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## The Impact of Direct Instruction of Social and Emotional Learning Skills on Academic Achievement in the 6th Grade Classroom

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The Impact of Direct Instruction of Social and Emotional  
Learning Skills on Academic Achievement  
in the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Classroom.

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

By

Erik Ecklund

In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Science in  
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**Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of direct instruction of social and emotional learning skills on academic achievement of sixth grade students. Student academic achievement was assessed by tracking homework completion and student grades at the midterm and end of the third quarter of the academic school year. While the majority of the students participating in the study showed academic growth in higher grades over the course of the study, there was little to no change in the homework completion rate of the students involved. As such, the results of the study were inconclusive as to the impact of the SUITE360 Social and Emotional Learning curriculum.

### **Dedication**

I would like to thank my patient and thoughtful wife, Katie, for inspiring my research into the impact of social and emotional learning on my students. Throughout the entire Master of Education program, she has been there to support me when I needed support, listen when I wanted to discuss, and encourage when I needed a push. I'm thankful to have such an amazing wife and friend that is as excited and inspired by youth as I am.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Introduction**

The importance of meaningful and impactful Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in the schools has never been more important for students of all ages. SEL is the process by which each student develops their capacity to integrate thought, emotion, and behavior to achieve and accomplish important social tasks (Ferreira et al., 2020). It was the researchers goal to implement and assess the impact of the SUITE 360 SEL curriculum that the Cloquet school district had planned on using in our middle school, grades five through eight, this year. The curriculum is internet based, so even with the uncertainty as we move from in person to full distance, the researcher was still able to begin using the curriculum with the students regardless of their current learning model.

In today's world, K-12 students are experiencing higher levels of anxiety, depression, and trauma than previous generations. One in five American children is experiencing a mental health issue such as depression or anxiety, and over half of all seventeen-year-olds reported having either experienced trauma directly, ranging for neglect to abuse, or witnessed it at least once as a child (Brackett, 2019). Since the outbreak of COVID 19 in early 2020, these issues have only been magnified for a variety of reasons. Many of the researcher's students were going home to places where they did not always feel safe or always have their basic needs met. All of the students were more socially isolated than any other time in their lives. These and other factors contributed to a general level of uncertainty and worry that many students struggle with on a daily basis.

### **Brief Literature Review**

Research is showing that nurturing social-emotional needs and supporting academic growth must be carefully integrated. More specifically, studies have demonstrated that boosting achievement without addressing social-emotional needs is almost impossible (Strahan & Poteat, 2020). The majority of teachers, administrators, and even students now feel that the inclusion of quality SEL education is an important part of a well-rounded education.

In 1994 the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was formed with the goal of “establishing high-quality, evidence-based social and emotional learning as an essential part of preschool through high school education” (Brackett, 2019, p. 202). They recognized that without the purposeful teaching and practice of the SEL skills, students were not fully equipped with the skills needed to succeed. The framework that CASEL developed focuses on five core skill areas. Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Promoting social emotional learning with students in the classroom involves behavior modelling and the teacher must provide opportunities inside the classroom for students to apply and expand those skills (Ferreira et al., 2020).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Over time the importance of SEL in the schools has moved to the forefront in education. Educators have realized that the students in their classroom are facing more mental health issues than ever before. In every school that the researcher has been able to be a part of, they have seen this first-hand. From the athletes the researcher coached, to the students in the classroom, they were all under tremendous pressure from themselves and outside sources to succeed and do well. When problems or roadblocks arose along the way, these problems could often be debilitating to the student or even lead to self-harm. The researcher believed that direct instruction in SEL skills



would better equip their students to handle the problems or roadblocks that they face in a more productive and healthy fashion.

Through the use of the Suite 360 SEL curriculum, the researcher hoped to be able to observe an increase in academic success and academic confidence in their students. The ability to monitor the students interactions on a daily basis was limited due to a switch to an all-distance learning for all students in the district. Due to this change in the district learning model, the researcher had to rely more on student interviews and checkups with them to assess any issues and concerns that they had as students in this distance learning model.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study assessed the impact of direct instruction of SEL skills on 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. Prior to the study, the students had not been receiving any direct instruction on SEL skills. Over the last few years, the researcher had seen an increase of the number of students that were dealing with anxiety and other mental health issues related to school and home life. The COVID 19 pandemic put an increased strain on these students and their families. The hope of the researcher was that by practicing the SEL skills on a regular basis through the use of the Suite 360 curriculum, they would be able to see an increase in academic success and confidence in the students. These skills would allow the students to better deal with the uncertainty of their current situation. The purpose of the study is to examine the effectiveness of this curriculum-based approach to SEL skills in the classroom.

