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## The Effects of Implementing a Zones of Regulation Curriculum in a Third Grade Classroom

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**The Effects of Implementing a Zones of Regulation Curriculum  
in a Third Grade Classroom**

A Project Presented to  
The Graduate Faculty of  
Minnesota State University Moorhead

By  
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In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
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### Abstract

This research project examined how 24 third grade students in a rural school identified their feelings and categorized them in the appropriate zone, as determined by the Zones of Regulation Curriculum by Leah Kuypers (2011). It also analyzed what effect the implementation of the Zones of Regulation Curriculum would have on the number of conflicts in the classroom. Data were gathered on the number of conflicts in the classroom pre and post teaching the Zones of Regulation curriculum. The results were inconsistent; there was no evidence of an increase or decrease in conflicts resulting from the implementation of the Zones of Regulation curriculum. Results from participation of a group of 4 students indicated that their identification and categorization post intervention gravitated mostly around Level 2 feelings, which are most specific (e.g., anxious, calm, elated) in comparison to Level 1 (e.g., happy, sad, mad) which these students tended to identify with prior to intervention. This indicated that those 4 students were better able to identify and categorize their feelings after being taught the Zones of Regulation curriculum.

## Chapter 1

### General Problem

Many students come to school with a variety of basic needs that are not met due to bullying, poverty, homelessness and dysfunctional family dynamics (Cranston, 2017). When basic needs are not met, students cannot focus on higher level goals, as Abraham Maslow described in his hierarchy of needs model (1943). This lack of needs being met can obstruct learning in the classroom and be associated with mental health concerns (Cranston). Students in this situation often have poor social skills from lack of teaching, modeling, care, love, and needs being met. They may antagonize others, have difficulty making and maintaining friends, or seek attention by negative behavior. As Kuypers mentions in *Zones of Regulation*, "No student wants the reputation as the "bad kid," but they may not have it in their skill set to act differently-unless they have been taught the correct tools to do so and given numerous chances to practice" (2011). Students also can have an inability to handle conflict with peers when, similarly, not given appropriate examples or strategies to do so. Therefore, in order to help prevent

management problems in the classroom, teachers can instruct on social and emotional self-regulation (Woolfolk, 2016; Kuypers, 2011).

Conflicts are a daily part of life. When people come together to work, play, or collaborate, personality and thinking differences come to surface and can result in a delay in production (Dogan, 2016). Students may not be able to focus long enough to listen or complete work. Handled appropriately, though, conflicts can stimulate development and growth (Longaretti & Wilson, 2000). Students will encounter conflictive situations throughout their lives that they will be able to learn and grow from or be held back in frustration. Therefore, being able to manage conflicts successfully in school aids students in making friends, regulating their emotions, and setting the stage for learning. These skills transfer over to life beyond school as well.

Students encounter conflicts early in their lives, especially in a school setting surrounded by other students. Since the playground environment at recess is more unstructured, this is a likely venue for conflicts to occur. Found across the country, recess playgrounds are a place of chaos (Clayton, 2010). In my teaching experience, I have found many wasted minutes in my day having to deal with conflicts from the playground at recess, many where students were not able



to control their impulsivity or appropriately handle their emotions. I have had students that were not able to deal appropriately with problems, and thus would bring them into the classroom learning environment. Since I was not a witness to the incident, my role was very tricky and required detective skills. Often students could not move on from a conflict appropriately or in a timely manner. The incidents would take away from valuable learning time and use up much energy on my part.

In search of a solution, I researched types of teaching programs on how to handle conflicts appropriately and independently. My goal was to give students tools and strategies to use when situations of conflict arise, in school and beyond. This led me to brainstorm ways I could use action research to see what impact a program of such type could have on my students. As various studies have concluded, teaching conflict management strategies, such as peer mediation, I-statements, basic social skills, and role play have been shown to decrease conflict and promote responsible problem solving (Boulter, 1995; Clayton, 2010; Crowe, 2009; Dentron, 2001; Dogan, 2016; Johns, 2005; Selfridge, 2004).

