EMOTIONAL LITERACY, LEARNING, AND THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

by

Megan Fry

An Abstract
of a research paper submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Library Science and Information Services
in the Department of Educational Leadership and Human Development
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Many students in the education system lag behind in social and emotional development. Librarians, as teachers, can model behavior and implement programs in the library to cultivate and create students’ emotional literacy, a main aspect of social and emotional development. Many of the programs designed for this purpose rely on literature, storytelling, and reading to promote academic growth and students’ achievement through the development of emotional literacy. Research shows that students who have developed emotional literacy perform better inside and outside the classroom. Librarians can play a key role in aiding students’ emotional growth and development.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

A complete education includes social and emotional development in addition to academic development. One aspect of social and emotional development is emotional literacy. Emotional literacy is the ability to understand and relate to the feelings of others and to process and manage internal feelings as well (Bierman 1802). Librarians model behavior and implement programs in the library to develop emotional literacy in students. This paper explains the benefits of emotionally literate students and programs that cultivate emotional literacy in the classroom.

Emotional literacy is a skill taught to students at home, in the classroom, and in the school library. Students learn emotional literacy through a process called social and emotional learning (SEL). SEL has recently become recognized by many educators as fundamental in education. Social and emotional development and the development of emotional literacy contribute to a student’s ability to build relationships with peers and authority figures. Well-developed emotional literacy is correlated with the creation of positive relationships and has been shown to significantly decrease negative behaviors (Kabaskal and Totan 59).

Many programs have been developed to increase students’ emotional literacy. Research in this review demonstrates the benefits of using these programs in the school library. Programs like shared reading, dialogical reading, using historical fiction and picture books help students gain emotional literacy while using literature in the library. These programs have been shown to be effective in one-on-one and small group settings. Since the library is full of literature, it makes sense for librarians to use literature-based programs in the school library.
Because well-developed emotional literacy creates more adaptive and capable students (Goleman 8), librarians may use other non-literature related programs to cultivate emotional literacy within students. Programs traditionally used to cultivate behavioral and social development are useful in the creation of emotional literacy. Circle time, delegation of authority, role-playing, use of persona dolls, peer mentoring, and nurture groups are interactive programs that can be implemented in the library. These programs, used in small or large groups, rely heavily on social interaction in the library. Because social growth is strongly related to academic learning (Daunic 43), many librarians are utilizing these programs in the library to help students achieve academic and emotional growth.

**Statement of the Problem**

Within and outside of the school social and emotional education is overlooked. Even when a teacher realizes the impact of social and emotional learning, it is difficult to find time in the academic schedule to devote to the development of emotional literacy. The lack of emotional literacy development in students causes emotional disturbance. Goleman states, “Students receiving lessons in social and emotional skills improved on every measure of positive behavior, such as classroom discipline, attendance, and liking school- and were less likely to engage in anti-social behavior, from bullying and fights to substance abuse” (8). Proper development of emotional literacy lessens, and it some cases eliminates, negative behavior, but many teachers do not have the ability to dedicate classroom time to cultivate emotional literacy; therefore, there is a need for more opportunities for students to gain emotional literacy. Librarians can use their time and resources to assist teachers in student development of emotional literacy.
Lack of time to spend on social and emotional learning is not the only problem that makes the cultivation of emotional literacy difficult in the school. Many educators are not aware of programs that develop emotional literacy. Educators may not have the research experience necessary to find social and emotional learning programs. Librarians are in a position to research and implement programs to create well-developed emotional literacy in the library. They are also capable of solving this problem by spreading awareness of programs to others in the educational field.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to further understand the impact emotional literacy has on students and how emotional literacy is cultivated by the librarian in the library. Literature was reviewed regarding social and emotional learning, emotional literacy, and programs designed to develop student’s emotional literacy. The results demonstrate that emotional literacy is crucial in the development of students as they achieve academic and social balance. The research also shows that many on the programs discussed in the paper are successful in creating emotional literacy and may be implemented in the library with positive results.

