotions and behaviors as well as the ability to use self-management to accomplish goal directed behavior (CASEL, 2020). OSPI maintains a delineation between the two, identifying self-management as the ability to regulate one's emotions and behaviors while regarding self-efficacy as the ability to engage in goal-oriented behaviors (OSPI, 2020).

Self-Management Skills

The core competencies according to CASEL and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction in the state of Washington are vital in teaching students with disabilities and supporting their achievement within the classroom. Students with disabilities characterized by social, emotional, and behavioral deficits continue to be excluded from the general education classroom either through expulsion, suspension, or restrictive educational placements (Mitchell, 2015). Only 40-50% of students with disabilities such as Autism Spectrum Disorders and Emotional Behavioral Disorders, both disability categories with major criteria related to social-emotional and behavioral functioning, are included in their general education classrooms for at least 80% of their day. In comparison, 71% of peers identified primarily with academic needs

such as students with specific learning disabilities, are included for at least 80% of their day (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

Mitchell (2017) found that “students with behavioral health conditions—disabilities that may manifest in behaviors that school staff deem anti-social, bizarre, aggressive, or disruptive—can be subjected to repeated isolation, segregation, disciplinary removals, and complete loss of access to an education” (p. 410). These students who are unable to self-manage are repeatedly excluded from their free and appropriate education as guaranteed by IDEA (Mitchell, 2017), posing severe legal ramifications for districts and also a complete waste of student potential.

Greene (2014, p. xi) described the situation in American public schools:

The wasted human potential is tragic. In so many schools, kids with social, emotional, and behavioral challenges are still poorly understood and treated in a way that is completely at odds with what is now known about how they came to be challenging in the first place. The frustration and desperation felt by teachers and parents is palpable. Greene (2014), a notable expert in the field of education and SEL, ascertains that the exclusion of students with social, emotional, and behavioral deficits is harming our students and our schools. Rather than understanding the skill deficits and intervening through best practice teaching strategies, these students are being removed from the general education classroom (Mitchell, 2017). Teaching SEL skills to students with disabilities in the general education classroom is best practice (Ahuja et al., 2005; Mitchell, 2017), and we must begin to deepen our understanding of how to provide this high-quality education to our most vulnerable students.

In order to address the behavioral needs of students, the five core competencies should be considered when determining which competency students are most likely to be lacking: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and decision-making skills

(CASEL, 2020). Of the five core competencies, the ability to understand and regulate emotions, control behavior, and achieve goals is most closely linked to the competency of self-management. According to CASEL (2020), self-management is, “the ability to successfully regulate one's own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations, and to set and work toward goals” (Jones & Doolittle, 2017, p. 5). To fully participate in general education classrooms, students with disabilities are often expected to regulate their emotions and behaviors, and to complete goal directed behaviors independently (Mitchell, 2017).

According to Michelle Garcia Winner (2020), students are asked to complete goal directed tasks every day in schools across the country. All directions given to students, such as completing an assignment, turning in an assignment, or completing a transition within the school day, requires the ability to plan and complete a goal directed activity (Garcia Winner, 2020). Teachers state the goal and students must make their own plan to complete the goal. If a student is lacking in these goal directed behaviors, the likelihood of their ability to be included in the classroom is nearly cut in half according to the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (2017). The importance of self-management cannot be understated in regards to closing the achievement gap between students with disabilities and their nondisabled peers as well as providing a more inclusive educational experience for all students with disabilities.

Current Trends in Social and Emotional Learning Interventions

Presently in the field of education, there is no gold standard for self-management strategies or interventions though many have been researched and shown promising results. These interventions vary greatly including group contingencies, direct instruction, the Academy of Independence interventions, student-directed strategies, and more. Some of the

aforementioned resulted in large effect sizes while some resulted in much smaller effect sizes, indicating varied results among the strategies. Many of these studies have been conducted within special education classrooms among students with disabilities. The field of education would benefit from understanding how these interventions would fare within general education settings – the setting we most often expect students to show their social-emotional skills. Each study conclusively found that social-emotional skills, and more specifically self-management skills, are necessary for students to learn; however, researchers differ on their recommended strategies and interventions.

Group Contingency Planning Interventions

The researchers of this study asserted that self-management means applying self-directed behaviors in a way that increases goal-oriented behaviors. They found that the skills associated with self-management are vital in the success of students within the classroom. They identify skills such as “planning, organizing, evaluating outcomes, (and) revising strategies” as necessary for students to exhibit within the classroom (Trevino-Maack et al., 2015, p. 347). The purpose of the study was to identify how to increase self-management skills among students in order to increase academic achievement. They conducted their research among secondary students; however, these same techniques can be adjusted and applied within the elementary setting. Trevino-Maack et al. (2015) hypothesized that group contingency interventions, an intervention where the group or individual performs a specific behavior to receive a specific reward, would promote self-management within the classroom. They utilized an independent group contingency plan, where the student received incentives based on their individual behavior, as well as timers and visuals to support student engagement. Their research found that these group contingency

reinforcers did in fact increase the self-management of students in the classroom, measured by how on-task students were during the class period.

