

## Final Report for Teacher and Student Learning at OHS with Sharon Kane

### Project SMART Topics in Education: Social Emotional Learning in High Needs Schools

**Teacher Participant Name(s): Heidi Conland Sheffield**

#### **Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:**

My action plan remained the same with just a couple of exceptions. I have maintained the meditation (or centering—the term I use with students) at the start of each class.

We did read The Acting Company's working script of *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare but ended reading it after Caesar's assassination and subsequent aftermath speeches by Brutus and Marc Antony due to declining student interest. We also read some selected scenes from The Acting Company's working script of *X: Or, Betty Shabazz vs. the Nation* by modern playwright Marcus Gardley prior to my tenth graders taking a field trip to SUNY-Oswego to see the Malcolm X play performed. Some students attended a performance of *Julius Caesar* at SUNY-Oswego the evening prior to the class field trip. A guest speaker from The Acting Company spoke in all of my classes about Malcolm X just prior to our field trip.

#### **Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning:** We examined our written reflections and found the following:

The meditation (centering) has been a beneficial addition to my classroom this year. Early on, I was dismayed to learn that my students (as reported by them) experience one or more of the following on a typical school day: Stress 61% Sadness 22% Anxiety 35% Depression 17% Anger 35% Fear 12%

After centering, I observed students who were able to attend to class better because they had a moment of quiet and stillness. A challenge for me was varying our meditations to try to reach all student interests. Of course, I did have students who were not interested in doing centering, but they were respectful of their classmates and generally sat quietly or doodled which was meditative in itself. At one point, I stopped doing centering for a week to see if I noticed a difference in student demeanor. It was subtle, but I observed that it was a bit more challenging for some students to focus on class—there was a restlessness that seemed to occur far less often after daily centering. Some students remarked and wondered why we were not doing centering. I do not have quantifiable data about this, but the special education teacher who works with me in two classes also noticed a positive difference in students after centering which leads me to the conclusion that it really does help students.

Reading and attending the plays was a highlight of this school year. While I chose not to continue reading all of *Julius Caesar*, students absorbed enough of the plot to be able to enjoy the live performance as well as compare and contrast it with the Malcolm X play. I observed genuine excitement from students who attended one or both of the plays. Shakespeare is really meant to be seen and that made all the difference for my students and me. We were able to follow the plot in the live performance even through the sections we did not read together. Therefore, I learned that using film clips with a heavy history play such as this would enhance learning and interest. Film clips from a variety of films would allow for discussions about directorial choices that may enhance or detract from the original Shakespeare drama.

It was a tough decision to abandon the completion of *Julius Caesar*, but I felt it was for the best for all of us as it became clear that students were losing interest. The language and the difficulty students had who took on roles to read aloud made our reading a real labor rather than a love. In hindsight, I needed to attend to their needs and devote more time to digging into particular scenes rather than trying to cover lots of ground reading the play aloud. Based on that, I carried that practice into the reading of *X* and contacted Lisa Gutting from The Acting Company for suggestions on what scenes to delve into which she provided. This worked much better; students enjoyed the snippets we read and were primed for the live performance. The excitement at the live performance was tangible through their comments and facial expressions as I checked in during intermission and directly after the show.

## Analysis of Data on Student Learning:

Meditation/Centering: Early on, students were surveyed and reported the following:

**78%** of students who answered survey reported they liked centering.

- **56%** of students reported they prefer meditation only.
- **20%** of students reported they prefer a combination of meditation and yoga.
- **3%** of students reported they prefer yoga only.

**22%** of students who answered survey reported they did not like centering.

**64%** reported feeling calmer, more relaxed, more focused after centering.

**21%** reported feeling the same after centering.

**13%** reported feeling tired after centering with 3 reporting feelings of annoyance, terror, and/or thinking about things that do not matter in the classroom.

Based on these findings, I focused solely on meditation for the remainder of the year. Students are willing participants with few exceptions (as previously noted—students who do not participate sit quietly and some doodle, which is a form of centering in itself). They comment when we do not do centering.

Overall, centering attends to the social and emotional learning of students in that it allows them to go inward, have a moment of quiet, focus on themselves, try to let go of any strife they enter the classroom with and come out of centering better able to focus on class as well as feel good about themselves.

*Julius Caesar* and *X: Or, Betty Shabazz vs. the Nation* provided students with a live theater experience that was a first for some and an overall great experience for all.

Students reported the following:

“Overall, I thought this play was very good and informational. I learned a lot about Malcolm X that I didn’t know.”

“Powerful and well done. Sitting on the stage definitely made the experience better because you felt more like were a part of it.”

“This was my second play and getting to sit on stage was the best ever. I felt like I was an actor and that my line was to just sit there but be in the play.”

“If I could see it again, I would. We all learned new things about Malcolm X.”

“Julius Caesar was a really fun time.”

“X really opened my eyes to the level of humanity that should exist but does not.”

“Seeing both plays was really cool. I like seeing how the two plays related and how the actors did multiple roles.”

“This was my first time going to a play. It was exciting and very entertaining. The story and set-up kept me intrigued and wanting more.”

“It was fantastic and amazing. I loved how the actors talked with the people on stage. It felt like I was in the play.”

“It was the first play I’ve seen where I could actually understand it.”

“When we got to talk to the actors I also thought it was really cool.”

“Both plays were good, but I liked the Caesar play the best.”

“I found the play to be very entertaining and the parts we read in class were in the play.”

“I wish I could see the play again.”

“I learned more about X and it was easier to take in the history instead of reading a history book.”

Many more similar observations were reported by students. Field trips are such a special and integral part of learning, but in my school district, they are denied due to budget cuts. We were fortunate in that the ticket cost and bussing fees were paid for by funds through The Acting Company and a local donor. Otherwise, this field trip would not have been possible.

As one can see, the social and emotional learning of students is clear through their comments. Additionally, we had a conversation about theater etiquette just prior to the performance so students would know the expectations in a public social situation such as this. They were all respectful and attentive audience members who honored the request to silence and not use cell phones.

Finally, nothing replaces firsthand experiences—whether it is a regular practice of meditations to calm and focus oneself or viewing a live performance of a play. Firsthand opportunities allow us to step outside ourselves for a bit and push us to think about how people cope and choose to live their lives. This project is a testament to that.

### **Teacher Participant Name(s): Thomas C. Caswell**

#### **Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:**

I decided to purposefully ask students to complete a survey in the middle of a unit of instruction after 8 months of online testing. By doing so, I hope to get more thoughtful and reflective student responses after they have had the experience of taking 12 online tests, but without the influence or the immediacy of any specific online test interfering with that goal.

#### **Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning:**

Based upon informal observations of students who were taking online tests, I noticed that despite being able to access vocabulary definitions when taking online tests, most students chose not to access every available definition. Rather, it appeared that students selectively chose to access definitions, which I believe was often based on their potential anxiety with the content of the question.

For example, if a student was either unsure of what a term meant, or had no idea whatsoever, they seemed more likely to access the associated definition for clarity and understanding. This “just-in-time” approach to learning, or reducing anxiety, is fascinating and may prove to be an area in need of further study.

Based on a handful of student comments throughout the experience, which were confirmed by the survey results, I also learned that a few student’s questions the design of the online tests designed to reduce student anxiety. These students seemed to feel that testing should be used primarily for ranking students, rather than as a tool to inform instruction, or as a learning activity. For example, in the project survey, one student stated:

“The main problem with online testing is that you basically don't need to know anything from the unit to get a good grade, as long as you know how to abuse the highlighted words on the site. Cheating seems very easy on these sites, and I personally don't seem to find any sort of "test" from the tests we take in US History. Online testing is good for the modern swing in the classroom, but could always sue more tweaks to it.”

In particular, this student seems to take issue with the availability of course vocabulary definitions within the questions in online tests, and the ability to make a second attempt. Do these options make the online test invalid, or do they change the nature of testing to serve a more meaningful purpose? Such ideas pose interesting questions for future research.

### **Analysis of Data on Student Learning:**

Findings are based on an examination of student performance on 12 online tests that allow access to vocabulary definitions and the ability to make a 2nd attempt, and the results of a survey of 55 students who had taken these online tests over the past 8 months:

#### **Surveyed students do experience test anxiety.**

This finding is based on student responses to the survey question “How often do you experience test anxiety on any test?” Almost 93 % of students indicated this was true overall, with 16.4% responding “always”, 36.4% indicating “often”, 40% indicating “sometimes”, and 7.3% indicating “never.”

##### **1. Surveyed students feel that test anxiety can impact their performance on any test.**

This finding is based on student responses to the survey question “How often does text anxiety impact your performance on any test?” Over 91 % of students indicated this was true overall, with 16.4% responding “always”, 36.4.1% indicating “often”, 36.4% indicating “sometimes”, and 10.9% indicating “never.”