**Questions Guiding the Study**

This research paper was designed to answer these research questions about how emotional literacy affects students’ behavioral and academic growth through a series of questions:

1. What is emotional literacy?
2. How does emotional literacy affect students’ academic success and can emotional literacy be achieved in an educational setting?
3. What programs can be implemented, by the librarian, in the library to cultivate emotional literacy?

**Limitations of the Study**

The limitations of the study include the limited time frame available to conduct research. There was also a limit of scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles related to programs used to develop emotional literacy in the school library. The search terms were expanded to include programs, which, although not specifically designed to create emotional literacy, did cultivate emotional literacy as well as other academic growth.

**Definition of Terms**

Direct affective response—An action that occurs when someone laughs at a funny image, or is upset by a disturbing image. The action occurs without premeditation, an emotional response.

Emotional intelligence—Can be used interchangeably with emotional literacy, but has the connotation that emotional literacy skills have been achieved.

Emotional literacy—The ability to understand and relate to one’s own feelings and the feelings of others.

Social and emotional learning—A learned behavior or skill, which can be taught to students. It is growth in emotional literacy, which allows individuals to communicate and interact with others in varying environments.
Research Design of the Study

The study was based on the research conducted by experts in the field of social and emotional development and education. The study describes and explains the experts’ research and how it can be implemented in the school library. No original research was conducted for this study; instead published literature and research were reviewed.

Articles were retrieved using Academic Search Complete and academic websites found using Google. Search terms included “emotional literacy,” “development of emotional literacy,” “librarian+emotional literacy,” “social and emotional development,” and “education and emotional development.”

Conclusion

The study is three chapters related to the impact of emotional literacy in students and programs that can encourage emotional literacy in the library. The second chapter is a research review. Chapter three answers the research questions provided in chapter one, as well as a discussion about the conclusion of the research and recommendations for the future.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A Brief Introduction to Emotional Literacy

One element of social development is the ability to understand and relate to the feelings of others. Librarians use literature and other library programs to help students develop empathy and understanding for others. The ability to relate to other’s feelings is referred to as emotional literacy (Bierman, Karen L. 1802). The research reviewed in this paper describes emotional literacy. It also shows how librarians implement and incorporate literature to promote emotional literacy. The final section presents other library programs that may be implemented into the library to cultivate emotional literacy in students.

Emotional literacy is a term used to describe the ability to express feeling and relate to, or understand, the feelings of others. Emotional literacy has two aspects. One aspect of emotional literacy involves self-awareness and recognition of feelings, and the capability to manage those feelings. This includes calming oneself when angered and reassuring oneself when unsure. A second aspect of emotional literacy is feeling and demonstrating empathy, or sensitivity, to other people’s feelings. This includes the ability to change one’s behavior to accommodate those feelings. Research has shown that, emotionally literate people are more able to use self-discipline to harness their emotions in order to achieve personal goals (Douglas Silas Silicitors). Complete emotional literacy requires recognition of feelings of one’s self and others as well as having skills to deal with those feelings in a productive manner.
Emotional literacy can be used interchangeably with the term emotional intelligence, although emotional intelligence has the connotation that skills have been achieved, where emotional literacy has a connotation of a continued process of gaining or learning emotional skills. Emotional intelligence is defined by Volberding, Baghurst, and Brown as, “The ability to recognize and moderate one’s own and others’ emotions, while simultaneously processing the information in order to make an informed decision about the present situation (38). Emotional intelligence and emotional literacy both require a person to make decisions, or act on (in some situations not act upon) the information received. They are an integral part of social and emotional learning and development. For clarity and continuity in this paper, which deals with the social and emotional learning, the term emotional literacy will be used.

**Emotional Literacy and Social and Emotional Learning**

Emotional literacy is a learned behavior or skill, which can be taught to students. The process of learning emotional literacy is called “social and emotional learning” or SEL. Professionals in the field of education place emphasis SEL because it aids in the development of self-awareness. Social and emotional development is crucial for students in building social relationships with peers and authority figures. Well-developed social and emotional behavior helps to create positive relationships and eliminate negative behaviors (Kabaskal and Totan 59).