### **Research Question**

What impact does direct instruction in Social Emotional Learning skills have on student achievement in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom?

### **Definition of Variables**

The following are the variables of the study:

- **Independent Variable:** The independent variable for this study was the Suite 360 SEL curriculum that students used to practice and learn about their SEL skills. Suite 360 is a web based SEL curriculum that let the researcher assign the most relevant skills needed for the students. The students then completed the 15-25-minute activities on their own and then had a whole class discussion about the chosen topic.
- **Dependent Variable:** The dependent variable will be student academic achievement and academic confidence. This variable will be measured through tracking student achievement and homework completion rates as well as student interviews.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study will hopefully show the positive impact of direct instruction in SEL skills on my 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. As research has shown the increasing examples of anxiety and other mental health issues with students, it is becoming more and more important to give the students the tools needed to be successful in the classroom and life. This study allowed the researcher to see if the school chosen Suite 360 curriculum truly had a positive impact on student academic achievement and academic confidence in the classroom. Furthermore, it allowed the researcher to see if the curriculum could have a positive impact on the students even when learning in a full distance learning model.

## **Research Ethics**

### **Permission and IRB Approval**

In order to conduct this study, the researcher sought MSUM's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (Appendix A) to ensure the ethical conduct of research involving human subjects (Mills & Gay, 2019). Likewise, authorization to conduct this study was sought from the school district where the research project took place, Cloquet Middle School in Cloquet, Minnesota (see Appendix B).

### **Informed Consent**

Protection of human subjects participating in research will be assured. Participant minors will be informed of the purpose of the study via the Informed Consent Letter. The researcher read this to the participants before the beginning of the study. Participants were made aware that this study was conducted as part of the researcher's master's degree Program and that it would benefit the researcher's teaching practice. Informed consent means that the parents of participants have been fully informed of the purpose and procedures of the study for which consent is sought and that parents understand and agree, in writing, to their child participating in the study (Rothstein & Johnson, 2014). Confidentiality will be protected through the use of pseudonyms (e.g., Student 1) without the utilization of any identifying information. The choice to participate or withdraw at any time was outlined both, verbally and in writing.

### **Limitations**

One of the biggest limitations to the study was the relatively small sample size as the researcher trialed the Suite360 program. While the researcher was able to trial the program with the 16 students in their homeroom classroom, in a traditional year, the researcher would have had access to ~100 students or one half of the total 6<sup>th</sup> grade student population in Cloquet.

The other limitation faced was the access to the students due to ever changing learning models due to the COVID 19 pandemic. While the students were given the option to come back to school for full time in person learning at the beginning of the third quarter, only 20 of the researcher's 27 students came back in person.

## **Conclusions**

Social Emotional Learning skills have never been more important for students than they are today. Students need to be able to practice and learn about the SEL skills in a controlled environment under the supervision of a trusted adult. By having the opportunity to develop these skills students are better able to self-regulate behaviors and focus on academics in the classroom setting. This research assessed the impact of the Suite 360 curriculum that the district had chosen for the middle school students. The objective of this chapter was to address the issue of SEL in the schools, give a brief overview of the literature, and explain the importance of the research being proposed. In the ensuing chapter the researcher will provide an in-depth review of the literature about this topic and the theoretical framework that supports this proposed study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process by which each student develops their capacity to integrate thought, emotion, and behavior to achieve and accomplish important social tasks (Ferreira et al., 2020). SEL fosters the use of various cognitive and interpersonal skills to achieve relevant goals, both socially and developmentally. SEL enables students to become more responsible, empathic, and productive, promoting a dynamic participation in society and citizenship. The importance SEL in schools has changed greatly over the course of the last decade. While the majority of the SEL instruction and research has been focused on younger students, research shows that the importance of SEL in Middle School to High School age students is just as important to their development and success in and outside of school. The goal of the research was to assess the impact of direct instruction of SEL skills on student achievement in 6<sup>th</sup> grade students.