##### **2. The majority of surveyed students still experience text anxiety when taking online tests, however, they indicate this happens less frequently when compared to other other tests.**

This finding is based on student responses to the survey question “How often do you experience test anxiety while taking online US History tests?” Over 55 % of students indicated this was true overall, with 3.6% responding “always”, 9.1% indicating “often”, 41.8% indicating “sometimes”, and 45.5% indicating “never”.

Compared with the #1 finding regarding overall incidence of test anxiety, the online testing format used in this research appears to result in a 38% reduction in overall test anxiety with the majority of the reduction apparent in a 13% drop in “always” responses, a 27% drop in “often” responses, and approximately the same (40% vs 41.8%) number of “sometimes” responses by students.

##### **3. Nearly all of the students surveyed access vocabulary definitions that are available in questions when taking online tests.**

This finding is based on student responses to the survey question “How often do you access the vocabulary definitions available in the online US History test questions?” Over 98 % of students indicated this was true overall, with 41.8% responding “always”, 21.8% indicating “often”, 34.5% indicating “sometimes”, and 1.8% indicating “never.” Further study is warranted as there appears to be a potential correlation between the availability and use of vocabulary definitions in online test questions, and a reduction in test anxiety felt by students when taking an online test, as indicated in the #3 finding.

**4. Nearly all of the students surveyed try to do better on their second attempt of online tests, and find that they actually perform better on the second attempt as well.**

This finding is based in part on student responses to the survey question “How often do you actively try to perform better on your second attempt when taking online US History tests?” Over 98 % of students indicated this was true overall, with 89.1% responding “always”, 1.8% indicating “often”, 7.3% indicating “sometimes”, and 1.8% indicating “never.”

This finding is also based on student responses to the survey question “How often do you actually perform better on your second attempt when taking online US History tests?” Over 98 % of students indicated this was true overall, with 78.2% responding “always”, 14.5% indicating “often”, 5.5% indicating “sometimes”, and 1.8% indicating “never.”

**5. The vast majority of surveyed students feel that taking online tests has had some type of positive impact on their learning.**

This finding is based on an analysis of student responses to the open-ended survey question “Please describe how your learning has been impacted by online testing in US History.” Written student responses were categorized, and 87.3% were “positive”, 5.5% were “mixed”, 5.5% were “negative”, and 1.7% were “unknown.”

**Sample “positive” student responses:**

“Taking the U.S history tests online has helped me learn a lot this year. The highlighted vocab words help guide you to the correct answer and also having a second try at the test helps as well. My grade always improves and I learn from the mistakes I made.”

“I think the online testing has made my learning experience better because when if I get a question wrong, I have the chance to go back and learn from my mistake.”

“Online testing helps my learning by giving me the chance to see what I got wrong and what is actually right. I tend to second guess myself a lot and getting a second chance helps me to see which questions I do that with”

“I think it has benefited my test taking in US History a lot. I do not get as stressed out when we take them online and I feel like it takes the pressure off knowing that within the test I have access to key vocabulary terms.”

“Online testing has impacted my learning in US history by making tests a more casual environment and giving little links to certain vocab words which help a lot. Also, having 2 chances to get a good grade on the test make it way less stressful.”

“I feel like my test taking skills have improved since taking US History. The anxiety is taken out of the equations since I get two attempts. I also feel like I've learned more in the course by not experiencing anxiety around test taking time. Another plus to taking the test online is when I'm absent I can take it whenever instead of having to rely on the testing center. I wish every teacher did tests online.”

**Sample “mixed” student responses:**

“I think that the tests are very easy, but I feel like it only helps when we are in the unit. If I were to go back and take a test from 3 units ago I don't think I would do good.”

“My learning has been affected in a positive way because I have the term definitions available to me when taking the test so I can review in my mind what the term is about. The only downfall to having the term definition right at the click of a button is that on mid-terms and the final exam I will not have the privilege of clicking on the vocab so studying and memorizing terms is vital for my success on those tests.”

**Sample “negative” student responses:**

“I would rather have a piece of paper to do a test on so I can underline important parts of the question”  
“it impacted me a lot because it is a lot harder than regular tests on paper”

**Final thoughts**

It appears that the process of online testing in a format that provides vocabulary definitions as needed, and an opportunity for a second attempt, can lead to improvements in social-emotional learning for students. I plan to continue using this testing strategy with students while I continue my efforts to help them implement strategies that decrease their stress and simultaneously increasing the joy that comes from understanding and learning from history.

**Teacher Participant Names: Renee Warren, Sarah Williams**

**Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:**

After discussion of our initial proposal with Dr. Kane, we modified it to include the following. We still planned to focus on adults who are influential to our students, but we added the following outcomes:

For Honors 11: In the first activity we decided to ask Mrs. Warren’s students to think of a person of influence (adults) and to ask this person for a poem or song which has been influential to the adult. The students then had to memorize the poem or selection (at least 20 lines) and recite for the class. They also had to explain why it was significant, as well as sharing the text of the poem/song with the class. After this the students were asked to explain why this was influential to them. This was an extra credit assignment.

This change was made to allow for students to bring in real life poetry into the classroom. A major portion of the AP exam in their senior year is centered around poetry, which is also a major part of the Honors 11 curriculum. Students tend to panic when we begin poetry; therefore, combining poetry with a pleasant activity of visiting with an influential person in their lives may relieve a portion of that anxiety. Also, it was intended to help students slow down and be mindful of the people who have an influence in their lives--especially the unlikely influences.

The second activity came about because of the lack of participation in the first activity! The general consensus of the students was that many did not complete the extra credit because of the stress in their lives. Therefore, we discussed the need for including SEL in this particular classroom immediately. The day prior to their biggest stressor--their AP American History exam-- we provided them with a lesson in meditation and relaxation along with coloring sheets and 30 minutes to color silently. The focus of this activity was to allow them to learn/use relaxation techniques they could also use in everyday life.

For senior AP class: Mrs. Williams had her students think of a person of influence and create a poster to include the words of wisdom from this person, as well as why these words influenced the student. This was an extra credit assignment.

For regular senior classes: Mrs. Williams had each student choose a person of influence and create a poster to include a picture of the person, the words that were influential, and the student’s explanation of how these words influenced him/her. They had to present these to the class.

These changes for seniors were made because a part of the original plan was to have seniors write graduation invitations to teachers who influenced them, but that would be after the class is completed and this assignment encompassed more than just teachers as influential people.

**Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning:** We examined our reflections and found the following:

**Mrs. Williams**

- Overall I learned a great deal from having my students complete these assignments. First, I was surprised that all of my seniors completed both the letter and poster assignments on time. This rarely happens with seniors, and showed me that the allowing my students to make connections with others, to reflect on their lives, to be mindful of the positive influences in their lives, was valuable and class time well spent. I have always loved teaching and sharing *Tuesdays with Morrie* with my seniors, and have done so for years, but both the letter assignment and poster projects made the text that much more enjoyable to me. I learned that my seniors are eager to acknowledge the contributions and influences of adults in their lives, if given the opportunity to do so. I also learned that the influences on them are, for the most part, close family members. One difficult aspect of growing and maturing is finding one's independence, which often means pulling away from family, but these two assignments showed me that teens are still looking to family and adults for guidance and support. I also heard them comment many times that these assignments were great because they had to stop and think about the people who are important to them, people they may not see as often once they graduate. My AP students appreciated an assignment that was outside our usual reading/writing based assignments, one that allowed them to step back and find a text that was a mentor for each of them. It also allowed them to connect on a personal level with someone who influences them, something they may not have taken the time to do otherwise given their busy schedules.

**Mrs. Warren**

- While I knew the honors students are concerned with their grades, early in this project it was surprising to see how many were willing to do an extra credit project that would possibly include a good deal of outside work. On the day that it was announced I recited a poem that I learned for this lesson and there was a tremendous amount of enthusiasm and excitement from the students. (Students were reminded several days prior to the due date so they could polish their memorization.) However, what I thought would be a great experience for them resulted in only 6 students of 19 in the class participating! The feedback from those 6 students when polled was extremely positive, ranging from: "The woman who I went to said she was so humbled to think that I would pick her" to "It turned out to be something that wasn't just about my extra credit, but it actually made a difference to him!" Because I polled the participants right in class this, I believe, made many wish that they had done it also. When I surveyed the remaining students in class about the lack of participation, most replied that they didn't have time in their schedules to meet with their person of influence or to invest in memorizing poetry. They began to recite their deadlines and upcoming responsibilities/exams in the month of May. The stress level was at a high and I realized, because of this class, that I needed to help them calm down instead of adding to the stress.
- While I know that this group of students are constantly under pressure academically, I neglected to see the connection to SEL and the immediate need to begin this type of lesson earlier. I put together a coloring activity with a few basic response questions (see attached) for after the activity and found that students crave a "reason" to have down-time and relax a bit during the month of May. This was also reinforced with the discussion following the activity.
- Next year I will not only reverse the order of these activities but believe I will include them earlier in the year.

