Introduction

A Teacher Laments

I have just about had it up to here! One more argument or fit of tears and I think I will scream. I know that I am supposed to be a super teacher with an endless supply of patience and energy, a technique for every situation, and a solution for every problem, but sometimes. . . . I cannot believe that he just crumpled up his assignment again because it was not exactly the way he wanted it to be. How can I get through all my lesson plans? Oh terrific. There she goes, grabbing his pencil yet one more time. I can see the headlines now: "Youth who stole pencils in her formative years arrested for grand theft!"

I want these children to grow to be happy, successful adults. I do everything I can. I talk with them and reason with them, but sometimes it is as if I were talking to the air. The same things keep happening over and over again. With youngsters being the way they are, it's difficult enough to get all the subjects covered that must be taught. Now you want me to teach something else? How can I find the time? Why should I bother?

WHY TEACH EMOTIONAL, SOCIAL, AND LIFE SKILLS? ■

Teachers in the twenty-first century have the formidable job of educating a nation of youth at risk. A significant number of young people have a strong potential for dropping out of school or becoming involved with youth violence, teen pregnancy, and substance abuse (Weissberg, Wahlberg, O'Brian, & Kuster, 2003). Studies indicate that a relatively few youths possess the kinds of skills, values, and supports that would protect them against these kinds of risks and promote their engagement in positive behaviors (Benson, Scales, Leffert, & Rehlkepartain, 1997).

Classrooms are filled with youngsters displaying a wide range of concerns and behavioral problems that teachers have little time and few techniques to address. Students may suffer from poor self-awareness, low concentration, lack of motivation, little self-discipline, low self-esteem, poor communication, an inability to express feelings effectively, difficulty in resolving conflicts, and a significant amount of emotional pain.

Anxious, unhappy, angry youngsters do not make ideal students. As they try to focus their attention on getting their needs met and feeling better, little concentration is left for learning. Searching for—and finding—inappropriate outlets for their emotions, they misbehave, often creating conflicts between students. Teachers spend too much valuable class time dealing with issues between students (Frey, Nolen, Estrom, & Hirschstein, 2005). Encouraging a classroom full of such students to learn effectively can be very time consuming and frustrating.

The question we need to ask is this: If children are struggling academically because other issues are occupying their minds, will giving them more academics help? Or do we want to educate them to deal effectively with their feelings, needs, and relationships so that they can then absorb the academics? (Elias, 1997).

It might be helpful to enlarge our definition of the *intelligence* we want our students to acquire so that it includes *emotional intelligence* (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2000). Howard Gardner (1983), in his definitive work, *Frames of Mind,* suggests that educators consider promoting other intelligences, including different kinds of emotional intelligence. He describes *intrapersonal intelligence* and *interpersonal intelligence* as two of the multiple intelligences people possess and describes the need to develop these intelligences, thus developing each individual to the fullest.

Research indicates that supporting emotional and social development is the missing piece in the education of our youth. Researchers from various fields of inquiry have come to similar conclusions—the importance of educating not just the mind, but the whole person. There is mounting evidence to support a strong link between social-emotional learning and academic performance; research also suggests an increased likelihood that youths who build social-emotional competencies will develop the values and attitudes that lead to safer, less risky life choices (Elias et al., 1997).

In his groundbreaking research on emotional intelligence, Daniel Goleman (1995) asserted the great need for developing mastery over the emotional realm so that people can get their needs met in healthy ways. He spoke of the need to develop social and emotional competencies, indicating that these can be learned and that the school environment is an ideal context in which to do so. This seems logical, as schools have access to youths, a history of effective presentation of knowledge and skills, and highly competent professionals to transmit the information.

More and more educators seem to be agreeing with Goleman, supporting an educational agenda that includes the promotion of students' social-emotional competence, character, and health. This is evidenced by a growing number of school-based prevention and youth development programs, focusing on producing students who are skilled socially, who know how to manage emotions, to get their needs met effectively, and to make choices based on their deepest held values (Elias et al., 1997).

The values clarification movement of the 1970s focused on helping individuals determine whether or not their choices were in line with their values, allowing the individual to determine what the values were (Raths, Harmin, & Simon, 1978). The current character education movement predetermines values to teach (Lickona, 2004). I propose that when people have the knowledge and skills to make informed, positive, independent choices regarding their social, emotional, and mental well-being,

they will be more likely to make choices in line with their values, which are universal.