The researchers concluded that through specific interventions, students are able to increase in their ability to self-manage within the classroom. While their research was conducted using secondary student participants, their findings can be applied to elementary school students using the same strategies for independent group contingencies. The limitation of the research is that it reviewed intervention strategies including incentives and visuals, but did not review teaching strategies to help students become more aware of their own behavior and goals. Overall, the study identified a strategy that can be used in the classroom to increase self-management behaviors (Trevino-Maack et al., 2015).

A Meta-Analysis of Interventions to Promote Self-Determination for Students with Disabilities

In another study at the University of Kansas, self-management as a component of self-determination was studied in relation to identifying interventions that promote these behaviors within the classroom. Burke et al. (2020) identified that “skills associated with self-determination, including choice-making, decision making, problem solving, goal setting and attainment, planning, self-management, self-advocacy, self-awareness, and self-knowledge, enable students with disabilities to make purposeful major decisions and daily choices in their lives” (p. 176). The meta-analysis studied 34 case studies conducted between 2000 and 2015. The analysis identified that the use of direct instruction along with intervention for at least 7 weeks provided an effect size of between 0.1, a small effect size, and 0.79, a significant effect size. The studies with enough aggregate information to compute an r effect size indicated an overall medium effect on student improvement (Burke et al., 2020).

While the data from the studies indicates that in each study, a positive outcome occurred, the analysis was inconclusive as far as which methods of direct instruction in self-management, a component of self-determination, yield higher rates of achievement among students due to the varying rate of effect sizes of the many studies. Due to the results of this study, the researchers recommended that additional research should be conducted to determine interventions and their effect size related to self-determination including self-management for students with disabilities within the general education classroom (Burke et al., 2020). This study indicates there is sufficient evidence to reasonably hypothesize that interventions and instruction in self-management could directly positively impact access to general education classrooms for students with disabilities.

Effects of Self-Management Training for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities

The study was conducted in order to determine the effect that a specific self-management training protocol could have on individuals with intellectual disabilities. The study conducted in 2015 identified that the specific protocol used improved self-management skills among individuals with intellectual disabilities. Many of the individuals included in the study also had comorbid disabilities such as Autism Spectrum Disorders. The researchers defined self-management as, “an overarching term involving all cognitions and actions of a person that deliberately influence his or her behavior in order to realize self-selected outcomes,” (Sandojo et al., 2018, p. 391).

The researchers utilized a specific approach called the Academy of Independence (AoI) which incorporates instilling self-esteem and independence into the daily routines of the individual. Support staff for these individuals were trained in the AoI approach and used this technique to support the individuals during their daily tasks. The technique helps the individual

determine goals and activities that are important to them and uses the support staff to guide the individual while allowing the individual to problem solve with scaffolding during their day. The goal of the technique is for the individual to gain independence in completing activities and goals that are important to them. Overall, through the use of this technique, the individuals were able to gain independence in managing their goals and generalizing these skills across settings (Sandojo et al., 2018).

The Academy of Independence (AoI) technique is a scaffolding technique that could also be generalized to the school setting. Using components of AoI such as helping students identify goals, scaffolding supports to help students make plans to achieve their goals, and increasing independence in accomplishing goals and activities during their day could all be adapted to function within a school setting. The main goal of special education services within public schools is to increase access to general education classes for students and increase a student's ability to independently function within the setting. Using scaffolding supports to increase independence could likely directly impact student accessibility within their general education classroom regardless of disability category (Sandojo et al., 2018).

Effects of Teacher-Directed Versus Student-Directed Instruction on Self-Management of Young Children with Disabilities

In this study, the researchers investigated how student-directed self-management strategies impacted students versus teacher directed strategies. For the student directed self-management strategy, the researchers used a self-rating strategy where students were responsible for identifying which subjects they wanted to work on, which tasks they were going to complete during class, and then circle a yes or no response indicating if the activity was completed (Mithaug et al, 2003).

In the study, students completed more tasks independently when they were in charge of choosing their subject areas and assignments. This result indicated that student choice in the classroom significantly impacts student self-management on independent work. However, the students did not continue to independently work after the self-management cards were removed and students were asked to again independently choose work and complete the work. Students also did not complete the same amount of work when it was selected by the teacher and explicitly assigned in a specific order for completion. This indicated that the strategy was helpful when being used by students but created no lasting effects on the students' ability to self-manage (Mithaug et al, 2003).

This study shows that self-management interventions for students with disabilities can support their ability to self-manage within the classroom. However, it also shows that the effects of the intervention only work during the implementation of the intervention and have no long-lasting effects on the student's SEL. This information can help future researchers better understand the impact of interventions and implicit instructional strategies versus direct and explicit instruction (Mithaug et al., 2003).