Also shown effective is teaching self-regulation and emotional control (Childs, 2014; Kuypers, 2011). These strategies help children learn to

independently resolve conflicts, create a more positive school climate, and reduce issues such as bullying (Cranston, 2017). After researching various programs and learning more about the root cause of conflicts, I realized an overarching issue for students is being able to self-regulate and control their emotions (Childs, 2014). This seemed to be a strong underlying issue that I felt was more important to address. Even students that can handle conflicts successfully benefit from lessons on self-regulation and emotional control. As Childs (2014) found, "all youth in schools can benefit from school mental health policies and programs that successfully promote social, emotional and behavioral health, build positive school climate and prevent school violence and dropout (Bruns, Walrath, Siegel, & Weist, 2004; Schargel & Smink, 2001; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001; Weist & Cooley-Quille, 2001)". Hussey & Guo (2003) also found that students who participate in a school mental health program demonstrated statistically significant reductions in disorder-related conduct, attention deficit-hyperactivity and depressive symptomatology over the course of one year (Childs, 2014). Therefore, for this action research, I chose to teach The Zones of Regulation curriculum to my third grade class and observe how students are able to identify their emotions in order to decrease conflicts in the classroom. The goal

was for students to be able to transfer this knowledge and skills to lifelong skills of problem solving and self-management.

## **Subjects and Settings**

### **Description of subjects.**

The participants in this study were chosen from a class of 24 third grade students from a rural elementary school during the 2017-2018 school year. Of the 24 students, 11 were girls and 13 boys. Four students had Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and 14 received free or reduced lunch. Over 50% of these students came from single parent households.

From this large group of students, the subjects chosen were four students; student 1 had Emotional Behavior Disorder (EBD) and struggled self-regulating, student 2 was somewhat able to self-regulate and had Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), student 3 was somewhat able to self-regulate, but had difficulty controlling impulses and getting along with classmates, and student 4 came from a background of trauma, often had low energy, and was sad.

### **Selection criteria.**

The sample chosen was a purposive sampling of a convenience cluster, since the 4 selected students were chosen from a group of 24 students in my third grade homeroom class. By using students from my homeroom class, it made it easier to conduct research because I was with the students the majority of the day.

### **Description of setting.**

This elementary school enrolls 340 students from pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. The population is primarily Caucasian, with less than 20% being minority (mainly Native American). About 60% of families are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The community has a large population of low income families; the median household income is \$33,191 per year. Due to the influence of outliers (wealthier families), the average household income is higher at \$46,080 per year.

### **Informed consent.**

I obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board at this university and from the school district to conduct this study. I followed the school district's IRB procedure to obtain permission to conduct my research. This involved receiving permission from the Superintendent, principal, and parents of the

students involved. Parents received information to consent on the permission form. The research involved had no more than minimum risk to subjects and the research was unlikely to adversely affect the rights and welfare of the subjects.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Definition of terms.**

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

**Conflicts:** a disagreement or argument between two or more parties that interfere with learning in the classroom.

**Self-Regulation:** the ability to adjust levels of alertness and display emotions through behaviors in order to attain goals in socially adaptive ways, also known as self-control, self-management, or impulse control. (Kuypers, 2011)

**Zones:** different emotional states. (Kuypers, 2011)

**Triggers:** events or situations that make a person feel upset, worried, or frustrated. (Kuypers, 2011)

Many schools have bought into the importance of whole-child approaches to education and its effect on creating a positive school environment.

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), Zones of Regulation, and MindUp are three such examples of programs designed to teach social emotional learning. CASEL has identified five important life-skills of social emotional learning: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making (Cranston, 2017). Cranston found these skills can, "help children identify and name feelings such as frustration, anger and loneliness that potentially contribute to disruptive and self-destructive behavior. It can also teach children how to employ social problem-solving skills to manage difficult emotional and potentially conflictual situations" (24, 2017).