## Analysis of Data on Student Learning:

### Outcomes - World Literature Seniors

- My students were very interested in reading *Tuesdays With Morrie*. They enjoyed the story of an adult who seemed to have it all learning from his college professor even though the professor was suffering from a terrible disease and knew he would eventually die. We talked a great deal about the influence that Morrie had on Mitch through their conversations, and the influence that Morrie has had on the world through Mitch's book. We also noted that although Mitch was close to Morrie in college, he did not expect him to be so influential later in this life. When I assigned the thank you letter project, I read to them a letter that I had written as a senior to my own kindergarten teacher. This was a great way to introduce the assignment and to show my own students my connection to an influential adult. There was a lot of interest in writing the letters, with many of them commenting that choosing a person was more difficult than they thought it would be. I do mail the letters, and received some feedback from the recipients. My students also received some feedback. After a few weeks to allow for responses, we discussed the project. Many of them were surprised at how touched the recipients had been, and some of them were planning to keep in touch with the recipients more than they had before the letter, echoing how Mitch reconnected with Morrie in the text.
- We also discussed the aphorisms that Morrie shares with Mitch, and these were a driving factor in how Mitch learned and grew. As a result of this I decided to ask the students to do the project that I was giving as extra credit to my AP students. I had them choose a person of influence in their lives, a person whose words are something that motivates and inspires the students. I told them the words can be a song, a poem, a quote, etc., but should be words that they hear over and over again. They then created posters with these words, pictures, and their explanation for why the words are important to them. We shared these in class the day prior to spring break, which was a thoughtful way to leave school for vacation. After sharing we discussed the project and almost all of them felt that it was worthwhile, that the posters forced them to think of who influenced them, and gave them a way to share this with others. They also noted that some of the words that were chosen were similar to Morrie's aphorisms, his wise words that he imparts to Mitch throughout the book.

### Outcomes - AP Seniors

- For the AP students, their senior year is often filled with more stress related to academics than regular seniors. The pressure to be accepted into the right school, to find the financing for the school, along with their coursework and extracurricular activities, can be crushing. To help them be less stressed as the AP exams approached, I asked them to complete the same poster assignment as my regular seniors for an extra credit grade. I was surprised by the number of them who completed the assignment, as 15 out of the 19 did so. Considering how busy they are this was surprising to me. We had a discussion about the assignment and they commented the following: "My dad was really surprised that I asked him for help on this. When I explained it he got very emotional and hugged me", "I loved this assignment! I thought a lot about who has influenced me before creating my poster", and "At first I thought this was a stupid assignment (no offense) but after I did it I realized you were trying to teach us something." These comments, among others, made me realize that these students, in particular, need opportunities to focus on work that is not academic at times and it can really help them recharge their batteries. I am glad we did it and plan to do so again. One aspect that surprised me was how many of them chose non-family members' words to share. A significant number of them had celebrities' words or song lyrics. They said I did not make a family



member or person directly in their lives clear, so in the future I would make sure that my directions were clearer if that is the outcome I wanted.

### **Outcomes - Juniors**

- My students have read various poetry, the short story “The Cranes”, and are finishing *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and we connected the influential people in the characters’ lives with the poetry extra credit activity they also completed. This was done in an effort for students to recognize and to be mindful of the importance of the people who influence them. This activity can have benefits for everyone involved. Connections were made in class between “The Cranes” and the elderly couple who felt that no reason to live because they were no longer needed, to being mindful of the elderly and investing the time and letting them know they are valued. In the novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Huck’s major influence came from Jim, a slave and unlikely character, given the time period, to influence a young white boy. Students stated that they were able to see the importance of slowing down as the growing and maturing process continues to making those important connections. However, they did not follow through with acting on that!
- They also commented on how easy it is to be “too busy” to think about the influence family members and other adults have on them and how even more difficult it is to invest the time in expressing their appreciation for the positive influence. Students commented on their stress level and due dates hindering them from completing this.
- Therefore, I found some SEL coloring pages and announced that the day before their AP History test we would be relaxing. A student who practices yoga volunteered to lead the class in a breathing exercise prior to coloring. I began class with very clear objectives for the period: for students to learn some techniques to relax and destress that they could take with them to any class or exam. Coloring pages, pens and pencils were chosen prior to the activity. Students had approximately 30 minutes of silence to relax and color with no expectations other than to destress and to feel this total relaxation. I found it interesting that no student would leave their picture for me to include here, but were actually more concerned with borrowing the pencils to complete it. Many expressed a need to make sure the colors were balanced on the sheet.
- I typed up some response questions to follow the activity. The feedback was amazing! 11 of the 18 present stated that they do not currently do any type of relaxation technique. Three stated that they exercise to relax, two stated music was their way to relax and two said they color and/or practice yoga. It was then that I decided I should have done this activity prior to the extra credit dealing with interviewing a person of influence. Many did not complete that because they did not see the value of the “down time” or setting aside time that was not for a specific academic assignment. After the coloring activity, I believe many could see the practical value in setting aside time to do something that once seemed unimportant or “extra”. All 18 students who participated were able to find practical uses for relaxation techniques in their lives--even if it were only a few minutes at a time.

### **FUTURE IDEAS:**

- Thinking about the concept of mindfulness in the classroom led us to think about the idea of growth mindset. We discovered a working definition of this at The Glossary of Education Reform. On this site the concept of growth mindset is explained in more detail. It is a concept developed by psychologist Carol Dweck and popularized in her book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. It is a concept that many schools are using to help students be more successful (“Growth Mindset”). OCSD even has a teacher in-service class based around Dweck’s book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. In her book she discusses in detail the differences between the fixed and growth mindset. This concept ties in well with our current project, and is something we both want to explore in the future.

**WORKS CITED:**

- “Growth Mindset”. *The Glossary of Education Reform*. Great Schools Partnership, 2014, <http://edglossary.org/growth-mindset/>.

**Teacher Participant Name: Gretchen Fronk****Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:**

Very little was changed. What was changed involved rotating the dog therapy teams to new classes during the second semester. This was due to the overwhelming need, and desire, for other teachers and their classes to incorporate a dog team. The response to the dogs in the building has been overwhelmingly positive, and students are asking for more dog teams!!

Teams (dog listed first):

Lucy/Mary

Ody/Dee Marie

LeRoy/Carol

Bella/Mary

Charolette/Connie

I created a schedule early in the year based on teacher volunteers and need. This was a set schedule so both teams and teachers knew when visits would occur and could plan accordingly; additionally, dog teams are limited to two hours of work per day. At the start of our second semester, I changed the schedule to reflect some different teachers than the previous semester.

Teachers were allowed to incorporate dog teams into their classrooms however they wanted. The most common way of inclusion was having the dog team enter the room and go row by row to greet each student, allowing for individual interaction with the dog. After that, the team would usually assume a location in the room, either by a student or a specified sitting area. Most often, the dog would be getting petted during this time, by students that needed or wanted to, or monitored the room for social/emotional/academic “vibes” at which the dog would alert the handler and the team would move to that student.

**Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning:** I examined the surveys, emails and reflected on conversations and found the following:

**The students LOVE having the dogs in their classes! – From the many teacher surveys, emails and conversations, I have received the feedback included responses such as:**

1. One of the history teachers invited a dog team into his class, admitting he wasn’t really sure what he was getting into, but he was willing to try because he had heard good things. What he realized, based on the following statement, was that the students were much more relaxed and willing to engage with academic material with a dog in the room.

-“Government class was really very open to having Lucy there and three students gathered up their paperwork and sat with her through the whole review class, participating and petting Lucy too.”

2. The largest success story that we had this year came from a math class. This particular class became involved in the program, because I selected it based off an observation I made. I had walked into the math office one day and the teacher of this class had a distraught look on her face. She told me how the kids have so many needs. She described the students in the class, all low academic achievers with some challenging behaviors. I felt really bad for her. I offered, if she wanted to, to try a dog in that class. I told her “it couldn’t hurt to try.” She agreed, and we did. I couldn’t wait to ask her how the visit went after the first dog team was in her classroom. I was greeted by a completely opposite person from the one before the class. She was exuberant!!!!!! She couldn’t stop smiling and telling me how well class had gone. She

mentioned particular changes in the atmosphere and attention of the students. Every dog team visit since this first one has been equally amazing. The growth for the students has been evidenced, but the growth in the teacher is also evidenced. This teacher is much more at ease and happy to greet and teach this tough class when the dog team is present. The following is part of an email sent to me from the handler that was in this teacher's class.