Self-Management Strategies to Support Students with ASD

This specific study used self-monitoring interventions to promote self-management among students with Autism spectrum disorders. "Self-monitoring is the most commonly used self-management intervention with students with ASD and has been used to improve on-task behavior, task engagement, academic productivity, and various social behaviors, such as social initiations" (Schulze, 2016, p. 226). According to Schulze (2016), "self-management procedures can be used to decrease challenging behaviors, but it is recommended that these strategies be used instead to increase a positive behavior" (p. 226). In the study, Schulze identified a time of

day to use the intervention, created a self-monitoring form the student filled out during the intervention, chose a cue to let the student know to fill out their form, and then continuously checked in with the student during the intervention. Other important components of the intervention included goal setting, asking the student to verbalize the steps of the task to be completed, and having the student graph the results (Schulze, 2016).

The outcome of the intervention was successful and helped to improve self-management during the course of the intervention. The authors did not continue monitoring self-management after the course of the intervention, so there is no data regarding the long-lasting effects of the strategy. However, while it is uncertain whether the intervention continued to be successful past implementation, Schulze (2016) noted that effective self-management strategies are vital in supporting students, and teachers and other school staff must be properly trained to carry out these interventions. Overall, Schulze concludes that strategies for self-management are vital for students with autism spectrum disorders to develop important SEL skills that will help them in their journey as lifelong learners. The researchers also agreed that self-management is a vital skill for students when in their general education classrooms (Schulze, 2016).

Self-Management Strategies to Support Homework Completion with Students with Developmental Disabilities

In this study, researchers identified self-management strategies that can be used to support homework completion for students with various disabilities. The researchers reviewed studies conducted with students with autism spectrum disorders to best determine which strategies were proven most helpful in increasing homework completion of these students. Through their review of multiple studies on strategies for self-management to increase homework completion, the researchers found that three components were necessary: self-

evaluation, self-instruction, and self-reinforcement. Self-evaluation is being able to set a goal and compare current performance to the established goal. The researchers were able to distill various studies to identify the best supports for homework completion. These supports include: a homework expectations form stating the expectations for completing homework; a homework planning form including the name of the homework, the date due, the reinforcer for completion, and the person delivering reinforcement; a homework flowchart showing the student how to complete homework assignments both online and on paper; and a daily report for the student to evaluate if they completed all steps of their homework and for parents to sign. These four steps were identified by the researchers as the most important for increasing homework completion and self-management skills for students with disabilities (Sipila-Thomas et al., 2020).

Sipila-Thomas, Choo, and Brodhead (2020) found that self-management strategies do not require much from teachers in way of implementation and follow up. After teaching the strategy to the student, the use of four prong homework completion strategy helped to minimize the time the teacher spent redirecting students and increased homework completion. Additionally, they found self-management can be taught across various different settings. The results of their review indicate that self-management is easily implemented within various settings, including general education classrooms, and show high impact on students' abilities to complete work independently. They also noted that self-management can aid in decreasing various conduct problems in addition to increasing positive classroom engagement and appropriate behaviors.

Conclusions from Current Research

Based on the literature reviewed in Chapter II, it is reasonable to conclude that through interventions, students with disabilities can improve their self-management skills in both special and general education classrooms (Burke et al., 2020; Mithaug et al., 2016; Sandojo et al., 2018;

Schulze, 2016, Sipila-Thomas et al., 2020, Trevino-Maack et al., 2015). While current research demonstrates these interventions improve self-management skills, additional research is needed to identify which interventions are most effective and how self-management skills can be taught to students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Chapter III describes the Delphi method and how it was used to gain insights from experts in the field.

CHAPTER III: METHOD

The Delphi Method

The Delphi method was used to answer the question: How can general educators promote self-management skills for students with disabilities? This method involved expert panelists who provided their professional opinions regarding a specific topic. Several rounds of questionnaires were used to create a consensus among experts and to inform an area of research (Skulmoski et al., 2007). While conducting a classical Delphi study, four key features must be observed: 1) the anonymity of the Delphi panelists to provide freedom of expression and opinion; 2) iteration that allows the panelists to make refinements to their responses during the progression of the rounds of questionnaires; 3) controlled feedback that informs the panelists of the other panelists' responses; and 4) a final analysis and interpretation of the collected data (Roe & Wright, 1999).

The classical Delphi method involved the following six steps: 1) developing the research question, 2) defining the research problem, 3) composing the panel, 4) developing the questionnaire, 5) reviewing the results, and 6) developing the next questionnaire (Skulmoski et al., 2007). Steps 4-6 created a cycle that happened during each round of the Delphi study. My action research project included three rounds of questionnaires, meaning that steps 4-6 occurred multiple times to include all three questionnaires and to review the results of each. The final step in the Delphi study was to analyze the overall results of the study. The next section provides detailed operational definitions for each of the six steps.