Social and emotional learning is a process that requires instruction and often scaffolding to master. SEL can happen in a home or school environment. It requires the student to develop techniques to process their own feelings and the feelings of others and to act on those feelings in a productive and responsible way in order to function well in society.
SEL is based on scientific research into the functions of the human brain. Research has shown that emotions play an integral role in the thought process. Research conducted in the last two decades that demonstrates how the brain functions (Keating, Harper, and Glew). This research has shown that the emotion center of the brain is a primary part of the brain, meaning, it directly affects “who we are” and “how we behave.” The emotional center of the brain has a direct link to how we think, reason, and act. Human brains are “hard-wired” to function off of emotional responses. In other words, the brain gives emotions the upper hand.

Sense, sight, taste, touch, sound, and smell, all send impulses to the human brain, through the nerves. These signals must go through the brain’s emotion center before they reach the part of the brain that works rationally. Because information received from the senses is first processed in the emotional center of the brain, people with better developed emotional intelligence, or emotional literacy, have increased capacity for communication between two parts of the brain, the emotional center and the rational center (30). SEL is a factor in creating successful, well-functioning individuals because of the increased capacity of communication in the human brain.

Research shows that learning emotional literacy (or teaching SEL) creates more adaptive and capable students. Goleman describes research conducted at Loyola University that analyzed and evaluated over 233,000 students who received instruction in SEL. The results demonstrated that instruction benefited students in many ways. “Students receiving lessons in social and emotional skills improved on every measure of positive behavior, such as classroom discipline, attendance, and liking school — and were less likely to engage in anti-social behavior, from bullying and fights to substance abuse” (Goleman 8). SEL helps to create
students who succeed in school. Students who demonstrate positive emotional literacy are less likely to participate in harmful behavior.

Emotional literacy is also useful in eliminating emotional imbalance, or emotional outbursts. Mack writes about the importance of emotional literacy in limiting negative behaviors like those that might occur with physical bullying. Mack believes that by teaching emotional literacy in the classroom, through the use of literature, students can learn positive responses to negative emotions. Because reading and writing cannot be done without emotion, they are effective avenues for teaching emotional literacy (Mack 22).

**Shared Book Reading for Emotional Literacy**

Because emotional literacy is effective, many experts have created plans and procedures for developing emotional literacy inside and outside of the classroom. Techniques like shared book reading, reviewed in this section, are used successfully to help students develop socially and emotionally. These techniques enable librarians to work with students one-on-one and in small groups. These techniques include types of shared book reading, dialogic reading, and circle time to develop emotional literacy.

**Shared Book Reading**

With shared book reading, a student reads with a teacher (or other adult). This provides “guided learning opportunities” where the adult and child share what they are reading and talk about how characters react to different situations. They talk about a character’s feelings and discuss why the character feels that way. It provides an interactive way for children to experience reading. The reader (a teacher or other adult) models not only reading
skills and fluency, but also the inflection of character’s feelings and emotions in a way that students can understand.

Shared book reading has been used to boost young children’s language and literacy skills. Research shows that shared book reading is a useful tool in teaching emotional literacy (Baker). Baker demonstrates that shared reading at home provides scaffolding necessary to grow socially. The same studies also show a strong correlation between literacy skills and other academic areas. Shared reading provides a foundation for childhood literacy skills, which are tied to better cognitive and social emotional skills (184).

Shared reading is not limited to the home atmosphere. Teachers and librarians conduct shared reading programs. Many teachers use shared reading in the classroom for vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension. Librarians use shared reading with small groups or in a one-on-one setting. In shared reading, the librarian, or the teacher, first introduces the story or book to the students. Students then make predictions about what will happen in the story, or ask any questions they have about the story. The teacher, or school librarian, then reads the story to the child. The adult pauses at any point and ask questions about the story. These questions are used to measure students’ comprehension of events and their understanding of characters’ emotions and actions. After the story is completed, the teacher or librarian discusses the book with students. They ask questions about how characters felt in the story and if any of the students have ever had similar feelings (Trivette and Dunst 2). Shared reading is similar to dialogic reading (which will be discussed next) because it is an interactive reading experience; but in shared reading, the primary job of the student is to listen and the primary role of the teacher or librarian is to model.
Kesler discusses the research conducted by McKeown and Beck, which provides evidence that shared reading gives students a way to better understand literature through the discussion which elaborates on ideas and makes connections between words and meaning (273). School librarians use the process of shared reading not only to aid in comprehension and vocabulary development, but also to help students develop emotional literacy. Shared reading provides librarians with an opportunity to discuss emotions in a positive way. It is beneficial for all grade levels and for students at every reading level (Bailey 31).