"In Mrs. Q's class, one of the students was 'having a very bad.' Ody 'alerted' to the situation, and we sat quietly next to the student while she took a test. As the student stroked Ody's head, I leaned into her and whispered that she could give Ody a doggie biscuit when she finished her test...which she promptly did."

**Analysis of Data on Student Learning:** I examined surveys, received emails from handlers, watched students in class and hallways and listened to students in conversation and found the following:

**The dog teams encouraged students to engage with their academic work and overall mindset as evidenced by the following remarks:**

**1. The dog teams encouraged students to learn and participate in class:**

- "the boys' practiced their English by commanding Ody to sit before they gave her a doggie biscuit"
- "Also, as we were leaving last Friday, one of the students from Ms. F's class, hurried down the hallway, he asked when we would be in the class again. When I told him next Friday, he smiled and said he would be sure to be in class that day, and not be late."
- "I have noticed changes in myself when the dog team is in my class because it makes me feel comfortable and happy."
- "Everyone is so happy and awake."
- "Yes, the dog made me happier, and I forgot about my problems for a while."
- "The class vibe completely changed to more relaxed right when the dog came in."

**2. The dog teams calmed students :**

- "I enjoyed having the dog therapy in my class because if you have stress it makes you feel better."
- "...when visiting Mr. H's class last Friday, one of the students was enthusiastically petting Ody. As the student hugged Ody, she looked up to me and said, 'This is my most stressful class, and having Ody here just brought my stress level way down'."

**3. The dog teams brought joy and happiness to those encountered:**

- "I have noticed changes in myself when the dog team is in my class because it makes me feel comfortable and happy."
- "Then the smaller black dog came in and we had a girl who was crying because of a personal issue and the handler put the black dog in her arms and she was better."

**4. The dog teams "sensed" students' emotional needs and addressed them:**

- "Yes, because they help me when I'm upset, and they know."
- "Rounding a corner, we encountered a young lady sitting on the floor, with her back to the wall. Her friend was visibly upset, not only because her friend was feeling faint, but also because the bell for classes was ringing. Ody snuggled next to the girl, and the student pet Ody as we waited with her until the nurse came."

**Wrap up:**

This project was conceived as a way to help address the many stresses, emotional needs and academic encouragement that I saw here in my building. I had a suspicion that the dog teams would be able to help with these needs, but I had no way to predict the overwhelming success of the program. The support that the dog teams were able to give, ranging from a simple smile on an individual's face to giving students a reason to come to a class they don't like or struggle in, to medical emergencies, the dog teams have become an integral part of our school. I am frequently asked by students, "When is the dog coming again?" A simple question that is loaded with emotional and mental necessity. Our dog teams have shown unconditional love and support that both students and faculty are desperate for. They have shown us how

to be happy and smile again; we still have a long way to go. Having said that, I plan on continuing this program next year. The proof, through conversations, surveys, emails and Mr. H's heart monitoring, have more than proven that the dog teams are an asset to this school. My hope is to have more teams involved that will be able to reach more students and teachers.

**Teacher Participant Name: *Billie Jo Peterson***

**Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:**

My original Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in High Needs Schools project idea was to work with SUNY Oswego, the Oswego City School District and my students on The Banner Project. I am still working on this project, but I decided to also work with just my Sculpture students on another project. It is this new project that my report is based on.

The theme of the project was Social Justice. I was curious what social justice issues my students would be most interested in and also if any personal stories were addressed while they completed the assignment. We started by learning about and looking at Constructivist Art. The Constructivists were interested in 'modern', man-made images and materials. The material I required them to use was Foam Core and they could also use other materials to embellish. Then we briefly discussed Social Justice and what it was about. I gave them an extensive list of possible directions they could go with this project. It was their responsibility to research their idea and come up with a plan. At the end Students wrote an artist statement supporting their work and the ideas behind it.

**Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning:**

Overall I was happy with the work my students made. There was only one student who did not seem to fully understand the idea of Social Justice.

**What I learned...**

Students need more time to discuss social justice issues. The conversations we had, the artist statements they wrote and the pieces that they made showed that they were interested and they cared, but an actual verbal critique where topics were discussed would have been beneficial to everyone. For example, one student wrote, "I used to have a friend who would get abused by her boyfriend. She would give me the biggest smile and say that she was okay when I saw her bruises and asked if she was okay. She would always wear some form of purple and a white ribbon over her heart." This particular student really opened up, but I'm not sure the rest of the class even read her artist statement. If we had discussed the message behind each piece in a critique setting more personal stories may have surfaced and maybe then everyone would have a better understanding of what social justice is all about.

Students also need more practice cutting and building forms with Foam Core and using papier-mache. Some students rushed the cutting of their Foam Core, therefore had ragged edges that needed to be covered with papier-mache. Having to do this extra work put them behind and then everything else was rushed too. The result was craftsmanship issues getting in the way of the message.

**Analysis of Data on Student Learning:**

After looking at what students made, reading their artist statements and having conversations with them about their work I found that deciding and researching an idea was relatively easy for most students. They seemed to feel strongly about their topic and wanted to express their thoughts and ideas through a work of art. One student said "this just makes me so sad". Others would say things like the topics made them "mad" or they "didn't understand" how something like "this could happen". One thing I found particularly interesting was that many of their conversations outside of this assignment have to do with sexual identity and how many people in their home lives are not accepting of LGBT people, yet no one decided to make a piece

based on this theme. Knowing that these pieces would be put on display for the whole school to see, it made me think that outside of their circle of friends; they still don't feel safe expressing their ideas about LGBT rights.

Working with the required material, Foam Core was the most difficult part. I had several students comment about how working with Foam Core was "hard", "a pain", etc., but they persevered. Four students picked an environmental issue and the images were very similar in all of them; trees, the earth, etc. The imagery was very comfortable and familiar to them. They could easily change, manipulate and/or abstract these pieces and the pieces were well crafted and ready for display. Other topics were child soldiers, abuse, equality, torture, genocide, etc. For these students, it was more difficult to come up with imagery and to give the pieces a finished, well crafted look. Some were able to work out the problems and others had less success.

**Teacher Participant Name: Elizabeth A. Moshier**

**Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:**

There were no changes made to the action plan.

**Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning:**

In the beginning, I didn't have any of the contenders for the Battle of the Books. I decided to purchase the books that were available through Scholastic. I was able to purchase multiple copies of some of the titles because of bonus points and such. In addition, I was given other copies that were funded by various sources, including Project SMART and PDS funds. So, I ended up with multiple copies of most of the contenders. This was great because several individuals could read and discuss the same books!

I was provided with a ginormous set of brackets for the Battle to display in our school cafeteria. Everyone who entered the cafeteria was able to see and view the 16 contenders chosen for the Battle of the Books. This prompted numerous conversations! "What is That for?", "Who gets to participate?", "Can I read one?!" I shared many books with my students, students I met in the cafeteria and adults working in the building.

As the Battle proceeded, books that won the round moved on to the next round. This also led to many conversations as to whether they agreed or disagreed with the choices.

I did not always agree with the winners, but I really enjoyed reading the judges' comments in regard to why they decided on one book over the other and the process they went through. Sometimes my favorites won and sometimes they did not.

This project has enhanced my knowledge about Social Emotional Learning. When we help students understand what they are feeling and how to express it in a way that is beneficial, we are teaching students about emotion.

Upon reviewing my written reflections, I found the following:

- 1) Students enjoyed being a part of a decision-making process. I had several students of mine as well as students I met during my cafeteria duty who participated and inquired about "The Battle".
- 2) Students read books they may have not thought was age appropriate. ("That's for kids!")
- 3) Students openly discussed what they liked or disliked about the books and respectfully listened to others' opinions. It's a beautiful thing to witness young adults being kind and respectful to one another while agreeing to disagree.

**Analysis of Data on Student Learning:**

Upon reviewing the data, My belief that students value art as well as well written material was validated.

Some of the comments I received during the first few rounds of the competition were, "I love the illustrations and how there are layers of the original documents along with the poetry." ; "The artwork is great!"; "The artwork is amazing and so detailed and it's cool how there is their dreams and stuff about them."; "Lots of color!"; "Simple, but meaningful." These comments were in response to the picture books, Freedom in Congo Square by Carole Boston Weatherford and R. Gregory Christie, Freedom Over Me by Ashley Bryan.

"I wish our textbooks were written like this!" This response was generated from a student who read Samurai Rising by Pamela Turner and Gareth Hinds. "The authors did a great deal of research on the topic and time period. Then, wove those details in and among the characters and storyline. The illustrations were amazing and the maps... Brilliant!"

In addition, I had many comments that directly related to Social Emotional Learning. "Every kid has these thoughts, it's relatable."; "Every person deserves their own name." These comments were generated after reading and discussing Thunder Boy Jr. by Sherman Alexie and Yuyi Morales.