Operational Definitions

Step 1: Developing the Research Question

The first step in the Delphi process was to develop the initial guiding research question. Current research points to discrepancies in how students with disabilities were included in the classroom based on the services they receive, and how general educators include students with social and emotional needs less often than their peers with academic needs (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). From the SEL standards set by OSPI and CASEL, I selected self-management as one of the key social-emotional skills that impedes students from fully participating in the general education classroom. Consequently, the guiding research question for this action research project emerged: How can educators promote self-management skills among students with disabilities in the general education classroom?

Step 2: Defining the Research Problem

The second step was to define the research problem which is the current lack of identified self-management strategies for teachers to utilize among students with disabilities in the general education classroom. This problem has led to students with disabilities being excluded from the general education classroom at a higher rate than their peers without disabilities. Also, students with disabilities who lack social-emotional skills are being excluded at a higher rate than their peers with disabilities which has a negative impact on their academic achievement and communication (NCES, 2017). To address this problem, I invited a panel of experts to identify strategies that promote self-management skills among students with disabilities in the general education classroom, thereby reducing levels of exclusion.

Step 3: Composing the Panel

The third step was to compose a panel of participants consistent with the cooperative nature of the Delphi method. The participants in this project are referred to as panelists. According to Adler and Ziglio (1996), panelists should meet the following requirements: knowledge and expertise in the field of study, a willingness to participate in the panel, capacity and time to participate in the panel, and an effective ability to communicate their expertise. I used a convenience sampling method and selected panelists based on their level of expertise in the field of education and with whom I have a professional relationship. Ideally, my goal was to select two building administrators, one special education administrator, one former special education program administrator, one director of special education, three college professors, one former professor of special education and former special education teacher, three general educators, three special educators, one speech/language pathologist who specializes in SEL, and two behavior specialists. I planned to contact the panelists through email, invite them to participate, and ask them to sign a consent form. I would select alternate panelists if the initial pool was unable to participate. I would keep the panelists' information confidential throughout the research process to allow for full expression of their opinions, ideas, and perspectives.

Step 4: Developing the First-Round Questionnaire

The fourth step was to use the guiding research question to develop the first-round questionnaire which would also function as a pilot study (Delbeq, et al., 1975). The pilot study was sent to a selected group of individuals who were not selected as panelists to ensure that the questionnaire did not confuse the panelists or result in the collection of inaccurate information. After the pilot study was completed, and it had been determined that the questionnaire was precise and clear, I would send it to the panelists through a confidential web-based survey system

called PsychData. I chose to use PsychData since it provides high levels of confidentiality and includes features required by most Internal Review Boards such as informed consent, online security, and protecting panelists' identifiable information. Panelists were provided a password to log into the questionnaire, further protecting the confidentiality of their responses and only allowing the selected panelists to complete the questionnaire. I sent links to the questionnaire to the panelists through the email addresses they provided and they were not required to enter any identifiable information. Panelists' responses remained entirely anonymous (PsychData, 2021). The selected panelists live in various states across the country, so a web-based survey instrument was the best option for contacting them for their input.

Step 5: Reviewing the Results

The fifth step was to review the results of first-round questionnaire to identify any similarities, differences, or other relationships existing between the responses. After the strategies suggested by panelists had been collected, they were compiled into one list. Using the report feature on PsychData, I was able to create a list of the strategies by filtering panelists responses and combining like responses (PsychData, 2021). In round two of the Delphi process, panelists were asked to rank the strategies generated in round one using a scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. These rankings helped me identify which of the strategies the panelists most strongly agreed would impact the ability of students with disabilities to self-manage in the classroom. Through PsychData's report feature, I was able to create a spreadsheet to display and compare the results, identifying each strategy and the number of panelists who ranked that strategy highest according to their responses in the second and third round questionnaires (PsychData, 2021).

Step 6: Developing the Subsequent Questionnaires

The sixth step in the Delphi process was to develop the subsequent questionnaires. After compiling the strategies from the initial questionnaire, I developed a second questionnaire based on the list of panelists' strategies. In the second-round questionnaire sent to panelists, I asked them to rank the list of strategies generated from the first-round questionnaire using a rating scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Researchers consider a three-round Delphi method as the most reliable in order to check for any potential outliers or skewed responses from round two (Skulmoski et al., 2007). For this reason, after compiling the list of strategies from the second-round questionnaire, I released a third-round questionnaire to the panelists, which is the same questionnaire used in round two. I asked panelists to rank the strategies again, to create a final consensus among the panelists regarding best practices for promoting self-management among students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Skulmoski et al., 2007).