**Dialogical Reading**

Similar to shared reading is dialogic reading. Dialogical reading, promotes emergent literacy skills, and social and emotional skills. Dialogic reading, introduced by Whitehurst in 1988, is a form of shared book reading that features strategic book-related questioning during the reading of the book. Dialogical reading involves multiple readings and discussions of the same text with the students in one-on-one settings, or in small groupings. In this process a student selects a book. Any book can be chosen as long as the student is able to read the book with little assistance. Typically, the teacher reads the book to the student the first time; but there are variations to this practice, where the student reads the book without first being read to by the teacher. In this practice the student is the “story teller.” Becoming the story teller allows students to become more familiar with aspects of the story. The position of story teller provides students with an opportunity to explain and express charters’ feelings and emotions.
In dialogical reading, the teacher or librarian is a participant, asking questions that lead students to think carefully about characters, emotions, and motives. These prompts encourage students to talk about their own inner life and how they perceive the inner life of others. There are typically five different types of prompts an adult uses with dialogical reading. Four are “open-ended prompts, recall prompts, completion prompts, and wh- prompts” (Whitehurst 1). Wh- prompts ask students to recall basic information from stories including, what, when, where, why. These questions are used primarily for comprehension. The fifth type, distance prompts, are more often used for emotional literacy because they ask children to relate parts of a book (emotions, events, words) to experiences outside of the book.

Dialogical reading improves social development through repeated exposure to the emotional life of characters and also through the frequent discussions about emotions and reactions. Over a decade of research from experts like Whitehurst demonstrate that, not only does dialogical reading improve social and emotional development, it also has a positive effect on oral language development and was crucial in the creation of early literacy in young children (Doyle and Bramwell 557). Dialogical reading produces, in young children, desired emotional gains.

Librarians can implement dialogical reading in the library using many of the same techniques used in shared reading. Because dialogical reading is best done in small groups, it is helpful to have a teacher, aide, or volunteer, in the library assist while using dialogical reading. This way smaller reading groups and one-on-one interactions are possible, so each child has the opportunity to be a story teller. Flynn suggests that dialogical reading is one of the most
powerful tools in education because it helps students develop the expressive language skills necessary for emotional literacy (11).

**Circle Time**

Another popular procedure for developing emotional literacy in students was developed by Moseley. He created the idea of “circle time” as a response to the unmet social needs of young students. In circle time students sit in a circle and discuss morale issues, work through conflicts, and solve problems (Coppock 408). It is a safe place where students are encouraged to voice concerns and work together to find solutions. Circle time has a set of rules that are established within the classroom, developed to increase participation and create a safe place for students to talk. Circle time gives students the time and space to talk about their problems and listen to the problems and opinions of others. Students learn to articulate their emotions and empathize with the feelings of others (Mental Health Foundation 1998). Learning to self-regulate emotions, through exercises like circle time, helps students gain self-confidence, which benefits them in every educational aspect (Coppock 412).