I found it heartwarming when students searched me out to share books they thought were worthwhile to read and had great meaning to them. Some of the titles shared with me and that I read are My Heart and Other Black Holes, Perks of a Wallflower, and GhostBoy.

### Teacher Participant Name: Gina Iorio

#### Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:

I hoped to purchase more books for my students however with a dwindling budget that was not possible. In addition, it was difficult to find a lot of recently published books on various health topics from the vender that I usually buy from. In the future, I do plan on expanding the collection and looking at other avenues to purchase books. This year we were able to buy from Amazon.com which will give me access to newer titles and more subjects. I will also be reading VOYA (Voice of Youth Activists) which is a bi monthly magazine that informs readers of the newest young adult books on the market.

I also added a National Suicide Prevention Lifeline flyer in the library for my Spanish speaking students.

I reached out to one of our social workers at school about different organizations that could help our students with mental health. She has provided me with a list of agencies that I will add to my website and I will also create flyers for the library and have them at the circulation desk and throughout the library.

In addition, I will look for clips of celebrities that have also faced mental health issues. I know John Greene, author of *Looking for Alaska*, has spoken about his difficulties and has posted them here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z\\_y4CACK-9g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_y4CACK-9g) . Perhaps if students know that others have faced similar mental health issues they will gain strength and encouragement from celebrities' stories. These clips will be placed on my website.

#### Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning:

Unfortunately, according to my statistics, only two of the newly purchased books on mental health were loaned this year. While I am sad to see this, I realize the books were placed in my OPALS system later than anticipated. Shipping was delayed on many titles and the books were uploaded into the system in February. Next year I will book talk my newest titles, and have them on display in the beginning of the year.

However, throughout the year I routinely gave book talks to classes or to individual students. These book talks are quick and to the point. For instance, *Living Dead Girl* by Elizabeth Scott is one title I cannot keep on the shelf. My book talk for this novel comprises of the following: "The main character, Alice, is kidnapped when she goes on a field trip. Her abductor is a pedophile that one day tells her (and I paraphrase) "find



me a nice young girl or I will continue to rape you.” Alice needs to choose what she wants to do. Will she put another girl through the same misery or will she continue to be raped?” Paul Volponi’s book *Black and White* deals with two teenagers, one black and one white who are basketball teammates and commit a crime. While the book deals with racism, society and social emotional growth, I do not touch on these subjects because I have learned that won’t catch the student’s attention. Instead, I read the first paragraph from the novel: “I admit it. I’ve been scared shitless lots of times. But I was never as shook as when the gun in Eddie’s hand went off. It thundered inside that car like the whole world was coming to an end. I never expected Eddie to pull the trigger...” Every time I book talk *Black and White* male students request to take out the novel. Even my reluctant readers want to read Mr. Volponi’s book.

The series *Thirteen Reasons Why* on Netflix has become so popular that a second season is in the works. Students and teachers are watching this show and are coming to the library to find similar books on suicide and mental health. I created a display in the library window that faces the hallway. It says “Thirteen MORE Reasons Why” and below the window on the shelf I have fiction and nonfiction books that deal with suicide. In the future, I will keep track of trends going on with young adults and see if I can make connections with books.

My personal website was taken down by the district in January 2017 for upgrades. This happened to everyone in the district. However, we were not provided training on the new system until later in the year so I was not able to upload the links that I collected on mental health. My website is very generic looking and is taking a bit longer than I anticipated. However, it is my goal to continue with teen focused links that deal with social emotional well-being. These links will deal with hotlines such as the GLBT National Help Hotline, but information on New York State driver’s permits, SAT/ACT and other information that is important to teens in their lives.

**Analysis of Data on Student Learning:** I had to quickly do a 180 for my project since new books were not being checked out. So, I manually kept a record on the mental health books that were loaned. These books were already part of the library’s collection. Very few of these books were nonfiction. If they were nonfiction they were biographies. An example is *A Child Called It* by Dave Pelzer. Some of the popular fiction books that dealt with social emotional well-being were: *Suicide Notes* by Michael Thomas Ford, *Sold* by Patricia McCormick, *Forbidden* by Tabitha Suzuma, *Willow* by Julia Hoban, and *Want to go Private?* By Sarah Darer Littman.

The titles listed above deal with mental health in some way and I have found the more disturbing the book summary the more students became interested. Also, it did not matter if the books were a few years old. In fact *Sold* by Patricia McCormick is from 2006 and the subject matter still interests students. *Thirteen Reasons Why* was originally published in 2007, ten years ago, and the novel continues to be relevant. *A Child Called It* by Dave Pelzer was published in 1995 and continues to go out at least five times a year. Demand was so strong that I purchased another copy for the library.

My goal was to bring new books into the library that would appeal to students and that had a focus on mental health. I still think it is very important to find newly released nonfiction books because my patrons need up to date information. However, it appears that when it comes fiction books and biographies it does not matter the publication date as long as the stories are compelling to my students.

**Teacher Participant Name: Carrie Patane**

**Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:**

January’s habit (4) was pushed back to February due to Christmas Break and Regents week. Habit 5 was combined with habit 6 in March.

I skipped an “activity” for Habit 7 (Sharpen the Saw) and discussed what they did on the April Recess as the “activity” since we need to be mindful of our bodies and give ourselves a break in order to maintain peak performance and take care of our emotional state of being.

**Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning:** I examined my written reflections and found the following:

After working with David Lloyd to implement the 7 Habits in the classroom, we discovered the implementation of the habits needed to be mindful and engaging. The habits themselves can be “read” about, but just lecturing or reading and writing about the 7 habits was not engaging students enough to impact their social and emotional connections to the habits. We met to determine how we could adapt the delivery of the habits in order to actively involve them in the habit. Once we did this, both my perspective and my students’ perspectives shifted. Simply reading about the habit was not enough. They needed to experience the habit in action. Once we began showing videos and engaging students in scenarios where they needed to apply the strategy in a mindful way, students began to internalize the everyday importance and applications of the habits. By challenging them, I was able to see a physical change in their body language, indicating an increase in interest and overall effectiveness of the program. Subsequent to engaging with the habits, students began making mindful choices about their schoolwork and became more proactive in the learning process. I witnessed students prompting each other about being “mindful” of their upcoming schedules and heard them using the word “proactive” in their discussions as they were planning their upcoming weekends. Two students also approached me about creating their own opportunities for extra credit. They planned their own projects, determined their worth, set their own deadlines, and followed through on their own learning process for their project. Students were able to apply their understanding of the habits in school and at home. Students openly stated that their social emotional well-being was enhanced by being more aware of others and by being mindful about listening to the needs of their peers and families. They also indicated that their general sense of stress management and problem-solving skills was greatly enhanced.

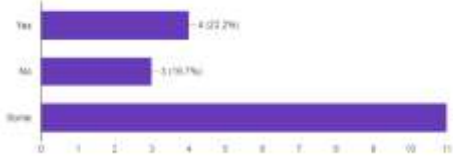
**Analysis of Data on Student Learning:** I examined student mission statements, data from our Socratic seminar & student responses to our class survey found the following:

We wrapped up the program with a Socratic Seminar, mission statement writing, and a survey. Based on the seminar the students participated in, the activities and discussions relative to the 7 habits appeared to help foster a more collaborative and productive learning environment. Earlier in the year, students were a bit more argumentative and were more focused on “being right”, rather than engaging in deeper thought. Student reflections on the seminar indicate that our lesson on habits 4, 5 & 6) (Win/Win, Seek First to understand, and Synergize) helped them to shift their attitude toward class discussion and fully understand the purpose of a seminar. The habits were not included in one of my Honors sections and the social emotional environment in that section seemed to be tenser during our class discussions. Their reflections indicated that they continued to repeat the same information and felt they could have gone deeper into the text. I suspect that the habits helped my other section find more academic success, but the class sizes are also different, so class size may also have played a role in their success rates. Overall, in my final assessment of the Socratic Seminars, their personal rubrics indicated that in the section of habit participants the group was more collaborative and productive, grades were higher, and discussion points were more elevated. It was also evident during their discussion that the habits group was more proactive about preparing for their discussion. They emailed me questions they wanted to pose and came in to show me their preparations ahead of time. Additionally, observations of the interaction between student participants was much more accepting and supportive, reinforcing the habits as a tool for social emotional growth and overall success. These students also took more notes allowing them to reference their peers directly and politely, reinforcing the habit 5 strategy of stating “what I heard [so and so] say was... but I’m wondering...” . To further assess this, it would be nice if I was able to compare the data with a class of a similar size.



The survey data reported some interesting findings:

Do you feel this program helped you focus on the goals YOU set? (11 responses)



- Only 16 percent of the students who participated did not feel that the program made a difference in their ability to focus on their goals.