Verification and Analysis of the Results

Verification of the results occurred after each round when the questionnaires were returned to me (Skulmoski et al., 2007). Between each round, the panelists' responses informed the development of the next questionnaire based on their own expertise. In the first questionnaire, panelists suggested self-management strategies for students with disabilities in the general education classroom. In the second and third questionnaire, panelists selected the strategies generated from the initial questionnaire that are most efficacious. I compared these results with the literature and determined which strategies the experts accepted as those with the highest potential for success.

Chapter III defined the six steps involved in the Delphi process. Chapter IV includes tables that present the results. Chapter V discusses the findings as they relate to the guiding

research question. Chapter V also includes delimitations to this action research project, implications for future research, as well as final conclusions.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the Delphi process used to answer the research question: How can educators promote self-management among students with disabilities in the general education classroom? The chapter summarizes the data collection process, the results from three rounds of questionnaires, and discusses the final results in light of the guiding research question.

Results of the Delphi Process

The first step of the Delphi process was to select and contact the prospective panelists. The panelists involved in this study were identified based on my professional relationships with them. I contacted the prospective panelists via email and sent an informed consent letter for their participation in the research. Out of 21 individuals contacted, 18 participated in the research. One panelist declined participation while two panelists did not respond to initial contact attempts. The 18 panelists who accepted the invitation to participate then signed the informed consent letter indicating their understanding of the requirements and risks of participating. I kept the panelists' information confidential and conducted my correspondence with the panelists through private and secure email. I did not trace the panelists information and IP addresses on the PsychData platform. The results from each of the questionnaires are discussed further in this chapter.

Results of the First Questionnaire

I developed the initial questionnaire based on the research question: "How can educators promote self-management skills among students with disabilities within the general education classroom? Responses may be in paragraph or list form." After creating the initial questionnaire on PsychData, I invited three individuals to participate in a pilot study. These individuals did not participate in the formal Delphi process. I sent them the initial questionnaire via email containing

a link to the PsychData questionnaire. After each individual completed the pilot study, I sent a follow-up email to identify potential confusion or concerns regarding the research question and to determine an anticipated time requirement for participants. Each of the individuals involved in the pilot study stated that the question was clear and there was no confusion regarding the initial questionnaire. Individuals also responded that it took between 20 to 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

After completing the pilot study, I sent the initial questionnaire to the panelists who had returned the informed consent form. There were 18 panelists who returned the informed consent form. These panelists included three general education teachers, three special education teachers, two behavior specialists, one speech/language pathologist specializing in social-emotional learning, three special education administrators, two building administrators, and four university professors. The initial questionnaire was available March 15 – 22, 2021. I sent the panelists an email with the link to the questionnaire on PsychData on Monday, and a follow-up email later in the week. I asked each panelist to identify strategies that could promote self-management skills with students in the general education classroom. The panelists provided a list of hundreds of strategies, which I compiled based on similar theme (e.g., “direct instruction” and “teach explicit skills”). See Table 1 for a list of the strategies identified through the initial questionnaire.

On the initial questionnaire, the most common strategies the panelists identified were to “pre-teach, teach, and reteach explicit self-management skills using research-based curriculum/instruction to the whole class” and “pre-teach, teach, and reteach explicit self-management skills using research-based curriculum/instruction in small groups.” Providing this instruction to the whole class received one more response than providing the instruction solely to a small group within the classroom. The panelists who provided this strategy typically included a

qualifying statement explicitly citing an additional need for teacher training around the use of this curricula. Panelists stated there is not enough training for educators to currently implement a research-based curriculum with the fidelity required to impact student achievement. Other common responses to the initial questionnaire included providing break spaces, choice in workspaces, teaching calming techniques, generating common language, and using visual modeling and role playing within the classroom.

Table 1

Strategies Identified in the First Questionnaire

Number of submissions	Identified strategy
12	Pre-teach, teach, and reteach self-management skills using research-based curriculum/instruction to the whole class.
11	Pre-teach, teach, and reteach self-management skills using researched based curriculum/ instruction in small groups.
10	Provide self-selected break spaces or workspaces.
8	Teach and use calming techniques such as deep breathing and sensory tools.
8	Use video modeling and role playing to practice self-management skills.
8	Generate common language, gestures/nonverbal cues that are used universally within the classroom.
7	Use visual strategies such as visual schedules, if-then schedules, visual timers, tolerance for delay charts, visuals of emotions, break choices.
7	Teach self-management skills through picture books and videos paired with discussions and personal stories.
7	Provide daily practice of self-management strategies paired with teacher support throughout the day including modeling, individual conversations with the teacher, small group problem solving, and whole group problem solving.
6	Teach the skills needed to identify emotions and triggers, then teach tools for kids to use when a trigger occurs, or they feel an uncomfortable emotion.
6	Provide students with tools such as timers or visuals to indicate they need time to process or are not ready to engage in classroom activities.
6	Have the student identify what helps them remain calm (self-determination).
5	Use community circles or morning meetings within the classroom where students can talk about emotions, preview the schedule for the day, and engage with their peers in a supported environment.