School librarians can use circle time as well. Circle time works well in elementary and middle school libraries. Collaboration between teachers and the librarians is a key aspect of making circle time work. One way to stimulate social and emotional growth is to use circle time to discuss morale issues or issues involved in being a student citizen. Librarians work with content teachers in areas like history and social studies to discuss social and moral issues related to class readings. For example, students discuss the issues like human rights or equal rights in circle time. Then they find literature in the library that supports their opinion in the circle.
Circle time typically follows a set of rules, created by students or by the teacher. Enforcing the circle time rules, students will learn to respect the emotions and thoughts of others, as well as learning how to acquire materials in the library to support their own opinions. For further emotional literacy growth, students are assigned to research opposing views and explain the opposite viewpoint in the circle. Canney and Byrne, state that circle time addresses three major educational elements: interaction skills, like starting conversations with others and letting others speak; affective skills, such as recognizing one’s own feelings as well as others’ feelings including trust, and understanding of appropriate disclosure; and cognitive skills, skills that are necessary for problem solving and perceiving situations from alternate perspectives (21). Affective skills, directly relate to a student’s social and emotional development. Interaction skills and cognitive skills, developed with circle time, help students achieve in other classroom settings. Librarians use circle time to encourage emotional literacy in the library.

**More Ways to Develop Emotional Literacy in the School**

Librarians encourage emotional literacy in multiple ways. Emotional literacy aids students in social growth and school performance. Librarians help students develop these skills through several types of library programs. These programs include delegating responsibility and role playing, and through the use of persona dolls, peer mentoring programs, nurture groups, picture books, and historical fiction.
Developing Emotional Literacy by Delegating Responsibility

One way to encourage emotional development in students is through creating a sense of belonging by delegating responsibility. Bhatia suggests that emotional intelligence is interdependent with the cognition process. Librarians create an environment in the library where students feel important. This includes giving students jobs in the library and opportunities to make decisions regarding these. Having a job gives students a sense of belonging to the school and the library. By providing students with opportunities to work in the library, librarians nurture a feeling of usefulness in students (Bunn 62). The student’s ability to make decisions improves his/her cognitive abilities and self-confidence. Jobs may include helping peers locate materials, checking in materials, helping to create book displays, or other chores around the library. Students performing these jobs benefit from working relationships with adults and students; they learn to interact positively and to solve problems (Saxena, Manoj and Aggarwal 46).

Developing Emotional Literacy by Role Playing

Role-playing is another way to develop students’ emotional intelligence. Research demonstrates that role-playing is a “constructive teaching method because it gives students an opportunity to identify the importance of emotional skills in everyday interactions” (Gliebe 254). Role-playing refers to acting out situations or behaviors and taking into account social expectations. In role-playing, students react to others in simulated, real-life situations without the risk, pressures, or consequences of real-life. There is also the opportunity to discuss and rework situations and experiences. Teaching strategy through role playing is a natural and important aspect of human development and it, “offers a unique way to resolve interpersonal
and social dilemmas” (Cherif 449). Role-playing is used to help students better understand themselves and others.

School librarians use role-playing to increase emotional literacy. In the library, students act out emotional or social dilemmas in novels or other literature. This begins as a drama; but in the role-playing, students have the ability to re-work characters actions, dialogues, or emotional responses to achieve desired results. Librarians collaborate with drama or literacy teachers to select appropriate scripts or written materials to be used in the library role-play activity. Students then re-write the material to see how different emotions, outbursts, and reactions change the outcome. Students then discuss these with their peers, teachers, and librarian, describing the changes they made in the script, novel, or dialogue and explaining why they made the changes. This also leads to discussions about relating to others and self-regulating emotions. Role-playing can be implemented in the library with positive effects to student’s’ emotional development.

Developing Emotional Literacy through the use of Persona Dolls

Other specialists have been interested in finding programs that help to develop emotional literacy in children. Barnfather and Amod studied the use of “persona dolls” in the development of emotional literacy in South African children. These children have faced horrific experiences that often delayed their social and emotional development. Persona dolls were used as an intervention tool to help the children develop emotional literacy. In the study, trained professionals selected or made dolls that looked similar to the child. Then the doll was given a history, or a background similar to that which the child has experienced. The trainer introduced the doll to a group or an individual child. Together, they discussed the doll’s
positive and negative reactions to situations and assigned to the dolls feelings and emotions. The child was able to identify with the doll and talk about emotions and experiences that have been too difficult to discuss previously. The student is able to identify with the doll and display empathy for the doll’s situation. The use of the doll helped children to express feelings of anxiety. The program helped children learn to manage their emotions through self-regulation and reduced the occurrence of stress, depression, and aggression in children.