#### **Review**

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

The promotion of social, emotional, and academic learning is not a shifting educational fad; it is the substance of education itself. It is not a distraction from the ‘real work’ of math, and English instruction; it is how instruction can succeed. It brings together a traditionally conservative emphasis on local control and on the character of all students, and a historically progressive emphasis on the creative and challenging art of teaching and the social and

emotional needs of all students, especially those who have experiences the greatest challenges (Aspen Institute, 2019).

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was formed in 1994 with the goal of “establishing high-quality, evidence-based social and emotional learning as an essential part of preschool through high school education” (Brackett, 2019). As the originators of the term “social and emotional learning” CASEL continues to lead the field in the promotion of the SEL Framework in which all SEL programs are rooted. This framework breaks down SEL into five core skill areas (*SEL: What Are the Core Competence Areas and Where are they Promoted?* 2020):

- Self-awareness – The ability to accurately recognize one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values.
- Self-management – The ability to successfully regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations.
- Social awareness – The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures.
- Relationship skills – The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups.
- Responsible decision making – The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms.

### **Current State of Students**

In today's world, K-12 students are experiencing higher levels of anxiety, depression, and trauma than previous generations. One in five American children is experiencing a mental health issue such as depression or anxiety, and over half of all seventeen-year-olds reported having either experienced trauma directly, ranging from neglect to abuse, or witnessed it at least once as a child (Brackett, 2019). At the same time, at least two-thirds of current and recent high school students agree that attending a school focused on social and emotional learning would help improve their relationships with teachers and peers, their learning of academic material, and their preparation for college, careers, and citizenship (Aspen Institute, 2019). These trends along with the ongoing global pandemic have made the teaching of SEL in the schools even more important than ever before. In his book *"Permission to Feel"* Marc Brackett, the Director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence speaks to the importance of teaching students the SEL skills that they need to succeed. In the survey that was conducted for the book of twenty-two thousand high school students across the United States, 77 percent of the students responded negatively to the question "How do you feel each day at school?". The three most frequent answers were "tired," "stressed," and "bored" (Brackett, 2019). One study in Connecticut found that thirty-nine thousand students were either disengaged or entirely disconnected from school (Parthenon-EY Education, 2016).

These negative feelings and disengagement among students can be altered by the introduction of direct SEL in the schools. Academic skills, social emotional competences can be learned and practiced through participation in meaningful activities in and outside the classroom, fostering students' progressive improvement and integration, helping them respond to more complex situations in academic, social, citizenship and health terms (Ferreira et al., 2020). Nine

out of 10 teachers believe social and emotional skills can be taught and benefit students (Aspen Institute, 2019). The students need the opportunity to work on the SEL skills while under the supervision of a trusted adult. Promoting social emotional learning with students in the classroom involves behavior modelling and the teacher must provide opportunities inside the classroom for students to apply and expand those skills (Ferreira et al., 2020).

### **Benefits of Increased Social Emotional Learning**

The benefits of increased focus on Social Emotional Learning in the upper grades has seen increased focus in the last decade. Many schools throughout the country have started to integrate a focus on SEL in their middle school and high school settings. According to a national survey, ninety-seven percent of principals believe a larger focus on social and emotional learning will improve students' academic achievement (Aspen Institute, 2019).

While questions might remain, about the importance of SEL skills in the classroom, research has shown that nurturing social-emotional needs and supporting academic growth must be carefully integrated. More specifically, studies have demonstrated that boosting achievement without addressing social-emotional needs is almost impossible (Strahan & Poteat, 2020). When students are entering middle school, they are entering with perceptions about themselves as people and as students based on their experiences. Evidence from elementary and middle school suggest that social skills increase academic performance because they allow students to participate productively in classroom activities that foster learning. These positive social skills are then a predictor of future academic success (Farrington, 2012).