If people can deal effectively with their emotions and know how to meet their needs effectively, they are more likely to embody values such as responsibility; if they know how to feel good about themselves, they are more likely to embody values such as perseverance; if they know how to get along effectively with others, they are more likely to embody values such as kindness and empathy.

As teachers help to promote social and emotional learning, they will be able to lessen their students' frustrations, helping them to get their needs met in positive, healthy ways; they will also make classroom time more productive, prevent behavioral problems, build students of character, and increase academic prowess. They will be able to do so by providing their students with a body of information and a set of skills with which to make informed, positive, independent choices regarding their social, emotional, and mental well-being (Dewhurst, 1991; Zins, Elias, Greenberg, & Weissberg, 2000). This book provides teachers with the tools to do just that.

It is important to clarify the nature of the information and the kinds of skills teachers need to provide in order to promote effective emotional, social, and ethical decision making. The underlying theme to all of the areas covered in this book is making effective choices. William Glasser (1998), in his discussion of *control theory*, explains that every behavior people exhibit is based on their best attempt to meet a need. He further explains that each action, thought, and, indirectly, feeling is based on unconscious choices. To make the most effective choices possible, people need to examine and reformulate their thoughts.

Daniel Goleman's (1995) research on emotional intelligence indicates that to develop social and emotional competencies, youngsters must develop the skills to challenge their often inflexible thoughts. He spoke to the importance of checking thoughts against available evidence, thus offering cognitive guidance before the emotional switch goes into effect, triggering ineffective choices.

Albert Ellis (2001), one of the pioneers of the cognitive-behavioral approach, further describes the crucial process of checking thoughts against evidence. He explains the importance of examining erroneous beliefs— assumptions—which lead to thoughts, triggering emotions, prompting people to behave in particular ways. To affect the ultimate behavioral choice, it is necessary to evaluate the assumption for errors in logic. This book is centered on that exact process.

The book begins by showing that every thought, feeling, and behavior is based on a choice that has been made. Often, however, these choices are made by default, out of habit, or based on faulty information or none at all. The curriculum helps the teacher to help students make choices con- sciously and effectively by developing students' abilities to think before they feel and act.

The lessons in this book help students to examine the assumptions that inform their thoughts, trigger their emotions, and ultimately lead to their behavioral choices. Students are taught about what assumptions are; some basic errors in logic that lead to assumptions; how to examine their assumptions and thoughts for errors in logic; how to change the assumptions to provable beliefs and then change their thoughts, feelings,

and finally their behavioral choices. They then are taught to apply this fundamental process across many situations. Assumptions are explored as they relate to dealing with a variety of emotions; issues of self-acceptance; issues related to a variety of relationships and ethical choices. The examination and reframing of underlying assumptions helps students learn how to stop, think, and choose well and in alignment with their values, rather than merely comprehending their options at a conceptual level.

This curriculum is designed to provide a wide range of active experiences in this choice-making process. The information and skills addressed are presented in a way that affords youngsters the opportunity to learn the material through application. In this way, material can be learned and used rather than merely understood (Sloboda & David, 1997).

■ TEACHING STRATEGIES

Drama

Many lessons in this curriculum utilize drama as a primary method with which to observe and evaluate choices and rehearse alternate options. The thought of using drama may seem daunting, as it conjures up images of talented actors and actresses performing great works of theater on a stage. In this book, the use of drama is nothing like that. Neither talent nor previous experience is necessary. Drama is used not to produce a high-quality play but rather to fully experience and examine the concepts in the curriculum.

Drama calls for participation at the physical, verbal, emotional, and intellectual levels. Using drama as a tool to explore choices allows for a more complete involvement in that exploration than merely discussing the concept. Drama becomes a mirror students use to observe the nuances of their own as well as others' choices in ways that other methods do not afford. In addition, as students involve themselves in the dramatization process, they are less likely to distance themselves from the concepts being explored than they might if they were exploring that concept through discussion alone (Mayer, 1990; McCullough, 2000).

Drama provides students a context within which to discuss and evaluate choices by reflecting on past situations and examining possible future consequences. By playing another person, effectively putting themselves in someone else's shoes, they can experience actions taken, the meanings of those actions, and the feeling of being answerable for those actions. They can determine whether these actions would express their values and whether or not the consequences would be acceptable to them. The information gained from such an exploration is more likely to be understood and applied than simply providing students with information about choices and consequences and expecting them to accept it at face value (McCaslin, 2005; Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998).

Most of the lessons in this book include a series of scenes focused on the choices being explored. You are welcome to use the scenes in their entirety, as a jumping off point, or to create your own with input from your students, based on their experiences.