Zones of Regulation is a conceptual framework used to teach students to categorize their complex feelings, then how to recognize and communicate how they are feeling in a safe way (Kuypers, 2011). As Yack (n.d.) and Scherz (2016) found, the Zones of Regulation curriculum helped students to increase self-regulation skills. These children, then, are better able to be in control over their behavior and remain engaged with their learning environments (Melnick & Hinshaw, 2000) and accomplish academic tasks (Lipsett, 2011).

MindUp is a brain-focused curriculum that teaches mindful learning and resiliency to students. It has a very similar framework as CASEL including areas such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (Scholastic, 2011). Findings from recent evaluations suggest that participating in MindUP may offer several benefits to grade 4–7 Canadian students, including: increased mindful awareness; improved social and emotional competencies; increased proficiency in EF; better relationships with teachers and peers; improved academic achievement and engagement; and improved psychological and physiological well-being. Findings also from this study provide support that, when combined, mindfulness practices and SEL can lead to positive improvements in social relations (Maloney, Lawlor, Schonert-Reichl, and Whitehead, nd).

In the next section, three successful programs are discussed that incorporate conflict management teaching. These programs are research based and all involve opportunities for students to take control of the situation, either through peer mediation, I-statements, or role play.

### **Conflict Management Programs.**

***Resolving Conflict Creatively Program.*** *Resolving Conflict Creatively Program* (RCCP), a conflict management program used by various schools incorporates instruction, practice, and observation of conflict management skills. It is a research-based K-12 school program in social and emotional learning, incorporating peer mediation, where students are the conflict mediators, rather than strictly a teacher. Through about twenty-five lessons, this program has shown less hostility, less aggressive behaviors, and less aggressive problem-solving strategies, as well as an increase in positive social and emotional control and an increase in academic achievement. Findings suggest RCCP promotes the emotional, social, and ethical development of students while fostering a caring and cooperative learning environment in Anchorage Public Schools (Selfridge, 2004; Lantleri, L. (2002).

***Playworks.*** *Playworks* is a nonprofit program targeted towards teaching conflict resolution in non-aggressive means, where students learn to solve problems independently through youth leadership in the conflict resolution process. This program has found success in alleviating conflicts within playgrounds (Clayton, 2010; Bleeker et al., 2012; Leos-Urbel, Sanchez, & Stanford University, 2015).



***Responsive Classroom.*** Another largely successful, research-based program used in many schools is *Responsive Classroom*. The approach used in this program for conflict resolution focuses on teaching students basic social skills, I-statements, and role play (Crowe 2012). Boulter agrees that an important step in teaching conflict resolution is teaching students how to verbalize their feelings appropriately, using role play situations (1995). This repeated practice in using conflict resolution skills is essential in engraining appropriate strategies in students' repertoire. According to Johns et al (2005), role play provides a safe environment for students to practice strategies for social skills and conflict resolution. Research shows that teachers' use of RC practices has been associated with **students'** improved reading achievement, greater closeness between teachers and children, better pro-social skills, more assertiveness, and less fearfulness (Rimm-Kaufman, 2007; Abry, 2013).

### **Strategies.**

Below are three strategies that have been shown effective in coordinating with conflict management training. These include basic social skills, I-statements, peer mediation, and social emotional learning.

**Basic social skills.** One important component of conflict management skills is basic social skills. As Johns, Crowley and Guetzloe, agree, it cannot be assumed that students come to school with these basic social skills, which may also vary from household to household (2005). Examples of the skills include: communication, collaboration, emotional management, empathy for others, listening, accepting compliments, responding to failure, and cooperating with peers (Cranston, 2017). As Cranston (2017) has found, students are missing life-skill elements in their educational experience. Therefore, teaching of basic social skills as well as conflict management skills benefit students, especially when it comes to interacting with peers (Johns et al. 2005).