The school librarian may use persona dolls in various ways. Students may make their own persona dolls. The librarian asks them to create a book about their doll’s experiences to read aloud to the librarian or to a small group of students. The librarian asks students to find biographical information about someone famous who might have shared a similar experience. The librarian may use the persona doll to create a lesson unit, and with the collaboration of content teachers, achieve standards in history, literacy, reading, and information literacy, while also developing students’ emotional literacy. The persona dolls are used as a therapeutic tool, educational tool, and to encourage “emotional development and management of emotional literacy” (Barnfather and Amod 602) in students.

**Developing Emotional Literacy through the Use of Picture Books**

Another procedure used to create emotional literacy in students is through the use of picture books in group readings. Blackmore and O’Shea found that humans are hard wired to respond to images. These responses are called “direct affective responses.” These responses happen when someone laughs at a funny image, or is upset by a disturbing image. Through the use of picture books children are able to experience the emotions of characters. This leads to a better understanding of the emotions of others. The understanding of another’s feelings is the
first step in children’s development of empathy, an important aspect of emotional literacy (Nikolajeva 255). The use of picture books provides readers with an emotional engagement to the text and is an effective way to develop emotional literacy in children.

School librarians help students select picture books or share picture books with teachers that provide opportunities to explore multiple aspects of human emotion. For older readers, graphic novels fill the role of a picture book in helping to understand and build empathy in middle and high school aged readers. There has been a push recently in education to use picture books and graphic novels in the classroom and the library to help engage readers and to reach reluctant readers.

Librarians and classroom teachers use picture books and graphic novels in areas like history and literature to reach students emotionally (Brenner 2). Pearson states, “When students have an emotional connection to history research becomes passionate, rather than just another teacher-driven report” (31). Picture books provide students with visual details that students use to “fill in the blanks” (Brenner 1) and depict historical characters as real people. Using picture books in the library helps students emotionally engage in the material they are studying, aids in comprehension, and also teaches student empathy, an important skill in the development of emotional literacy.

Developing Emotional Literacy through the Use of Historical Fiction

Historical fiction is also a tool for helping students make emotional connections to historical events. The genre can be used to supplement text book learning. Text books tend to broadly cover historic events. Historical fiction can bring to life characters and events in a way that not only entertains students, but also emotionally engages students in the life, events, and
decisions made by historical figures. Linquist states, “Social Studies texts are often devoted to coverage rather than depth. Too often, individuals—no matter how famous or important—are reduced to a few sentences. Children have difficulty converting these cryptic descriptions and snapshots into complex individuals who often had difficult choices to make” (3). With the use of historical fiction, and especially picture books related to historical fiction, students begin to relate to historical figures as people, rather than flat facts. Historical fiction offers readers an emotional engagement with history and an opportunity to develop emotional literacy that students can explore personally or through group discussions.

Developing Emotional Literacy Through Peer Mentoring

Peer monitoring programs are also effective in improving students’ mental health and reducing risk taking behaviors. In a seven year study, Weare found that schools that used programs which develop emotional literacy, like peer mentoring, saw a dramatic improvement in students’ ability to handle uncertainty and change (qtd. In O’Hara 278). Peer mentoring, is a formalized one-on-one relationship between two peers, where the goal is to encourage and support one and other. Karcher, recruited 8th and 12th grade students as mentors; they received eight hours of training. The peer mentors met with their peer two times a week for a six-month period. The peer mentors worked in paired and group activities where they talked about school, including emotional aspects. They offered homework help and a positive ways to cope with school related stress and relationships.
The peer mentoring program works because students are willing to open up with their peers in a way they are not able to with adults (Topping 1996). Peer mentoring creates meaningful relationships between students that can have a positive impact on their social development and emotional literacy. The peer mentoring relationship has the ability to build connections that may be difficult for teachers, parents, and other (authority figures) to reach.