### **Theoretical Framework**

SEL instruction in the schools can be organized into four main evidence-based practice categories (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2017):

- Skill-focused promotion programs typically provide explicit instruction on social-emotional skills through the use of free-standing lessons that follow an organized scope and sequence. These programs typically cover a broad set of skills over multiple years.
- Academic integration programs supplement or replace standard curriculum with one that includes strategies to promote social-emotional skills embedded within it. These programs use teaching practices as their core to help teachers create a classroom climate that supports SEL.
- Teaching practices programs use strategies designed to foster student social-emotional learning through positive classroom or school climate, positive student-teacher relationships, and positive peer interactions. Unlike freestanding lessons, teaching practices do not require extra time because they are simply integrated into teachers' everyday practice, but they often require more professional development time compared to the average training for skill-focused programs.
- Organizational reform programs rely primarily on system level strategies to promote SEL. These programs require substantial time and commitment to implement.

### **Research Question**

The increased discussion around the importance of SEL in the classroom lead the researcher to develop the following question, what impact does direct instruction in Social Emotional Learning skills have on student achievement in their 6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom?

**Conclusion**

The impact of SEL on student achievement has been well studied and documented in younger students. Research and studies show that it can have a great impact on middle school and high school aged students as well. The researcher's hope was that through the use of the evidence-based Suite 360 platform of SEL lessons that they would be able to observe an increase in academic success and academic confidence as well as reduction in off-task behaviors in my 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. This year provided an interesting challenge to the students as they were dealing with the uncertainty of COVID-19 and the impact it is had on their school year. At the beginning of the school year seventy-five percent of the students attended class in person with the others connecting remotely from home. However, as the COVID-19 cases rose in the county, the district had to switch to a full distance learning model at the start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> academic quarter. The researcher anticipated that this full distance model would have a negative impact on the students as they would no longer be able to interact with their peers on the same basis each day. Because of this change, being able to understand and process their emotions in a positive and productive fashion was more important than ever.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

#### Introduction

This study was looking into the impact of direct instruction in social emotional learning skills (SEL) on student achievement and student behavior in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom. The middle school the researcher teaches at had recently adopted a new SEL curriculum, Suite360. They wanted to assess what impact this curriculum had on the students in the classroom. The nature of the study had to evolve and change over time to better suit the unique situation of teaching in a variety of models during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the group of participating students, 20 of the 27 began the year attending school in person every day, while seven students would join class via ZOOM or Google Meets. As the COVID-19 cases rose in our school community, many students had to switch between in person or digital learning due to safety measures. We were able to use this model for all of the first academic quarter, but at that point the district had to make the switch to full distance learning for all of our students due to the rapid increase of COVID-19 cases. This full distance learning model continued until the end of the second quarter, at which point students returned to full time in person learning. These changes in the learning model meant that I also had to adjust what I was going to track with the students.

#### Research Question

What impact does direct instruction in Social Emotional Learning skills have on student achievement in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom?

**Research Design**

According to Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun (2019), a single-subject A-B design was deemed to work best for the action research. This design allowed the researcher to create a baseline of student academic achievement, measured by percentage of assignments turned in on time per week as well as success rate. After the creation of this baseline academic achievement data, the implementation of the SUITE360 SEL curriculum took place. The researcher then continued to monitor student academic achievement over the course of a three week period. After this period concluded, the student data was compiled to see there had been any growth or reduction in student academic achievement over this time.

**Setting**

The setting of the study will take place in the city of Cloquet. The population is approximately 12,000 residents. The residents of the community are employed in a variety of industries. The main employers are the two factories in town, the hospital, and the school district. In addition to these local employers, many residents make the twenty-mile commute to the city of Duluth as well. There are just over 800 students that attend Cloquet Middle School. In this student population, 73% of the students are Caucasian, 14% are two or more races, 11% are Native American, 1% are Hispanic, 1% are African American, and <1% are Asian. In this student population 41% of these students qualify for either free or reduced lunch, while 15% of the students qualify for special education services. The students are currently learning in a full distance learning model but the possibility for them to transition into a hybrid model in the spring is possible.

**Participants**

There are 16 6<sup>th</sup> grade participants in the study. All of the students range between 11 and 12 years old. There are 6 female and 10 male students. Six of the students identify as at least part Native American. Due to scheduling issues, the researcher only had general education students in his classroom at the time of the study. The students with individualized education plans were out of the classroom receiving specialized services during the implantation of the Suite360 SEL Curriculum. These students accessed the curriculum at different times during the week as part of a study skills class.