**I-statements.** When students, or anyone for the matter, encounter conflicts, emotions often take precedence over thought process. As Boutler (1995) has found, children often lack the necessary skills to verbalize their conflicting feelings and thoughts. Therefore, there is a need for explicit teaching of communication skills for students in conflicting situations. As Dentron (2001) describes, I-statements, use the formula, “When you \_\_\_\_\_, I feel \_\_\_\_\_, because \_\_\_\_\_, so what I would like is \_\_\_\_\_.” Students practice using these sentence prompts in friendly ways until they become comfortable with it. The next step is creating conflicting scenarios for

students to practice using I-statements. Students need scaffolding in this process, especially with generating words to describe how they are feeling (Dentron, 2001). In order for I-statements to be used effectively, students need guidance and practice opportunities in a safe environment.

***Role play.*** Actual opportunities to practice conflict management strategies have been shown important for the transfer of skills to real life situations (Boulter, 1995; Clayton, 2010; Johns et al., 2005; Longaretti & Wilson, 2000; Selfridge, 2004) Since children's need for physical movement is strong at this age, role play is effective in allowing children to act out their feelings in a group setting. As Boulter (1995) states as part of the role play process, children give feedback on how to best handle the situation to those role playing. This allows children to see conflict from different perspectives, making them aware of the other person's feelings and motives as well.

An aspect of role playing that might be effective for students includes the act of writing out possible solutions to problems (Boulter, 1995). This approach may be more beneficial to students who learn best through writing. By writing out their thought process, students are given more time to think through a situation

and feel confident in their solutions. Students can then share their problems and solutions to the group, who can follow it up with role playing the given scenario.

### ***Peer Mediation.***

Another component for teaching conflict management strategies involves students taking ownership and responsibility for the classroom climate through peer mediation. Students are given the role of conflict mediators. They are more often older students who are mature and have earned the title of peer mediator. Their job involves observing students during a conflict resolution meeting and offering services and advice to the students. Peer mediators are the experts rather than the teacher. RCCP has found peer mediation very effective at encouraging self-management and responsibility in students who act as peer mediators and those who look up to the peer mediators (Selfridge, 2004).

### ***Social and Emotional Learning***

The final strategy that was explored through this study is teaching social and emotional learning. As reported by Wyman et al., teaching students how to regulate their emotions reduced problems rated by teachers in behavior control, peer social skills, shy-withdrawn and off-task behaviors as well as caused a decrease in disciplinary referrals and suspensions (2010). Students who regulate their emotions are more successful at learning tasks (Ganz, 2008). Children taught self-management techniques show better control over their behavior, ability to remain engaged with their learning environments, (Melnick & Hinshaw, 2000) and capabilities of fulfilling academic demands (Lipsett, 2011) (Scherz, 2016). Therefore, teaching students to regulate their emotions can have positive impacts in various areas of their lives.

As research has shown, conflict resolution skills and self-regulation and emotional control are important for students' well-being and development person. This research project sought to discover how explicit teaching, modeling, and practice of self-regulation skills can transfer to students in the classroom.

## Chapter 2

### Research Questions

What was explored through this research project was the teaching and modeling of self-regulation and emotional control and its effect on students' use of the same strategies. Questions that guided this study:

1. What is the impact of the Zones of Regulation curriculum on the number of conflicts in the classroom?
2. Will the chosen four third grade students with difficulty self-regulating be able to appropriately identify what zone they are in during check-in times?

It was hypothesized that students will grow in their ability to identify what zone they are in during the school day. This will, then, contribute to less intense and shorter lasting conflicts or personal emotional issues in the classroom.

### Research Plan

#### Methods and rationale.

The strategies used in this research were adapted from the Zones of Regulation curriculum, including basic skills such as self-identifying emotional level, understanding different perspectives, identify expected social behavior, and

identify emotional triggers (Kuypers, 2011). These skills were taught, modeled, and practiced through a series of nine lessons.

There were two instruments used to collect data in this research. The first was a data table to record the number of conflicts that occurred each day throughout the intervention. This was analyzed for patterns of increase, decrease or consistency. The second instrument was a self-assessment that was given to the four subjects twice a day. The assessment had students first identify what emotions or feelings they have currently by choosing an emotion card. Then they identified what zone they were in because of that feeling by choosing a zone card.

