



The WeFEEL Approach: Exploring the Impact of an Emotional Intelligence Approach on Social-Emotional Development and Classroom Interactions

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Abstract

The goal of this mixed-methods research study was to examine the effects of the implementation of the WeFEEL emotional intelligence (EI) approach on both student development and classroom interactions with a population of three and four-year-olds considered socioeconomically at-risk (Foerch & Adelman, 2020). This approach utilizes children's literature focused on emotions, diversity and inclusion, thinking and mindfulness activities, yoga, and meditation. It focuses on a coaching model and places emphasis on fostering co-regulation to achieve self-regulation. This study was conducted to (1) nurture and evaluate emotional intelligence (EI) in young children as measured by the Ages and Stages Questionnaire tool, video observations, and focus group interviews, and (2) to foster and evaluate classroom interactions as measured by the CLASS. A sample of 13 centers in low-income areas of Broward County serving at-risk children including, but not limited to children with disabilities and in the foster care system, and receiving government assistance, were given ongoing professional development (PD) on the WeFEEL approach, self-regulation games, co-regulation support in combination with children's literature, yoga and meditation. The purpose was to examine the implementation of the WeFEEL approach and these games, as well as their impact on the young children's development of EI. Quantitative data consists of pre-tests and post-tests for the CLASS (AP1 and AP3), which are obtained directly from the centers included in the study. Qualitative data consists of video observations and structured focus groups. During the 24 months of the funding period, data was collected and analyzed to determine EI gains and positive classroom interactions.