**Sampling**

A purposive sampling of students that took part in the researcher's Social Studies class was done. This method of sampling was chosen due to the nature of the school year and the researchers limited contact with students in a more traditional setting. Homework completion rate will be used to assess student progress.

**Instrumentation**

During the study I used three instruments for data collection. The first two tools were simply daily check-ins that the students took at the beginning and end of each academic day. These check-ins were very basic Qualtrics forms (see Appendix B and Appendix B) that asked the students about their mood at the start of the day, if the students had anything that needed to share with me about school or life and allowed them to ask me any questions, they might have about homework assignments. The third instrument used to gather data was the Homework Completion and Success chart that I created to track student achievement before, during, and after that implementation of the Suite360 SEL Curriculum. This tool allowed me to track the completion rate of the assigned work for the students per week as well as the average score that

the students received on those assignments. These tools were valid because they allowed me to track student mood and if there was any relationship between student mood and academic achievement.

### **Data Collection**

Student information related to their general attitude towards school was collected on a daily basis through the use of the Morning Check-In Survey during morning homeroom and the End of Day Check-In Survey at the end of the students' study hall period. The Morning Check-In Survey asked how the students were feeling to begin their day and if there was anything that they felt they needed to tell the researcher. The End of Day Check-In Survey asked how the students were feeling at the end of the day, how much of their work for the day they felt they completed and again if there was anything they needed to tell the researcher. Homework completion data was also collected. This data was completed at midterm of the quarter and again at the end of the quarter. These times coincided with the beginning and the end of the action research. This homework completion data tracked the percentage of assignments successfully completed and submitted on time. This data was then used to create graphs to analyze the data and look for trends in academic achievement for each student and the class as whole.

### **Data Analysis**

After data for the baseline was collected, I created an average homework completion rate for the individual students as well as for the whole class. I then continued this process for each week of the observation period to assess impact of the Suite360 SEL curriculum. Once the study was completed, I compiled the data to look for any trends that I noticed in the students over the course of the study.

**Research Question and System Alignment**

<i>Research Paradigm</i>	<i>Research Design</i>	<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<i>Instruments</i>	<i>Source and Sample Size</i>	<i>Data Analysis</i>
Qualitative	Action Research	What impact does direct instruction in Social Emotional Learning (SEL) skills have on student achievement and student behavior in the 6 <sup>th</sup> grade classroom?	DV: Social Emotional Learning  IV: Social Emotional Learning lessons	DV: Daily check-ins at the start and end of the school day.	6 <sup>th</sup> grade students  Sample: 16 6 <sup>th</sup> grade students (6 female and 10 male) in their Social Studies class.	Review of student responses to assess SEL understanding and growth.

**Procedures**

The study took place over course of three weeks during the third quarter of the school year. During this time period, the students used the Suite360 SEL curriculum twice a week during their study hall period. This class period is from 1:55 to 2:25 each day. The students were assigned a SEL lesson to work on and then discuss as a whole group. This SEL lessons ranged from self-organizational skills to anti-cyberbullying lessons.

During this time period students also were given daily Beginning of Day check-in and End of Day Check-in surveys to help track how students were self-identifying their own moods and feelings about school or life in general.

**Ethical Considerations**

An informed letter of consent was sent home to the families of each of the student in my homeroom class. Due to the age the students participating, it was important that their families were made aware of significance and importance of the study being conducted. In addition to the letter of consent, it was imperative that the students know that their information would be kept confidential and anonymous. The possibility of harming any of the students was present in form of disappointment related to their academic achievement. The daily check-ins allowed the students raise any questions or concerns that arose during the course of the study.

**Conclusions**

This chapter's objective was for the reader to have a better understanding of scope and goal of the study. This chapter described the demographics and setting of where the study took place. In addition, the instruments and tools being used for data collection and how they would be used to analyze the data were described. The next chapter will discuss the findings of this study.



## Chapter 4

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### Purpose

The purpose of the action research was to determine the impact of a district selected social and emotional learning curriculum on academic achievement in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom. When students are better able to understand and control their own emotions and feelings, they are better able to focus and succeed in the classroom setting. In researching the impact of the SUITE360 curriculum, the researcher will be better able to select and deliver social and emotional learning lessons to the sixth-grade students in my district.