Recording data in a table was an appropriate strategy because it allowed the data to be compared and analyzed for patterns over time. The data table was less reliable given the students were scored by one teacher's interpretation of conflicts. Therefore, I decided to define conflict as an issue that interferes with a student's ability to do work or listen in class. This is quantifiable and made the data more reliable. The self-assessment worksheet was an appropriate instrument to use because it was easy to implement, quantifiable, and a direct assessment of the second research question.

**Schedule.**

I taught a bi-weekly Zones of Regulation curriculum. This included lessons, modeling, and practice of strategies. Data was recorded only on issues of self-regulation in the classroom. Data was collected prior to the implementation of the curriculum and daily throughout the five week program. At the end of the five week period, data was analyzed, compared, and interpreted.

**Ethical issues.**

The purpose of this action research project was to help alleviate conflicts and emotional issues in the classroom and provide students with strategies and tools for handling them independently. Within my classroom, all students received the intervention of the self-regulation and emotional control, therefore, the principles of justice, beneficence, and respect of persons were upheld. A possible ethical issue could have been that students didn't feel comfortable and confident self-regulating on their own, even after the training. I didn't find this to be an issue, though, as all my students felt comfortable sharing and expressing their feelings. These students also might have felt helpless that I would not help them through their issue and that the problem rested on their shoulders alone.



This didn't seem to be the case either throughout the implementation of the program

### Chapter 3

**During the implementation of the Zones of Regulation Curriculum, where I taught lessons related to identifying and categorizing feelings, I wanted to see if there was a connection between conflict resolution and identifying feelings, therefore, I created Research Question 1. I also wanted to know how effectively students could identify their feelings and categorize them, so I took a sample of students to test their ability to do so in Research Question 2.**

**What is the impact of the Zones of Regulation curriculum on the number of conflicts in the classroom?**

Prior to the start of research, I collected baseline data of the number of conflicts that occurred daily. The average number of conflicts per day was 3 and the total number of conflicts was sixty. I then gathered similar data during the research phase. The average number of conflicts per day was 2.11 and the total number of conflicts was 42.3. The data gathered from the research phase was two days less than the baseline data, given days I was absent. Therefore, two days of the average were added to the total number of conflicts.

Table 1.0 indicates the number of conflicts students had throughout a ten-week period.

Table 1.0

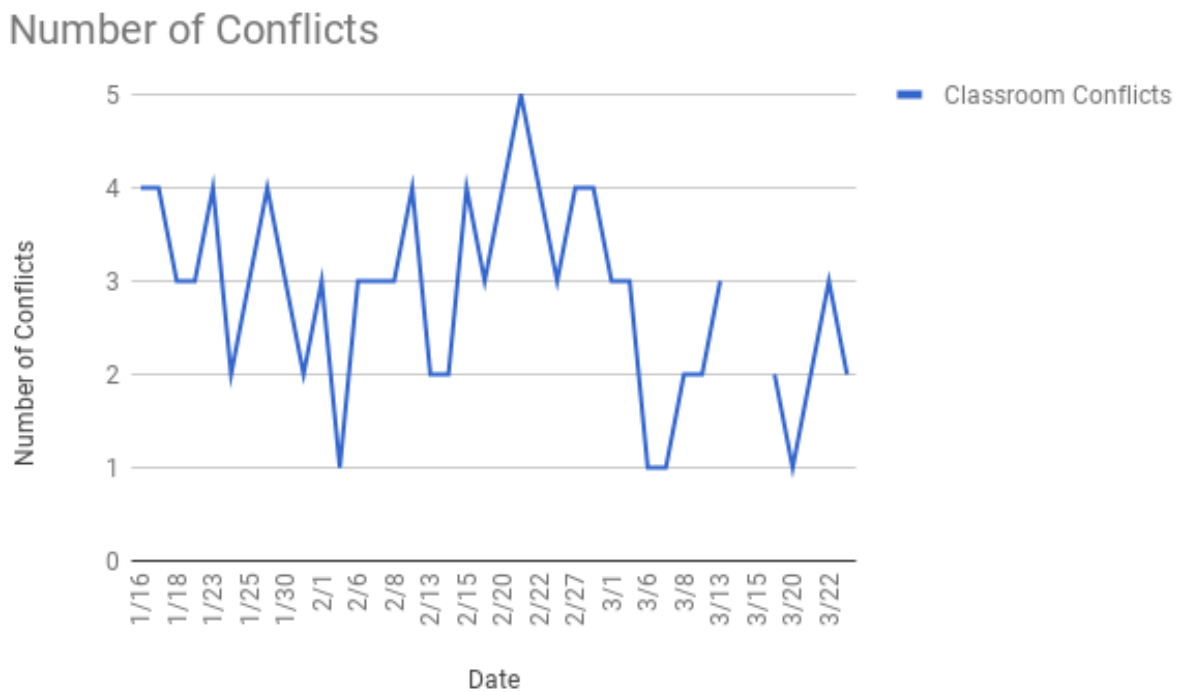
*Number of Conflicts of Students in Third Grade*