Do you feel this program should be continued with next year's incoming Freshmen? (19 responses)



- 78% feel that this program should continue with next year's incoming freshmen.

I do. I feel as though this motivated me to be more organized, meaning I can now put more time into more important things.

I feel like I have made progress toward becoming a positive force in my life as well as others.

I have started to adopt some of those traits and I am in control of my life.

I let my friends influence me, as well as making choices myself. If someone doubts me I strive to prove them wrong, and I notice positive aspects of others and try to incorporate them into my own traits.

Yes, I do recognize and appreciate good traits in others, but I do not adapt them. I have my own traits and will only change if they become detrimental. I am defiantly taking my life by the reigns instead of letting others tell me what to do.

Yes. This I think does have to do with what we've been doing. It opened my eyes and actually made me think about these things. Usually I'd just go on with life day by day not doing much, but thinking about this- I now have a reason to do more. The future.

I have started to adopt those behaviors into my own life, because I see them being successful so I want to be successful too. I have decided to be control of my own destiny by being proactive and not letting others be a bad influence on me.

I've been more mindful of what's most important, so yes.

I have found a balance, I found that if I do things early (homework or other things I need to do) then I feel more relaxed and able to do the things I want.

This has made me realize that just working to the best of my ability isn't enough, I must work for the betterment of my team to make sure everyone succeeds.

I am more mindful about the impact of the relationship. This habit has impacted me because it made me realize that even if something does not impact me, it could impact another person and I should be mindful of that.

Yes, listening to others is very important, as is working together. Compromising is the best thing you can do. If every person gets a taste of what they want, it equally spreads the feeling of success.

Did you find value in writing a mission statement? (19 responses)



- Students also seemed to value the process of writing their mission statements. 94% of the participants found value in creating a mission statement.

## What is your personal mission statement? (18 responses)

To express myself through my imagination and originality as I write stories and music, that I hope will one day inspire others as it had inspired me.  
Imagination. Originality. Hope.

Though others may doubt me, I will stand by my beliefs to inspire others into discovery of themselves.

I want to live my life showing creativity and loyalty while being a leader and also want to be successful and important while at the same time making a difference.

From start to finish, I will not only have the determination, but the curiosity and excitement towards helping others and myself finding their and my own personal value, and letting those around me see their own beauty.

A strong value of humor in myself and others will boost my happiness. I strive to be a wholesome individual, and be remembered as an honest friend who says things how they are.

To accomplish all the goals I make, better myself through education, be friendly and sympathetic towards others around me, and persevere through tough times.

Everyday, I pledge to exhibit my charm, portray extensive class, and keep control over my life.

I want my confidence, motivation, and determination to help me achieve my goals, while inspiring those around me every day

I live my life with integrity, selflessness, and diligence to help my friends, family, and community improve in faith and kindness.

To wake up with a smile that I can spread to others, ready to improve, all while being free in my choices - Trying to make the best ones along the way.

Make your mark on the world by overcoming the challenges that they throw at you, but make your mark on your life by being reliable, optimistic, and surrounding yourself with those whom you love

Achieve and balance ambition through perseverance

I will be independent and live life as though it is an adventure. I will be successful in life and achieve all of my goals while being selfless and helping others around me to create a better world.

Trying is the key to my success.

To be mindful of others around me by making a contribution to assist individuals to reach their full potential and to inspire others through achieving my goals and succeeding.

I will live my life with confidence and wisdom and surround myself with diversity so I can continue learning and impact the world.

Approach each day with order, brilliance, and valor.

Based on my analysis of student answers on the survey, and observations of student engagement while writing their mission statements, I can conclude that is likely that the habits helped students be mindful of themselves and others and impacted their overall social and emotional states of being. Here are the reasons why they found value in the process of writing their own mission statements:

If Yes - why? If NO, why not? (Explain your answer.) (18 responses)

It let me consider what I believe in most.

It's a good statement of motivation and personalized so you can make it your own

it does help in motivating me when I think about it.

Personally it's something I really need to work on, and having be able to remember it and see it for a long time and quite the number or times, its something i can frequently reflect upon, not even just this year either.

Made me realize my values.

Yes, but I think it would help me more if I were to spend more time making it, it's a good way to identify who you are and what you want out of life.

Writing the mission statement made me think more about my own values and characteristics I want to exhibit in my life.

It helped me look at my future, identify what I want to do, and fining ways to achieve my goals while maintaining a happy, healthy life.

It helps establish goals.

It reminded me where I want to be in life. It gives me a reason to do the things I do, and to do more than what I'm doing now. I want to reach that, I want a good future.

It helped me realize my ultimate goal

It gives you a way to sum up your goals in a short way.

I feel like it reminds the person of what they value and how I want to live my life.

I dont find any purpose for a mission statement.

It gives me something that I can use to keep myself motivated when it feels everything is just going wrong. Something positive.

it helps to focus on my goal.

It helped me to start to stay on track better because seeing it on paper reinforces my values better and makes them easier to remember and live by.

It actually guides you and helps you imagine who you are.

Student surveys confirmed my assumptions about the impact the habits had on their personal social and emotional wellbeing. Five of the eighteen students commented that the habits did have at least some impact on their lives. Students generally found value in the program and indicated that it had a positive impact on their overall sense of self and the way they connect socially and emotionally with others.

## In what ways did practicing the 7 habits effect your social & emotional well-being, including your values, attitudes, behaviors, goals, and understanding of others?

(18 responses)

It has helped me with depression by making me realize that anything is possible if we all work towards a common goal and everyone wins.

It didn't affect me as much as I thought it would, it helped partially but in some cases I was already doing some things. And another thing is that it was all about habits and how you can't change them, which is kind of ironic because before he came in we had habits and here he was trying to change them.

It did help me to be open to new ideas but most of the habits I already knew and did.

It let me see that in order for a community to survive and thrive together as a whole, you need to be mindful of others while also being mindful of yourself, but not too much.

It made me realize my values and how to plan accordingly. It also pushed me to achieve my goals and take others feelings into account.

I didn't really effect me.

I think the habits had little to no effect on my life.

They helped me make the most of my time, while also helping me strive for an end goal by working hard and helping everyone around me.

Made me think about where I want to be and reminded me of the things I need to do in order to get there. I'm now more mindful about what I say to my friends, and I also am getting back on track with doing my work. It reminded me of what I need to do to be successful in life, and I have some pretty big goals.

helped my realize my ultimate goal

I don't think that they really help me because I did most of these things before the program

It has made me more mindful of the people around me, and has given me a way to achieve my goals.

I didnt practice them outside of the class activities.

It motivated me a bit to get my work done early after a session, but after a week I usually just went back to my old habits.

I am mostly the same, although I think I'm starting to manage my time a little better.

The seven habits did not really affect any of those areas all that much but it allowed me to be more mindful of certain things in certain situations.

Not everything helped, but some still did. What helped for me may not help for others, and what didn't help me may help others. We usually don't take the time to sit down and think about these things, but we should, and this makes us do just that. Makes us look at the bigger picture and to remember where we want our actions to lead us.

In conclusion, I am quite pleased with the outcome of this project. Initially, I feared that the students would miss out on valuable instruction and worried that losing a day of curriculum would put the students behind



without having enough of a positive effect on their ability to be mindful of the way their social and emotional wellbeing impacts their educational experience and their academic performance. I was pleasantly surprised that I was able to carve out enough time to create a meaningful experience with the habits and complete all of the required curriculum. I generally feel that teachers and students have a lot of pressure placed on them, and we both need to be more mindful of the social and emotional choices we make which impact our learning and the relationships within our classrooms. This project brought my students a sense of self-awareness which I hope will benefit them for years to come. I will certainly make time for Social-Emotional enrichment in my classroom in the future, as it does have more value than I realized.

**Teacher Participant Name: Stacey Van Campen**

**Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:**

I created a series of sketchbook assignments (based on the life and career of Mordicai Gerstein) that turned into a NYSATA presentation a few years ago. We are now taking that Power Point "*Shifting to an Art/Literacy Classroom*" and turning it into an article. Throughout the sketchbook unit, I used art and literacy together to show Social Emotional Growth in the students' artwork and writing assignments. We used our Power Point Presentation from the NYSATA Conference to create a Google doc. We have been writing and revising collaboratively to determine what we put in and what we take out. Once we have the release and permissions signed, we plan to submit to the NAEA Educational Journal. My project combines last year's theme of mindful literacy and this year's Social Emotional theme.

**Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning:** We examined our written reflections and found the following:

The following sections describe in detail, my sketchbook unit, including student artwork and writing that reflect the year-long goals of my art classroom.