#### Description of Data

During the course of the study the students completed the Morning Check-In Survey (see Appendix C) at the beginning of the school day, and the End of Day Check-In Survey (see Appendix D) at the end of the school day. These informal surveys focused on how the students were feeling at the start and end of the school day, as well as if there was any information that they were willing to share that might be impacting their day. For instance, some students shared concerns about loved ones at home or events to which they were looking forward. In addition to the daily check-ins, the students took 50 minutes each week, broken into two 25-minute blocks, to work in the digital SUITE360 Social and Emotional Learning curriculum. Upon completion of each lesson, the researcher and the students discussed and reflected on the topic that had been assigned each day. Academic achievement data were tracked by comparing the homework completion rate of the students at the midterm and end of quarter 3. Prior to the midterm the students had no exposure to the SUITE360 SEL curriculum.

## Results

### Question 1: What impact does direct instruction in Social Emotional Learning skills have on student achievement in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade Reading classroom?

Table 1 shows the homework completion rate of the students before and during the introduction of the SUITE360 SEL curriculum, as well as the total homework completion rate for the class during the quarter.

**Table 1**

*Whole Class Homework Completion Rate*

Time Period	Homework Completion Percentage
Start of Quarter to Midterm	94.44
Midterm to End of Quarter	90.10
Start to End of Quarter	88.81

Table 2 shows the number of students with a change in their amount of missing during the study as compared to their amount of missing work prior to the study.

**Table 2**

*Change in Percentage of Missing Assignments – Midterm to End of Quarter*

Change in missing assignments	Number of Students
No missing assignments	12
Decrease in missing assignments	1
Increase in missing assignments	3

Table 3 shows the change in student grades over the course of the study. In order to better organize the results, I considered a change of plus or minus 4% to be a measurable amount of change as increasing or decreasing a grade by 4% will result in a different letter grade on our district grading scale.

**Table 3**

*Change in Student Grade – Midterm to End of Quarter*

Change in student grade	Number of Students
Significant increase in student grade	3
No significant change in student grade	9
Significant decrease in student grade	4

### **Conclusion/Implications**

The results of the study were interesting to me for a couple of reasons. Out of 16 students participating in the study, three of the students, or 18.75%, saw and an increase of a full letter grade or more in Reading after the introduction of the SUITE360 curriculum. In addition to those three students, two other students maintained their grades of 100% during the same time period. On the other end of the spectrum, four of the students or 25%, saw a decrease of a full letter grade or more in Reading. I would be hesitant to attribute any academic growth to the SUITE360 curriculum due to the verbal feedback I received from the students as they were working on it. When compared to similar time periods in Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 of the school year results during the study were similar to Quarter 1 and better than Quarter 2. This is can likely be attributed to the students having to learn in a full-distance model during Quarter 2 of this year.

It became apparent very early on in the study that I did not have the buy-in from the students in regard to the SUITE360 curriculum in the classroom. After the first day using the curriculum, the students were not excited to use it during the subsequent class periods we had set aside. I heard complaints or had to redirect students frequently when it was time to work. Students asked to be done or would have an increase in off task behaviors during the set aside time. When I questioned the students about what they specifically didn't like about the SUITE360 curriculum, they responded that they lessons were too long and that they thought the videos weren't engaging.

One of the other issues that I do not think the study adequately accounted for was the ever-changing classroom situation due to COVID-19. Due to various circumstances, at certain times throughout the study, various students were at home, distance learning due to COVID-19 protocol. Some of these students were only distance learning for a day, while others were distance learning for a full week. When the students were distance learning, they did not take part in the SUITE 360 lessons.

COVID-19 also had a great impact on the students that did not take part in the study due to being full-time distance learners. At the start of the school year, it was decided at a building level that distance learners would not have to be online during the study hall time that the other students were working on the SUITE360 curriculum. In my view, these were some of the students that could have benefitted the most from the SUITE360 curriculum as these students have had some of the lowest homework completion rates throughout the school year.

If I were to repeat the study, I would have liked to get more specific feedback on individual lessons from the students. Perhaps if given more input into what they would be

learning about using of the SUITE360 curriculum, they would have been more engaged and involved with the process.