The school librarian can implement peer mentoring in the library. The librarian creates informal mentoring in the shape of peer reading, where an older student is paired with a younger student for reading exercises and discussion about the reading. Librarians also create a formal mentoring setting where students are trained to work as a mentor. This type of program fits well in a learning commons environment where mentors help their peers with homework, research, and inquiry assignments.

**Developing Emotional Literacy Through Nurture Groups**

The use of nurture groups has also been shown to help students develop social skills and emotional literacy. Researchers in the field of personal and social development, PSD, have shown that nurture group, or small groups of peers working together, are influential for individual emotional development (Camilleri 33). Students are grouped together, by age, and asked to solve a problem. The use of nurture groups requires students to work together, to communicate efficiently, and to take into account the feelings and thoughts of others, in order to create a solution. Nurture groups simulate real life activities. For example, students might be asked to come up with a solution to a problem that affects their school, such as, student littering. Through brainstorming, research, and communication, students solve a problem that matters to them and their peers. Issues, problems, and investigations also include bigger
problems like political, moral, or religious dilemmas. Students learn to work socially in a positive atmosphere. Camilleri writes about PSD and nurture groups: “Given the student-centered technique and direct first-hand experience...students are empowered to gain control over their learning, to take responsibility over their life and to understand themselves” (27). Nurture groups are an effective way to stimulate social and emotional development.

School librarians use nurture groups to create emotional literacy while addressing other library standards. Nurture groups research answers to social problems. These can be problems that students face in the school, like how to make students aware of new recycling procedures on the campus, or world-wide problems such as poverty or inequality in education. Librarians introduce elements of the inquiry process and students work together to gather information and develop plans to solve problems. In this environment students learn to communicate feelings and ideas and to respect the feelings and ideas of others. Research has shown that classroom nurture groups have a beneficial effect on students’ social, emotional, and behavioral functions (Shaver and McClatchey 99). Nurture groups are an effective tool in the school library to develop emotional literacy.

Conclusion

Research has shown that social and emotional growth is strongly related to academic learning (Daunic 43). Because of recent pushes for academic achievement within and outside of the school, social and emotional education may be overlooked (44). Even when teachers realize the impact of social and behavioral learning, it is hard to find classroom time to spend on developing skills like emotional literacy. However, social and emotional development is a crucial aspect of a student’s personal growth. The research presented here demonstrates that
it is possible to address emotional literacy in the educational environment. Many schools have acknowledged the necessity of generating lessons in social and emotional development to reduce the number of behavioral problems and to help students work well with others, demonstrate empathy and understanding towards their peers, communicate their thoughts and emotions with others, and self-regulate. Research presented in this paper shows the positive, academic and social impact of emotional literacy in an educational setting.

Every educator’s goal is to help develop successful students. Librarians have an integral role in helping to cultivate emotional literacy in schools. Exercises and activities in the library, like shared book reading, dialogical reading, circle time; and the use of picture books, historical fiction, nurture groups, persona dolls, peer mentoring, and role play develop emotional literacy. Librarians play an active role in providing students with an education that addresses social and emotional needs, as well as their academic needs.
CHAPTER 3
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Social and emotional development is an aspect of students’ academic growth. One element of social and emotional development is emotional literacy. Emotional literacy refers to students’ ability to understand their own emotions and the emotions of others and respond to those emotions in a positive way. Librarians use literature and design library programs to cultivate emotional literacy in students. This section presents answers to three questions: why social and emotional development impacts learning; what emotional literacy is, and what programs can be used in the library to develop emotional literacy.

Emotional Literacy and Student Success

Social and emotional learning is used in the library and classroom because emotions are a primary function of the brain and directly affect students’ thinking and ability to learn. Social and emotional learning (SEL) is based on scientific research into the functions of the human brain. Research has shown that emotions play an integral role in the thought process. Research conducted in the last two decades demonstrates how the brain functions and has shown that the emotion center of the brain is a primary part of the brain, meaning it directly affects “who we are” and “how we behave.” The emotional center of the brain has a direct link to how humans think, reason, and act. Human brains are “hard-wired” to function off of emotional responses. In other words, the brain gives emotions the upper hand. The senses of sight, taste, touch, sound, and smell- all send impulses to our brain, through the nerves. These signals must go through the brain’s emotion center before they reach the part of the brain that works rationally. Because information received from the senses is first processed in the emotional center of the brain, people with better developed emotional intelligence, or
emotional literacy, have increased capacity for communication between two parts of the brain, the emotional center and the rational center. SEL is a factor in creating successful, well-functioning individuals because of the increased communication capacity in the human brain.