<b>Dates</b>	<b>No. of Conflicts Prior to Lessons</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>No. of Conflicts During Lessons</b>
<b>1/16</b>	4	<b>2/20</b>	4
<b>1/17</b>	4	<b>2/21</b>	5
<b>1/18</b>	3	<b>2/22</b>	4
<b>1/19</b>	3	<b>2/23</b>	3
<b>1/23</b>	4	<b>2/27</b>	4
<b>1/24</b>	2	<b>2/28</b>	4
<b>1/25</b>	3	<b>3/1</b>	3
<b>1/26</b>	4	<b>3/2</b>	3
<b>1/30</b>	3	<b>3/6</b>	1
<b>1/31</b>	2	<b>3/7</b>	1
<b>2/1</b>	3	<b>3/8</b>	2
<b>2/2</b>	1	<b>3/9</b>	2
<b>2/6</b>	3	<b>3/13</b>	3
<b>2/7</b>	3	<b>3/14</b>	Absent

<b>2/8</b>	3	3/15	Absent
<b>2/9</b>	4	3/16	2
<b>2/13</b>	2	3/20	1
<b>2/14</b>	2	3/21	2
<b>2/15</b>	4	3/22	3
<b>2/16</b>	3	3/23	2
Total	60	Total	47
Average	3	Adj. Total	42.3
		Average	2.11

Table 1.1

*Number of Conflicts of Students in Third Grade*



Based on the data gathered, the average number of conflicts was fewer during the Zones of Regulation lessons by .89 of a conflict. The total number of conflicts was also fewer by 17.7 conflicts.

### **Interpretation**

I expected that the number of conflicts would decrease after students were taught how to identify their feelings. I also predicted that when I continued the lessons and gave students tools to regulate their behaviors, the number of conflicts would decrease more significantly. As Cranston (2017) found, teaching self-regulation and emotional control can help children learn to independently resolve conflicts.

While teaching the Zones of Regulation lessons, I found that it was difficult for students to resolve conflicts independently because they could be in control of their behavior and response, but not the other students' behaviors and responses. This made it harder for students to self-regulate. During the lessons, I had to emphasize repeatedly how students can control their actions, but not the actions of others. This is a hard and frustrating concept to grasp, even for adults.

I found it helpful, though, to teach students how their actions can affect the thoughts and feelings of others which in turn can impact the actions of others.

One specific lesson was very powerful related to this concept. During this lesson I talked about how when people behavior in expected and unexpected means for the given situation, they affect what others are thinking. We brainstormed feelings that people have when others are doing expected versus unexpected behaviors. To demonstrate this, I passed out green chips to students when I had good thoughts and red chips when I had bad thoughts about them based on their behaviors. I made sure that students had many green chips before I ever gave out a red one. Students were very engaged in this activity and strongly desired to get a green chip. Student 1 and my original Student 4, who have Emotional Behavior Disorder, significantly changed their behavior for this activity. I was surprised by their strong participation and engagement but acknowledge that it makes sense due to their competitive nature. These two students, especially, were more on task and focused during lessons, therefore instigating fewer conflicts.