## CHAPTER 5

### **Action Plan**

As a result of this study, my plan is to continue to implement the SUTIE360 curriculum twice a week in my classroom. Next year, my goal will be to implement the SUITE360 right from the start of the school year and to work hard to build student trust and enjoyment of the curriculum. The content was sound and applicable, but early on in the implementation process I noticed very quickly that not all students enjoyed the content. In the future I will also seek out to assign more relevant and focused content to better address the specific needs of my students. Hopefully, this more tailored approach to content delivery will help increase student buy-in.

In addition to this more tailored approach to the use of the curriculum, I will advocate for the distance learners in our district to be participating in the use of the curriculum as well. More than ever, the future of the next school year is in question as to what it will look like. While it appears we are headed back towards a more typical school year and school setting, as we have learned in the last year, things can change very quickly and unexpectedly. All of our students have been through a wide range of emotions over the last year and being better equipped to handle that wide range of emotions will benefit them greatly.

### **Plan for Sharing**

My plan for sharing begins with sharing the results of my study with my fellow 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers. They have all been aware that I was more closely tracking the impact of the curriculum on my students and have wondered what kind of results I was seeing in the data I have collected. After sharing my data and findings with my colleagues, I hope to facilitate a discussion about how we can better meet and server the needs of our students in the realm of social and emotional learning.

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**APPENDIX****Appendix A****IRB Approval Letter****Institutional Review Board**

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DATE: February 2, 2021

TO: Ximena Suarez-Sousa, Principal Investigator  
Erik Ecklund, Co-Investigator

FROM: Lisa Karch, Chair  
Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB *Lisa J. Karch*

**ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS**

PROJECT TITLE: [1709823-1] The Impact of Direct Instruction of Social and Emotional Learning Skills on Academic Achievement in the 6th Grade Classroom

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

DECISION DATE: January 25, 2021

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations under 45 CFR 46.104.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact the [Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB](#). Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

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This letter has been issued in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Minnesota State University Moorhead's records.

Appendix B



Independent School District No. 94  
Cloquet, Minnesota 55720

**Central Administration**  
302 14th Street • 218-879-721 • FAX-879-5721  
**Cloquet Senior High School**  
1200 16th Street • 218-879-3333 • FAX-879-8484  
**Cloquet Middle School**  
2001 Washington Avenue • 218-879-3328 • FAX-879-4175  
**Churchill Elementary School**  
615 Granite Street • 218-879-3308 • FAX-879-7004  
**Washington Elementary School**  
801 12th Street • 218-879-3360 • FAX-879-3360  
**Community Education**  
602 Arthur Street • 218-879-1261 • FAX-879-3013  
**Cloquet Area Alternative Education Programs**  
302 14th Street • 218-879-0115 • FAX-879-8844  
[www.isd94.org](http://www.isd94.org)

January 7, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to grant Erik Ecklund permission to conduct an action research study at the Cloquet Middle School during the 2020-2021 academic year.

I understand that this study poses no risk to those involved or to the Cloquet School District. I also understand that all information will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this study.

Tom Brenner

Principal, Cloquet Middle School

## Appendix C

### Morning Check-In Survey

4/10/2021

Qualtrics Survey Software

#### Default Question Block

### Morning Check-In Survey

First and Last name

Enter a date:

April 2021						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8

How are you feeling today?

4/10/2021

Qualtrics Survey Software



I am ready to work.



I am happy!



I am sleepy.



I am upset



I am silly.

4/10/2021

Qualtrics Survey Software



I am sick.



I am sad.

Do you have anything to tell me? This can be about school or life.

## Appendix D

### End of Day Check-In Survey

4/10/2021

Qualtrics Survey Software

#### Default Question Block

### End of Day Check-In Survey

First and Last name

Enter a date:

April 2021						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8

How are you feeling today?

4/10/2021

Qualtrics Survey Software



I am ready to work.



I am happy!



I am sleepy.



I am upset



I am silly.

4/10/2021

Qualtrics Survey Software



I am sick.



I am sad.

How did you do today?

- I finished all my assignments.
- I finished most of my assignments.
- I didn't finish my assignments.

Do you have anything to tell me? This can be about school or life.