SEL has a direct effect on student achievement. To succeed in school, students must be able to build working relationships with peers and people in positions of authority. Well-developed social and emotional behavior helps to create positive relationships and eliminate negative behaviors. Social and emotional learning is a process that requires instruction and often scaffolding, to master. It requires the student to develop techniques to process their own feelings and the feelings of others and to act on those feelings in a productive and responsible way in order to function well in the library or classroom. Well-developed social and emotional learning creates students who can build positive relationships based on effective communication and the understanding. Research has shown that, “Students receiving lessons in social and emotional skills improved on every measure of positive behavior, such as classroom discipline, attendance, and liking school — and were less likely to engage in anti-social behavior, from bullying and fights to substance abuse” (Goleman 8).

**Emotional Literacy in Education**

Social and emotional learning can be very effective in an educational setting. Emotional literacy is a learned behavior or skill that can be taught to students inside or outside of the classroom. Professionals in the field of education have recently acknowledged the importance of social and emotional learning. Social and emotional learning and the development of emotional literacy are processes that require instruction, and often scaffolding to master.
Educators, in this paper specifically librarians, provide the scaffolding necessary to acquire these skills.

**Definition of Emotional Literacy**

Emotional literacy is an element of social and emotional development. It is a term used to describe the ability to express feeling and relate to, or understand, the feelings of others. There are two aspects of emotional literacy. One aspect of emotional literacy involves self-awareness and recognition of feelings and the capability to manage those feelings. This includes calming oneself when angered and reassuring oneself when unsure. This aspect of emotional literacy helps students maintain and regulate their feelings. Emotional literacy is also useful in eliminating emotional imbalance and emotional outbursts. Emotional literacy might limit negative behaviors like those that occur with physical bullying. By teaching emotional literacy in the classroom students can learn positive responses to negative emotions.

A second aspect of emotional literacy is feeling and demonstrating empathy or sensitivity to other people’s feelings. This includes the ability to change one’s behavior to accommodate those feelings. Research has shown that emotionally literate people are more able to use self-discipline to harness their emotions in order to achieve personal goals (Douglas Silas Silicitors). Emotional literacy requires recognition of the feelings of oneself and others as well as having skills to deal with those feelings in a productive manner.

**Programs that Develop Emotional Literacy**

Librarians use multiple programs to cultivate emotional literacy in students. Some of those programs are based on the use of literature. Programs like shared book reading and dialogical reading involve the librarian reading in small groups or one-on-one, in guided learning.
situations, with students discussing literature in a way that helps them recognize the emotions in characters and relate those emotions in a person. Librarians also use other forms of literature, like picture books and historical fiction, to engage students more deeply in the literature. Through the use of historical fiction, and especially picture books related to historical fiction, students begin to relate to book features as people rather than flat facts. Historical fiction offers readers an emotional engagement with history. These are ways literature programs are used in the library to develop emotional literacy and help students grow socially and emotionally.

Other library-based programs foster emotional literacy as well. Librarians use programs like persona dolls, circle time, peer mentoring, role-playing, and nurture groups to create an environment where students discuss, discover, and deal with emotions and emotional interactions in a positive way. In these environments students learn to communicate feelings and ideas and respect the feelings and ideas of others. Research has shown that classroom nurture groups, and other library programs, have a beneficial effects on students’ social, emotional, and behavioral functions.

Research demonstrates that the librarian plays a role in the social and emotional development of students by cultivating emotional literacy in the library. Student’s emotional literacy directly affects their ability to make and maintain relationships and succeed in the school environment. Programs discussed in this paper successfully develop emotional literacy in the library.
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