Each scene is designed to help students examine the assumptions that inform their thoughts, trigger their emotions, and ultimately lead to their behaviors. This approach was inspired by a method called *psychodrama*, which uses drama techniques to gain psychological insight. Practitioners of this method have discussed its application to affective education as a very effective tool to promote self-awareness (Blatner, 1988).

In psychodrama, an individual is encouraged to explore life situations by acting them out in a group setting, using others present as other actors in his or her "life drama." The others present can also take on other specific roles: as a mirror reflecting the feelings of the main character in the drama or as a double, reflecting the inner thoughts of the main character.

The scenes provided in this book reflect universal life situations as opposed to situations based on individual students' stories. However, the scenes are designed to promote self-awareness and psychological insight as students examine their life situations in light of the scenes presented. Also, the roles of double and mirror are used, and an additional role of assumption or belief has been added to facilitate far greater awareness, insight, and opportunities for change.

The first scene enacted and examined in every lesson reflects the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors based on a particular assumption. The assumption, thoughts, and feelings are highlighted in the actual dialogue of each scene. Then, the scene is investigated in light of some of the basic errors in logic that lead to assumptions–*crystal-balling,* when one claims to know what will happen in the future; *generalizing,* when one exaggerates by stretching the truth, using words such as *always, never, everyone,* and *no one;* and *awfulizing,* a form of generalizing in which one claims that something is awful, horrible, or terrible.

The investigation is followed by a discussion of the scene, including how the assumption affected the character's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; how to change the assumption to a more provable belief; and how that new belief would alter the character's thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and final outcome. A second scene is then enacted reflecting the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors based on the provable belief.

This dramatic enactment, evaluation, and reenactment of the process of making choices (from assumption to thoughts to feelings to actions) offer a powerful opportunity to experience the process and rehearse ways to change behaviors by first changing beliefs and then rehearsing new thoughts and actions stemming from them. Dramatizing this process is as close as possible to experiencing it in real life, thus making it more likely that this learning will be applied in the students' own lives.

It will be necessary to make copies of both scenes for your students so that they may participate in them. The scenes are enacted simply. Use chairs and desks to represent furniture, and use simple hand-held objects as necessary. Or choose to have students imagine everything. Students can move around as much or as little as the scene indicates. Putting the scene in the center of the room allows other students to surround the enactment. This can foster greater group involvement. The front of the room is another option.

To involve as many students as possible, allow different students to act in each scene. As students play the characters, encourage them to express the thoughts and feelings of the character through their bodies and voices. Those not involved in the scene may be active observers, looking for

nuances of body language and vocal inflection that might further illuminate the concept and listening for evidence of illogic in the character's assumption, thoughts, and behaviors. In addition, some scenes ask the observers to take on roles such as members of a jury, which can further engage them.

You can discard or modify the provided scenes or use them as jumping off points, allowing your students to create scenes that more closely reflect their own life experiences. The process of creating a scene helps students to thoroughly explore the assumption being discussed and apply it to their own lives. This also builds other skills such as sequencing and creative writing.

To develop their own scene, students must focus on the assumption being investigated. They determine which event might best depict the outcome of a belief in that assumption, giving preference to situations that the students have experienced. For example, when creating a scene dealing with an assumption that leads to anxiety, ask the students, "In which situations might you feel anxious? In what setting would that take place? What characters would be needed to enact the scene? What kind of thoughts and feelings might the assumption lead to in the main character? What would happen at the beginning, middle, and end of the scene as a result?" Make sure students adapt the same investigation/discussion process to their own scene so they can explore and correct the errors in logic that led to the assumption. Then, have the students create a second scene reflecting the thoughts, feelings, and actions based on the provable belief. The scene can be either written out and read or outlined and ad-libbed within the framework created.

Skill Development

To execute increasingly effective life choices rather than merely understanding how to make them, youngsters must develop a range of skills or human competencies. In his book, *Emotional Intelligence,* Goleman (1995) cited a number of highly effective emotional education programs. A common thread in each of these programs is a focus on developing these skills. Other researchers have also pointed out the importance of providing opportunities for intrapersonal and interpersonal skill development (Cowan & Clover, 1991; Deline, 1991; Erin, Dignan, & Brown, 1991; Jones, Kline, Habkirk, & Saler, 1990; Rolan, 1991; Rotheram, 1982; Sloboda, 1997; Tobler & Stratton, 1997). One of the strengths of this curriculum is that it addresses a comprehensive range of skills fundamental to making increasingly effective life choices. Students are initially exposed to building skills in cooperation. There are activities infused throughout that continue to support the acquisition of this skill. Not only is this an important life skill but it supports the teaching of the curriculum, as many of the activities are of a cooperative nature.