The data collection process was simple and I found defining conflicts easier than I expected it would be. The data may be skewed by the absence of a few students that were gone on family vacations. One student that often instigates conflicts was absent for a week. Another student who is often involved in conflicts was gone for a week and a half as well. These absences could be strong contributing factors in the decrease in the number of conflicts. Another factor

that could skew data was one student who began making bracelets and selling or trading them, which spurred other students to trade things, and sparked conflicts left and right. There was a rise and fall of conflicts over the data collecting period due to many uncontrollable variables. Therefore, a correlation between the Zones of Regulation lessons and conflicts cannot be positively made. I believe that there would be a more significant decrease in conflicts, consistent even with uncontrollable variables, after students learned tools to regulate their emotions, which is the second part of the curriculum.

**Will the chosen four third grade students with difficulty self-regulating be able to appropriately identify what zone they are in during check-in times?**

I conducted baseline data on the chosen students by having them complete check-ins for a week prior to the Zones lessons. They continued check-ins after lesson 6, "The Zones in Me". The check-ins occurred as they came in to the classroom in the morning, after lunch, or at the end of the day. Prior to lesson 6, all students were given the opportunity to verbalize what zone they were in and why during our morning meeting. This provided an opportunity for me to formally evaluate how they were able to identify correct zones.

The chosen students were: Student 1 was in the Emotional Behavior Program and often had difficulty managing behaviors. Student 2 was a high functioning student that has Attention Deficit Disorder and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. Student 3 was a student that instigated drama and conflict often. She would often be in the center of conflicts. Student 4 came from a background of trauma, which affected her at school. She was often sad, depressed, and had low energy. The variety of students that I used was based on the research (Childs, 2014) that finds social and emotional learning can benefit all students, regardless of their needs.

Initially I had four students chosen but I found out last minute that Student 4 was going to be gone on vacation for a week and a half of school days. This made me reconsider using this child for my research, because I would miss almost two weeks of data gathering. Therefore, I chose a different student that often was sad and in the blue zone during school. My hope was that I could help this child move into the green zone more often.

Table 2.0

*No. of Times Students Correctly Matched Level 1 and Level 2 Feelings to a Zone Over the Course of a Two-Week Period.*



	<b>Prior</b>	<b>Prior</b>	<b>During</b>	<b>During</b>
Chosen Students	Total No. of Level 1 Matches	Total Number of Level 2 Matches	Total Number of Level 1 Matches	Total Number of Level 2 Matches
Student 1	4	3	2	5
Student 2	5	2	4	3
Student 3	7	0	4	3
Student 4	5	2	3	4

*Note.* Level 1 feelings include basic feelings such as: sad, good, happy, and mad. Level 2 feelings include more specific feelings such as: sick, tired, bored, moving slowly, calm, feeling okay, focused, ready to learn, frustrated, worried, silly/wiggly, loss of some control, terrified, yelling/hitting, elated, angry, excited, out of control, or any other feelings students came up with.

As the data indicates, each of the four students were able to correctly identify feelings and match them to a zone for each check-in. I expected that the chosen students would use general feelings to describe themselves during the baseline data collection and would use more specific feelings after the Zones of Regulation lessons. This held true as each of the four chosen students used more Level 2 feelings during the lessons compared with before the lessons as Table 2.0 indicates. Even though students used Level 2 feelings, many of the feelings were the same. For example, Student 1 used *okay* for three of the seven check-ins. Student 2 used *excited* and *silly* twice. Student 4 used *sad* and *tired* twice as well. Student 3 was the only one who used a variety of Level 2 feelings.