5	Scaffold the lesson for success, and provide student choice on the assignment such as how to work (mode of task completion), where to work (in seat, on the floor, by the teacher), and with whom to work.
5	Establish a relationship with the student.
5	Teach regulated breathing strategies such as square breathing, five-finger breathing, belly breaths.
5	Strengthen home to school communication and encourage the student to use the identified self-management strategies both at home and school.
5	Provide clear and consistent classroom rules and routines that are posted in the classroom for all learners combined with direct teaching of classroom rules and routines using and referring to the visuals.
4	Provide choice in activities and assignments.
4	Provide time for students to self-reflect on their day or their learning.
4	Promote a healthy lifestyle through adequate sleep, nutrition, and hydration.
4	Providing the lesson target and clear and visual expectations of the assignment to help students understand what they are expected to do.
3	Prepare learners for transitions and changes to the daily routine and provide planned time before and/or after transitions, especially unstructured to structured activities, for breathing or other brief focusing activities.
3	Provide environmental adaptations in the classroom: light covers for fluorescent lights, calming background noises such as rain, water running, birds, dimmer lighting, various seating options such as rocker seats, lap desks to use on the floor, standing desks, sit and move cushions, lap weights.
3	Use cooperative and collaborative games instead of competitive games to support inclusion and acceptance as well as the concept of achieving success by working together (e.g., collaborative musical chairs).
3	Teach individual students to anticipate triggers and provide strategy to be accessed proactively (e.g., assemblies, new classroom seating arrangement).
3	Provide positive reinforcement systems for expected behavior.
3	Provide students with lessons and information about the brain.
3	Provide early intervention.
3	Prepare students for hypothetical situations they may encounter in the classroom and brainstorm strategies for managing those situations.
2	Implement yoga or mindfulness programs for children.
2	Use trust buddies in a classroom by pairing students who can serve as a support peer to implement agreed upon strategies (e.g., taking a walk, drawing together).
2	Have students journal when they want to share something rather than blurting. They can share this with the teacher later.

Results of the Second Questionnaire

After compiling the results of the initial questionnaire, I combined responses such as “using a curriculum like the Zones of Regulation,” and “teaching and reteaching explicit skills” with “pre-teach, teach, and reteach skills using a researched based curriculum/instruction to the whole class.” I shuffled the strategies by assigning each strategy a random number between 0 and 1 using the randomized number function in excel. The strategies were then sorted based on ascending numbers using the sort feature. This randomly sorted the strategies which were then imported to PsychData to create the second questionnaire. Then I sent the second questionnaire to the panelists through PsychData. The second questionnaire was active March 22 – 29, 2021. I asked the panelists to rank the strategies they identified in the first questionnaire from 1 – 10 (1 = highest potential for increasing a student with disabilities’ self-management skills within the general education classroom). See Table 2 for the strategies the panelists ranked in order of highest potential for impact to least potential for impact.

I ranked the strategies by averaging the panelists’ responses. For example, panelists ranked some strategies as a top strategy while other panelists ranked that same strategy as less effective. Most strategies received a wide range of rankings and most of the panelists differed on where strategies fell, based on impact. However, one strategy received the top ranking from 12 panelists. This strategy was “building a relationship with the student.” Two thirds of the panelists agreed this strategy has the highest potential for promoting self-management skills among students with disabilities in the general education classroom, based solely on the teacher’s ability to build and maintain a strong and healthy relationship with that student.

Table 2*Strategies Ranked by Potential for Impact in the Second Questionnaire*

Overall ranking	Identified strategy
1	Establish a relationship with the student.
2	Teach self-management skills through picture books and videos paired with discussions and personal stories.
3	Prepare students for hypothetical situations they may encounter in the classroom and brainstorm strategies for managing those situations.
4	Teach the skills needed to identify emotions and triggers, then teach tools for kids to use when a trigger occurs or they feel an uncomfortable emotion.
5	Provide daily practice of self-management strategies paired with teacher support throughout the day including modeling, individual conversations with the teacher, small group problem solving, and whole group problem solving.
6	Using community circles or morning meetings within the classroom where students can talk about emotions, preview the schedule for the day, and engage with their peers in a supported environment.
7	Provide clear and consistent classroom rules and routines that are posted in the classroom for all learners combined with direct teaching of class room rules and routines using and referring to the visuals.
8	Scaffold the lesson for success, and provide student choice on the assignment such as how to work (mode of task completion), where to work (in seat, on the floor, by the teacher), and with whom to work.
9	Teach individual students to anticipate triggers and provide strategy to be accessed proactively (e.g., assemblies, new classroom seating arrangement).
10	Provide early intervention.
10	Teach regulated breathing strategies such as square breathing, five-finger breathing, belly breaths.
10	Generate common language, gestures/non-verbal cues that are used universally within the classroom.