**The Life of an Artist: How it Begins**

Because I know the importance of offering student's opportunities to see how artists get started in this field, how they use their craft to create or express a mood, and how they use art to respond to the world in unique ways, I decided they would study Mr. Gerstein's life as an artist. Using Gerstein's autobiographical piece in *Artist to Artist* by Eric Carle (2007), my class learned how art appeals to us all in different but universal ways. Gerstein told the story of how he got started when he was a young boy, how he loved to look at old masters' artwork and copy them into a scrapbook his mother gave him. Mordicai was always trying to express his feelings about something...always trying to convey the mood of the story or of the character.

After years of trying out every style and kind of paint and pencil and crayon, I arrived at a way of working that feels the most comfortable, the most like me. But still, I believe every picture I make is somehow based on a picture I have seen somewhere – in a museum, or in a comic book, or on a poster – at some time in my life. (Carle, pp. 38 ).

So, my students and I visited the computer lab in order to create their own museum page. Students were asked to save/print images/artworks that they were drawn to...whatever the reason may be. It could be the composition, subject matter, style, use of materials, expressive qualities, to begin to understand how important it is to look deeply into other artists' works for inspiration. Some of the resources they used included: (<https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/category/artist>), (<https://www.moma.org/>), (<http://www.metmuseum.org/>), (<https://www.google.com/>).

The students printed their images and arranged them in their sketchbooks to create their own "museum page". Finally, based on their scrapbook research, they each selected one piece of artwork or artist to emulate and reproduce. They verbalized in class why they chose that particular artwork...Was their choice emotionally driven or did it contain technical aspects that they wanted to aspire to create? Students

analyzed and dissected that one work of art that somehow inspired them. Upon completion, each piece was then critiqued by the class.

### **Artist's Critique Using the Language of Art**

Throughout the school year, I asked my students to complete a written critique that describes the work of a professional artist. Because they were already engaged in the study of artist Mordecai Gerstein, I based this assignment on his work. Students selected and read one of Gerstein's picture books (Gerstein, 1997; 2001; 2002; 2004) then chose an image to analyze using elements of art (line, shape, form, color, value, texture, and space) and principles of design (balance, movement, rhythm, contrast, emphasis, unity). Their task was to write a critique of one Gerstein piece utilizing as many art vocabulary terms (elements of art and principles of design) as necessary to accurately describe the chosen work. The students use their "visual vocabulary" to talk about the technical aspects of the artwork and then they add a sentence that describes how they could relate that artwork to their own artwork. For example:

**"This is an amazing piece titled *Jonah and the Two Fish*. The water is almost Surreal, you can tell it's water but at the same time you can't. I love the texture and rhythm of the water. I also love the brilliant color of the fish. He used greens, a salmon color, blues, and highlighted it with orange and gold to create emphasis on the fish. He also used gold to create emphasis on Jonah. I think Gerstein created a great illusion of depth and space in this piece."**

### **The Visual Self-Portrait**

We also read aloud the *Man Who Walked Between the Towers*. We discussed French aerialist Philippe Petit's passion for life and walking on a tightrope. We talked about risk-taking and pursuing your dreams though there may be some obstacles along the way. We talked about adventures. My goal was for the students to create a text self-portrait that conveyed to the viewer, a time in their life when they experienced determination, sheer joy, or realized they had a profound skill. We looked at some examples of self portraits and talked about their expressions, the color scheme they used and how that affects the mood of the artwork and the message that is conveyed. We did some more technical writing that analyzed \ personal experiences. Telling their stories led to brainstorming sessions where they decided how to convey their message and express themselves. The writing samples then turned into sketches for artwork and later, finished pieces. The writing prompts were meant to elicit emotions and thoughts that connect to SEL. This allowed them to identify feelings and express them in writing as well as artistic images . Anytime the students are asked to share their art or writing in class, they are developing their social skills. The following quotes from students' responses and conversations will serve as examples...

**"When my family goes to New York City, there is so much to love about it; the lights, being able to get lost in the crowd, the little diner in Gramercy Plaza with the best grilled cheese and tomato soup I've ever had. Since the first time I stood on my cousin's rooftop in Queens, watching the sunset over Manhattan and the city lights beginning to twinkle like stars, I knew I belonged in that big city.**  
"

**"The time I discovered that I had a talent was when I was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. I drew a box of crayons and it was picked to be put on a race car. Another time in 6<sup>th</sup> grade my design was chosen of all the 6<sup>th</sup> graders in my school for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade spotlight program cover. I never thought I was good at art but now I realize how much I love it and how much joy it brings me to look at a finished piece and know that I have a talent that not everyone has. I am truly grateful to be able to create art rather than just admire other people's."**

**Analysis of Data on Student Learning:** We examined Mordicai Gerstein and found the following:

### **The Moral of our Story**

Collaborating on this project as art educator and teacher educator, we learned a lot that we can share with our respective colleagues. We learned that....

- **Art and literacy have a lot in common.** The vocabulary that literacy teachers use and the vocabulary that art teachers use is quite similar (tone, image, perspective, rhythm, emphasis, etc.) and can help us understand both disciplines better. Artists who study other artists' works become more successful artists, just like writers who read widely. Studying the kinds of texts that you hope to express and create is essential to critical literacy in any field.
- **The universe is "text".** If all communication has a sender and a receiver (author/reader; artist/viewer; performer/theater goer, etc., then all literacy pieces can be considered text. O'Toole (2008) says that literacy isn't just about reading and writing, "but all the symbol systems, linguistic and otherwise, that mediate meaning, each with their own literacy demands (O'Toole, Sinclair, and Jeanneret, 2008, p. 31). He refers to multiliteracies as oracy (speaking and listening), literacy (reading and writing), visual literacy (reading and interpreting visual symbols), ...
- **Creative freedom is a necessary component for both art and literacy instruction.** Offering students both voice and choice as they express, create, communicate, etc. facilitates the creative process (Cameron, 2015).
- **Studying the life and work of author-artists** and using/applying what they learn can lead students to think critically, express, analyze.
- **Responsive professional development** can indeed have an immediate impact on instruction and classroom outcomes.
- **Teaching art within a critical literacy framework** requires students to utilize language arts skills such as speaking, listening and writing. Art provides a critical lens for understanding students can look past what is right in front of them. (aka reading between the lines; close reading). Art is a vehicle for using literacy for social justice.

Most importantly, our collaboration has helped both of us see and understand two important morals: First, that experimenting with one literacy activity in the art classroom can serve as a launching point for many more rich art/literacy activities; we need to trust our own instincts about what is good pedagogy for our own students and be willing to take a risk; and second, that incorporating literacy into art lessons offers an inclusive approach for *all* learners to explore, express, analyze, and participate in creating and making meaning, regardless of age, language, or artistic ability.

**Teacher Participant Name: Joseph C. Houppert**

**Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:**

Stress can have a major impact on cultivating a learning environment that is conducive for optimal learning in a science laboratory classroom. Students differ in their ability to prepare for, recover from, and adapt to change or stress. Emotional wellness is one aspect of resilience. Depleting emotions can cause a waste of energy and deplete our internal reserves. Depleting emotions cause an increase in the production of the hormone cortisol, which can affect our ability to think and communicate clearly.

Gretchen Fronk, an English teacher at the Oswego High School and a participant in Project SMART, initiated a new "Unleash Your Happy" program utilizing therapy dog teams at OHS. The teams were integrated into various classes and offices at the Oswego High School to assist with academic struggles, as well as lowering stress levels and facilitating class camaraderie. I wanted to bridge Gretchen's program with additional data and information to study the effects of using therapy dogs on social-emotional learning in a science laboratory classroom. The purpose of this project was to study the impacts of a therapy dog on the emotional wellness, coherence, and heart rhythms of students in a science classroom.

Students in a Pre-AP Biology class and a Living Environment were given a survey asking them to list their top three stress triggers associated with that class.

During a period of 1-2 weeks students took their blood pressure using a digital blood pressure monitor. Measurements were taken during normal classroom routines and procedures. An average of three measurements was used to establish a baseline for each student. During a four-month period (January – April) a therapy dog was brought into the classroom to interact with students. These dog-student interactions were contingent upon the comfort level of the student and the lesson being conducted in the classroom. Most of the interactions involved petting them, talking with them, or just close proximity as the dog was walked around the classroom. After interacting with the therapy dog, students measured their blood pressure. Each student recorded three blood pressure measurements in the presence of the therapy dog. An average of the three measurements was recorded. Baseline measurements were recorded in the same manner as prior to any interaction with the therapy dogs.

Coherence can be achieved when the heart, mind, and body are all working in sync. In a coherent state we have more energy, think more clearly, and can handle challenges with more stability. Emotions can be measured by our heart rhythms. Heart rate variability (HRV) measures heart rate changes with every beat. This can be an indicator of physiological resilience and behavioral flexibility. Coherent heart rhythms can help the brain process information more efficiently. Memory (long and short term), reaction time, decision making, ability to focus, and problem solving have been shown to improve with coherence.