## **Interpretation**

Throughout the lessons, I had the opportunity for the entire class to share what zone they were in at morning meeting. This practice helped students feel compassionate for each other knowing how others feel and why. I was surprised that students enjoyed sharing this as much as they did. I only had a few that chose not to each day, which was usually because they couldn't think of something to share at that moment. I believe this also contributed to students using less general feelings when it came to the check-ins.

As mentioned before, students used less general feelings after learning about the zones, but they could continue to learn more specific feelings and identify times when they feel that way. I think this will come with more time and experience identifying their feelings. Students might also benefit from more modeling of identifying specific feelings. Again, I believe students will improve with this skill after the entire Zones of Regulation curriculum is taught.

Throughout the lessons I found that students had the most difficulty identifying the yellow zone. This was an important fact for me to know because if students cannot determine when another student is "on the verge", they are likely to push too far, and it will contribute to that student falling into the red

zone. I spent extra time identifying and practicing what the yellow zone looks, sounds, and feels like because of this.

After gathering data and analyzing the results, I believe that the Zones of Regulation curriculum is beneficial in helping students identify their emotions and correctly place them in a zone. The curriculum provides clarity and distinction between the zones and feelings that correspond with the zones. I am unsure of whether strictly identifying emotions truly leads to a decrease in classroom conflicts. The data was not clear enough to find a direct correlation. My students did show an interest and desire, though, to learn strategies to move them toward a green zone. Once strategies are introduced and students can practice, I believe there will be a more significant decrease in classroom conflicts.

## Chapter 4

Moving forward, I will continue to teach the rest of the curriculum including Unit 2 and 3 where students learn strategies and tools when in a yellow, blue, or red zone. Based on the ability for students to more accurately identify their feelings and categorize them, I am confident that they will benefit from learning tools and strategies for moving toward a green zone. I plan on making a Zones check-in a regular part of our day for the whole class. I will take time for students to think about moments throughout the day when they were in each of the zones. Then I will have them think about their reaction to being in that zone, if they used tools or strategies to move toward a green zone. I will make sharing aloud about their feelings optional as I found that very successful throughout my research.

At Blackduck Elementary School's final workshop of the year, teachers will become trained in the Zones of Regulation and I am excited to bring my experience teaching the curriculum to the training as well as questions to improving its implementation. Given that my school is training its staff in Zones of Regulation, I feel confident that administration will be supportive in teachers taking time out of the day to implement the program, which I plan on beginning

at the start of the school year. This will align nicely with Responsive Classroom and building our classroom community those first six weeks of school.

There have been a few key points that I have taken from this research project. One being that all students, even ones deemed already able to self-regulate, can benefit from explicit teaching in identifying emotions and signs in themselves and others. I found it very helpful for all my students to learn how to verbalize and name their feelings. I also realized the power of teaching students how to connect their actions to the thoughts and feelings of others. This concept needed to be reinforced multiple times, but one student had an "ah ha" moment when we discussed how his actions made the classmates around him want to put an orange chip in his cup to represent a negative or bad thought about him. This visual really helped him become aware of the influences of his actions.

Another key point I have learned is that teaching students to identify and name their feelings by zones is not enough to substantially reduce the number of conflicts that occur in the classroom. Students need to be able to recognize triggers in themselves and others, then use tools and strategies to avoid going into a red zone. Therefore, if a teacher is hoping to help students solve problems

independently, they need to provide strategies for students to use in conflicting situations.

I plan on sharing my findings from my research project with my coworkers and administration at school. I will do this by sharing my experience teaching the Zones of Regulation curriculum at my end-of-the-year workshop. This is when the entire staff will be trained in the curriculum. I will share my experiences teaching about feelings and how the students responded, the challenges of making time in our day for the lessons, the benefits of social emotional learning for all students, and the importance of teaching the strategies to move into the appropriate zone. I will let staff know that if they are more interested in my research, they can come talk to me and I will show them any data they wish to see. I will also send a copy of my research to my administration to keep if they wish to use it or share it with others.

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