Following the second questionnaire, a third and final questionnaire was used to check the fidelity and potential biases of the responses from the second questionnaire. This questionnaire included the same strategies as the second questionnaire, again randomized to prevent bias, in order to study whether the same strategies would be selected by panelists.

Results of the Third Questionnaire

A third questionnaire is recommended during the Delphi process to check for bias and ensure fidelity of the rankings in the second questionnaire. For the third and final questionnaire, I shuffled the strategies by assigning each strategy a random number between 0 and 1 using the randomized number function in excel and sorting them based on ascending numbers. These randomly sorted strategies were then imported to PsychData to create the third questionnaire. The panelists were then asked to rank the strategies again, in terms of potential for promoting self-management skills among students with disabilities in the general education classroom. See Table 3 for the strategies the panelists ranked in order of highest potential for impact to least potential for impact.

In the third and final questionnaire, the panelists' ranking of the strategies was the same as in the second questionnaire. The top strategies were "develop a relationship with the student," followed by "provide early intervention." The strategy "prepare students for hypothetical situations they may encounter in the classroom and brainstorm strategies for managing those situations" ranked 3rd in both the second and third questionnaire. The strategies "teach and use calming techniques such as counting backwards from 10, deep breathing, closing eyes and thinking of something that makes you happy, using fidgets, sensory tools" and "teach regulated breathing strategies such as square breathing, five-finger breathing and belly breaths" ranked 4th and 5th, respectively.

Table 3*Strategies Ranked by Potential for Impact in the Third Questionnaire*

Overall ranking	Identified strategy
1	Establish a relationship with the student.
2	Provide early intervention.
3	Prepare students for hypothetical situations they may encounter in the classroom and brainstorm strategies for managing those situations.
4	Teach and use calming techniques such as counting backwards from 10, deep breathing, closing eyes and thinking of something that makes you happy, using fidgets, sensory tools.
5	Teach regulated breathing strategies such as square breathing, five-finger breathing, belly breaths.
6	Have the student identify what helps them calm (self-determination).
7	Teach the skills needed to identify emotions and triggers, then teach tools for kids to use when a trigger occurs or they feel an uncomfortable emotion.
8	Have students journal when they want to share something rather than blurting. They can share this with the teacher later.
9	Provide daily practice of self-management strategies paired with teacher support throughout the day including modeling, individual conversations with the teacher, small group problem solving, and whole group problem solving.
10	Use trust buddies in a classroom by pairing students who can serve as a support peer to implement agreed upon strategies (e.g. taking a walk, drawing together).
10	Pre-teach, teach, and reteach skills using a researched based curriculum/instruction in small groups.
10	Teach individual students to anticipate triggers and provide strategy to be accessed proactively (e.g., assemblies, new classroom seating arrangement).

Chapter IV reviewed the results of the study and each of the individual questionnaires. The results of the study are discussed further in the next chapter. Chapter V also discusses the strengths of the study, delimitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and implications for practice.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Discussion of the Project

The ability to self-manage in the classroom is vital to student success. However, students with ADHD, autism spectrum disorders, and emotional and behavioral disabilities are disproportionately excluded from their classroom and lose nearly 1 year of learning each year (Hattie, 2017; Mitchell, 2017). Students with disabilities are excluded at rates far higher than their typical peers, and students who struggle with the ability to self-manage due to their disability are excluded at rates of nearly 50% in some cases (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). The goal of this action research project was to identify strategies to increase the rate of inclusion of students with disabilities by promoting their ability to self-manage within the general education classroom. The initial questionnaire identified a total of 80 strategies proposed by experts in the field of education. After organizing these strategies into a list of 33 strategies, I created a second questionnaire and asked panelists to rank the top 10 strategies. To check for bias and fidelity, I created a third questionnaire and asked panelists to again rank the top 10 strategies.

To promote self-management among students with disabilities in the general education classroom, two thirds (12/18) of the panelists agreed the top strategy is to “develop a relationship with the student.” This strategy does not require students to gain new skills or understanding; it does not require a behavior intervention plan, or expertise on the part of the teacher in the area of self-management or social-emotional learning. The implementation of this strategy requires two things: the student must be included in the general education classroom and the teacher must foster and maintain a healthy, respectful relationship with the student.

According to Hattie (2017), 252 factors can influence student academic success. Hattie found “teacher estimation of student success” had an effect size of 1.29, “teachers not labeling students” had an effect size of .69, and “student-teacher relationships” had an effect size of .52. Students feeling like they are “disliked” by their teacher had a negative effect size of -.19. Additionally, students identified with ADHD had a negative effect size of -.90. The panelists who participated in this action research project seemed to agree that building positive relationships with students, believing in student success, and fostering a classroom environment of respect and kindness is not only a large factor in the academic success of students with disabilities, but also the number one factor in determining their ability to self-manage and thus be included in their general education classrooms.