The first section of the book offers a range of dramatization activities as well as exercises that build emotional skills. Fundamental stress-management skills are addressed at the beginning of the curriculum and throughout. The second section promotes the development of social skills, and the third section provides activities that further develop life skills, such as values clarification, communication, negotiation, assertiveness, conflict management, and goal setting.

Detective Metaphor

Envisioning the choice maker as detective is a metaphor that is sparingly included throughout the book. I recommend this metaphor for your use and can say that I have found it very helpful in teaching this material. If asked to play the role of a "choice detective," students frequently respond with enthusiasm and a freedom of expression that is not always comfortable for them "playing themselves." The metaphor is not applied heavily in the text, however, so that there is latitude to include personalized versions of detective activities or ignore the suggestion if desired. My use of the term *choice detective* for choice maker, the Inquiry and Investigating Procedures sections of some of the student handouts, and the dramatic activity titled *scene investigation* are intended simply as suggestions for including the metaphor in your presentation of the material.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK   ■

This book is designed for anyone who works with young people and has the context within which to develop the knowledge and skills described. It can be used, for example, by teachers, school counselors, day care providers, club leaders, program directors, camp directors, and parents. The curriculum is most appropriate for children in Grades 2 through 6. It can be used for middle school students, as well, and modifications have been provided for these grades.

The activities fall most directly within the curricular areas of health, social studies, and language arts. However, additional activities are provided to extend the lessons into the areas of math, science, and history. These activities can be expanded to more fully address these curricular areas, and additional activities can be developed to extend the lessons into other areas of the school curriculum. Also, if a lesson does not fully address your needs on a particular topic, expand the lesson as necessary to address specific issues in greater depth.

Multiple intelligences are addressed throughout the curriculum, including intrapersonal, interpersonal, bodily/kinesthetic, verbal/linguistic, visual/spatial, and logical/mathematical.

Lessons

Each lesson begins with an introduction that outlines the salient points of the topic being addressed. This introduction is used to inform the teacher of the focus of the lesson. The material from the introduction will then be shared with students after some initial activities to engage their interest in the topic. The heart of a lesson is the activities, which include exercises and scenes designed to move step by step toward acquisition of the knowledge and skills related to that topic. Some suggested activities require students to behave in ways that are unusual in some classroom settings. For example, some activities require that students move around rather than sit in chairs. Other activities, such as brainstorming, may lead to overlapping conversations rather than each student speaking in turn.

Although these activities may demand a certain flexibility in the classroom, they do not lack structure. Each activity is designed with a specific outlined framework to maximize its effectiveness. As a result, these techniques provide students with a high level of involvement in the topics explored. In addition, the activities can be adapted to your level of comfort. For example, you may prefer to try some of the more physical activities with a smaller portion of the class. Or, if you are concerned about the noise level in the classroom, you may want to structure an activity such as brainstorming so that students raise their hands before they speak.

In most activities, one or more handouts for students are provided. These handouts are collected in Resource A near the end of the book. You are encouraged to photocopy and use them for instructional purposes in your classroom.

One section that recurs in many of these handouts is the Inquiry section. This section is an opportunity for each student to express feelings, opinions, and experiences; to explore a certain topic and develop material for further exploration; and, if shared with another, to find out that other classmates may have similar experiences and feelings. An inquiry is presented in the form of an unfinished sentence that students complete, based on the first thing that comes to mind. There are no right or wrong answers. If the student shares a personal response during a class discussion, no one should comment on it, and the handouts are not to be evaluated.

A number of the handouts are variations of four worksheets. These four worksheets, which are also provided in Resource A, are used in more than one activity. As a result, before use, teachers will need to add titles, label columns, and provide directions. The activity description will identify which worksheet to use and provide the information needed to tailor the handout for that activity. You will need to briefly share the results of the worksheet on a separate day from the actual lesson. This lets the students know that to create positive change, it is important to work on their choice-making awareness and skills daily and not just during the actual lesson time. Consider suggesting that students collect the handouts as part of a personal journal. The collection provides a good review source outside the classroom.

Following Resource A, Resource B provides summary activities that supplement the chapters. It includes additional suggestions for ways to reinforce the knowledge and skills by using them throughout the school day. I strongly recommend using these suggestions to make this approach to choice-making a part of the classroom culture. This will contribute greatly to the likelihood that the knowledge and skills taught will be applied.