A HeartMath Inner Balance Trainer Coherence Scoring System was used to measure coherence and heart rate variability (HRV) for students in the Pre-AP biology class. The software app was loaded on high school iPads so students could measure these attributes before and during/after the interaction with a therapy dog. However, the OHS iPads did not have the lightning connector to allow us to connect to the innerbalance probe. Therefore, only a limited number of measurements could be taken using my personal cell phone connected to the innerbalance probe. A total of four students measured their coherence and HRV before and during/after interacting with the therapy dog.

Discussions about the effects of stress, emotional wellness, performance, and overall feelings after the therapy dog visitations were conducted with both classes. A class lesson was given on the physiology of coherence and its relationship to the autonomic nervous system. Strategies for building and sustaining resilience during stressful situations were discussed and practiced. We discussed strategies for completing laboratories on time while maintaining academic success. We also discussed strategies for taking tests and ways to reduce test anxiety.

**Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning:** We examined our written reflections and found the following:

Most of the students taking Pre-AP Biology have a high academic ranking and take challenging courses at the high school. Students in the Living Environment class are a very heterogeneous group consisting of high and low academic ability. Some of these students were not used to doing homework during their middle school experience, but were able to move forward to high school Regents classes. Both of these groups of students find the rigors of an academic science class at the high school level challenging and stressful.

A survey was given to determine if there were common stress triggers among these two groups of students. I learned that my Pre-AP students were most stressed about doing labs and completing them on time. These students ranked the requirement of writing daily learning objectives and answering them as their number two stress related activity. The third-ranked stress trigger for this group of students was taking tests. I learned that my Living Environment students were most stressed over the actions, behavior, and distractions from some of the students in their class. They ranked labs as the number two stress related activity in their class. The third-ranked stress trigger for Living Environment students was split between homework and tests.



Interaction with a therapy dog did not affect the blood pressure in the Living Environment class. However, approximately one half of the students in the Pre-AP class showed lower average blood pressure after the therapy dog was introduced to their class. This data is not conclusive because of human error and the number of trials conducted.

Due to the limited number of innerbalance devices, only four Pre-AP students were monitored for coherence and heart rate variability (HRV) before and after interaction with a therapy dog. In three of the four students, coherence values improved in the presence of a therapy dog. Heart rate variation improved in all four students in the presence of the therapy dog.

Although the data is inclusive because of the small sampling size, I have learned there are mechanisms for students to reduce stress in a science classroom. The therapy dog seemed to put the students in a more coherent state. Based on the data and physical observations students were able to focus, think more clearly, and handle challenges better. Based on their HRV's these students would also have better physiological resilience and behavioral flexibility.

The presence of a therapy dog also put me in a more relaxed and coherent state. A teacher's social and emotional wellness is also a very important aspect of classroom learning. Stress and anxiety can be projected on to the rest of the class. Stress reduction in my classroom has been a common theme since the initiation of this project and will continue in the future.

### **Analysis of Data on Student Learning:**

I analyzed the student survey and the data from interactions with a therapy dog and found that students were generally in a more coherent state when a therapy dog was in the classroom. The data indicate that a student's heart, mind, and body are all working in sync. In a coherent state, students have more energy, think more clearly, and can handle challenges with more stability. Most students were excited to hear a therapy dog would be used in their classroom. In discussions with both classes, there was general sense of a more relaxed, less tense environment when the dog was present. Some students said they were able to focus better after petting and talking to the dog. Other students said they just liked knowing the dog was there if they wanted to interact with it. Student comments suggested that the therapy dog helped in reducing tension and made the classroom environment more enjoyable.

This project introduced students to social-emotional learning. They were able to recognize certain stress triggers and learn attributes that may help them become more successful in various academic environments. Students learned about blood pressure, nervous system responses, coherence, and heart rate variation as they apply to emotional well-being. The majority of students enjoyed participating in this project.

### **Teacher Participant Name(s): Laura Bateman & Elizabeth Crannell**

#### **Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:**

Due to the nature of our flipped classroom, we were able to take the time to conference with our students individually and discuss goals and an action plan for each of them to be able to work towards their goals. It was great to talk to each student about their struggles and what they thought was helping them to be more successful this year. In a traditional classroom, we wouldn't have had the time and flexibility to do this because we would have been in front of the room giving instruction. We were able to have our students continue to work through the content while conferencing so there wasn't any time educational time lost.

#### **Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning: We examined our written reflections and found the following:**

Through this project we learned, when our classroom was structured as a blended learning environment, the students were able to build stronger relationships with their classmates and us as their teachers. This resulted in an increase in productive communication between classmates because they cared about their

success and their classmates' success. It also seemed as though they worked harder in class because of the level of respect they built for themselves and their teacher.

#### **Analysis of Data on Student Learning:**

After reviewing the student surveys, we found the majority of the students enjoyed being in a blended math class more than a traditional math class. They reported in the survey that it was less stressful to be able to learn at their own pace, and work together with their classmates. Others reported they appreciated being able to have access to the teacher in a one on one or in a small group setting. The majority responded they had a better grasp of the content because they put forth more effort when they were able to listen to the lesson on their own, and found time to work through the math lessons outside of class.

#### **Teacher Participant Name(s): Jay-Nel Steitz at CiTiBoces**

#### **Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:**

My project was promoting literacy by using *The Battle of the Kids' Books* for 2016. I was able to tie in the topic of the class, Social Emotional Learning. I did this by having some of my students choose a book from the 16 contenders and completing a written piece or small project focused on SEL. I was not able to do as much as I anticipated. For instance, I was not able to have a debate before the undead book was chosen. I was also not able to create a book trailer for the books (if there is time, I may have students do this with some of the poetry books).

I also did not create any worksheets for the students to fill out after reading one of the books. I thought about each student individually and their social-emotional needs and we came up with a small project they could do to show that they read the book and connected with it in some way.

I was not able to hold a contest like I intended due to time and absentee issues.

I was not able to do a complete lesson on a certain book as there was not enough time, and I did not receive my books. I was able to borrow a couple from the librarian here, however, she did not have enough for class sets.

Our librarian came in and did a presentation on audiobooks. We set up accounts so students are able to listen to books. Also, they were set up with an account so they could download free books. Students can search by topics they are interested in and download the book onto their account. They now have access to this book at any time, especially if they download the app.

Instead of using vinyl on the lockers, we decided to use construction paper. Mrs. Cooper printed out letters to then paste on the construction paper. Students helped with this process.

#### **Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning:** We examined our written reflections and found the following:

I have found that when you give students more choices and give them some time to think about things, they are more receptive to reading. For instance, I did not force my students to read *The Battle of the Kids' Books*. I found some students who were interested in reading some of those books. This in turn was observed by other students in the class; they then were asking if they could borrow books or if I had any books on certain topics. This led me to speak to the librarian about the audiobooks and free downloadable books. She gave a presentation and students were very interested. They were asking if there was an app and then downloaded the app. Some students at this point will log into their accounts and start reading or listen to a book after they have completed their assignment.

Students who do enjoy working with their hands helped to display the book binds of the *Kids' Books* on the lockers in my classroom. They had to put the cut-out letters together and make sure they had the title of the book correct before gluing them onto the construction paper.

Students also built a couple bookshelves for my classroom. By being able to display books, students are more apt to pick a book up and become interested in wanting to know more about that book. This means that most of my students are visual learners—they learn better when there are examples in front of them that they can see instead of just being told.

### **Analysis of Data on Student Learning:**

Students also helped to keep track of the contenders by placing the correct titles on the chart. This chart was displayed in the hallway. I not only had students, but teachers as well asking me about this.

Students who did enjoy reading the books created some great projects. For instance, one student read *Samurai Rising* and decided to show off artistic skills by using imagery to draw a picture of a samurai and the equipment they used. This student often draws when upset. This is a coping strategy the student uses to help when feeling stressed out. This student also read *Anna and the Swallow Man* and created a comic strip displaying different images that resonated with him.

Another student did a variety of small projects: She read *Freedom in Congo Square* and wrote a poem about freedom and America. She also read *Makoons* and wrote a summary detailing some events from the story while connecting it to how she would feel if she were alone. This got the student thinking about her social-emotional needs and felt the same way the character felt—they did not like being alone.

She also read *When Green Becomes Tomatoes* and drew a poster by dividing it into seasons. She placed quotes from the books and drew pictures of different symbols described in the book as well as symbols that she felt represented the seasons.

At this point in the school year, more students have expressed an interest in reading. Students have come to me on their own and have asked to borrow some of the books. Other students have observed this and then have asked to borrow a book as well. It may not be a *Battle of the Kids' Books*, but at least they are interested in reading; they ask for topics that they are fascinated by.