In addition to building a relationship with the student, six other strategies were ranked consistently in the top 10 in both the second and third questionnaire. These six strategies include 1) provide early intervention; 2) prepare students for hypothetical situations they may encounter in the classroom and brainstorm strategies for managing those situations; 3) teach regulated breathing strategies such as square breathing, five finger breathing, belly breaths; 4) teach the skills needed to identify emotions and triggers, then teach tools for kids to use when a trigger occurs or they feel an uncomfortable emotion; 5) provide daily practice of self-management strategies paired with teacher support throughout the day including modeling, individual conversations with the teacher, small group problem solving, and whole group problem solving; and 6) teach individual students to anticipate triggers and provide strategy to be accessed proactively (e.g., assemblies, new classroom seating arrangement). These six strategies emphasize the need for early identification of student skill deficits and intervention, as well as the need to provide consistent, daily instruction and practice.

The use of an explicit curriculum was not ranked in the top 10 strategies in the second questionnaire, but the strategy was ranked 10th in the third questionnaire. Interestingly, it was the strategy most commonly listed in the first questionnaire. Why was it not ranked as a top strategy in the subsequent questionnaires? One possible reason is that due to the current movement surrounding social-emotional education in schools, a focus has been placed on the need for explicit instruction and curriculum to teach students these skills. Educators are given a curriculum to guide their instruction, yet many educators lack an understanding of foundational social-emotional skills. In the second and third questionnaires, panelists did not rank in the top 10 the use of an explicit curriculum. However, they did rank in the top 10 explicit teaching and modeling, preparing students for situations in which social-emotional skills are needed, and teaching social-emotional skills such as regulated breathing, self-calming strategies, emotions and trigger response. Panelists also ranked highly in the second and third questionnaires the use of modeling, practice, and small and whole group problem solving practice. These results indicate that the strategies with the highest potential to impact a student with disabilities ability to self-manage within the general education classroom are: building a relationship with the student, providing early intervention, and social-emotional instruction integrated throughout their day through direct instruction and continuous practice of learned skills.

Self-management is a skill that can lead to the exclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Often because of deficits in self-management skills, students with disabilities such as ASD, ADHD, or EBD are excluded at a rate of nearly 50%, and they lose years of academic learning (Hattie, 2017; Mitchell, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Many of these students feel disliked by their teachers and peers; they lack a sense of belonging and are labeled negatively. Based on the results of this action research project, self-

management skills can be promoted in the general education classroom through positive student-teacher relationships, early intervention, and teaching, practicing, and modeling social-emotional skills, even when an explicit curriculum is not present.

Strengths and Delimitations of the Study

Strengths of the Project

Throughout this action research project, many strengths were identified. The panelists selected for this research all exhibited high levels of expertise in the field of education. Another strength of this study included the varying backgrounds of each of the panelists. The panel consisted of three general education teachers, three special education teachers, two behavior specialists, one speech/language pathologist specializing in social-emotional learning, three special education administrators, two building administrators, and four university professors. Finally, a high level of confidentiality was maintained through the web-based platform PsychData.

Delimitations of the Project

The first delimitation of this action research project was a small sample size of 18. While Delphi studies can be conducted with smaller sample sizes, larger sample sizes increase the ease for verification of the results (Skulmoski et al, 2007). The second delimitation was the convenience sampling method used to select panelists based on their professional relationship with the researcher. The third delimitation is that the project did not examine whether the recommended strategies promoted self-management skills in the general education classroom.

Recommendations for Future Research

Research into social-emotional learning continues to evolve. Based on the results of this action research project, future research should focus on the efficacy of the identified strategies in

the general education classroom. Specifically, positive student-teacher relationships, early intervention, and instruction and practice of social-emotional learning skills should be focused on to determine the effect each has in practice on student social-emotional learning outcomes. Finally, more research should be conducted to determine whether explicit social-emotional curricula or the training of educators in the pedagogy of social-emotional learning without the presence of an explicit curricula has a greater impact on student social-emotional learning outcomes.

Implications for Practice

The results of this action research project suggest the number one strategy to promote self-management skills, or the ability to regulate one's emotions, impulses, behaviors, and thoughts, is through positive relationships between students with disabilities and their teachers. To foster this relationship, research suggests that students should not be removed from the general classroom environment. Teachers should be trained in the pedagogy of social-emotional learning. This training should also include how to 1) respond appropriately to student behavior; 2) recognize skill deficits; 3) implement early interventions; 4) plan lessons directed at student need; and 5) practice, model, and role play self-management skills. According to the panelists, explicit curriculum does not have the highest potential for promoting self-management skills among students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Rather, the best strategies include establishing a positive relationship with these students, providing early intervention, and preparing them for situations they may encounter requiring social-emotional skills. Together, all educators can increase the self-management skills of students with disabilities while keeping them in their general education classroom. We have the capacity to change the narrative of the exclusion of students with disabilities within the American school system.

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