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Specialist

MASTER CLASS

Social-Emotional Learning & Trauma-Sensitive Practices in English Language Teaching

- with Janine Darragh and Luis Javier Pentón Herrera -

Session 2 Supplementary Guide

Contextual Factors for SEL and Trauma-Sensitive Practices



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Summary

This session will provide a framework for understanding the context in which ELT professionals may want to apply SEL and trauma-sensitive practices. Luis and Janine encourage educators to first consider the needs of their learners, asking questions about the learning context and learners' individual backgrounds and well-being. They suggest using multimodal approaches for getting to know learners, highlighting that educators should avoid making assumptions based on what they think they know about their learners.

Janine and Luis also consider the institutional supports and constraints educators may encounter, from contexts in which SEL and trauma-sensitive practices are well established and accepted to ones in which educators may need to shape their own approach to these practices. They pay particular attention to the way in which cultural perspectives on mental health and well-being practices may impact the way these practices are introduced by describing their own experiences in a wide array of contexts.

Session Takeaways

1. Consider individual learner needs, including those related to trauma.
2. Identify supports and constraints for addressing emotional well-being at the institutional and community level.
3. Consider cultural perspectives on mental health and well-being practices.



Examples from the Field

Institutional Considerations

[SEL Policy at the State Level](#) (CASEL): This interactive web page provides links to existing SEL policies in states across the U.S.

[Asia-Pacific SEL Handbook](#) (UNESCO): This handbook introduces an SEL framework and training modules for early childhood teachers in the Asia-Pacific region ([CC BY-SA 3.0 IGO](#)).

[Schools & Mental Health](#): This UNESCO brief provides an overview of how schools can better support student well-being at the systems level.

Community & Cultural Considerations

[Maryland TESOL Handbook](#) (p. 69-75): This handbook includes the list of community organizations and clinics that Luis and his colleagues published for teachers to share with learners in need of support.

[Identity & Cultural Dimensions in the U.S.](#): This website provides an overview of different identities and cultures in the U.S. and how they may interact with a person's experience of their own mental health.

[State Pushback on SEL](#): In this session, Janine refers to pushback in the U.S. against the term "social-emotional learning." This news article reports on Idaho's State Department of Education decision to change the terminology used to describe SEL.

Classroom Practices

[Needs Assessment Survey](#): In this session, Janine describes a survey administered during her Specialist project in Nicaragua in which she gauged what challenges and strengths teachers might bring to her workshops.

[Mental Health Checks](#): Temperature checks such as the one Janine describes in this session are excellent ways to gather information about learners' emotional states and needs on an ongoing basis. This site provides 25 ideas for questions teachers can ask to check in with their students.



Identifying Mental Health Problems: This resource by SAMHSA lists behaviors related to mental health challenges that educators should look out for in students.

Understanding the Needs of ESL Students: This article sheds light on some of the challenges learners of English in the U.S., especially refugees and immigrants, might encounter and how to alleviate them.

Teaching Tip: Social Action Projects

In this session, Janine describes a social action project her students implemented on the University of Idaho campus.

One group wanted to investigate what supports were available on campus for mental health. They first scheduled an appointment with the university mental health clinic to do some primary research. One of the issues they discovered was that, because the clinic had recently been built, it was not on the campus map. Moreover, there was no sign in front of the building. So even if students were able to easily make an appointment, they might have been unable to find the building. The students ended up working with stakeholders on campus to get the building added to campus maps (paper and web) and made fliers that shared some information about the available mental health resources and how to access them, which they hung up around campus in high-trafficked locations such as the recreation center, dining halls, and public bathrooms. They also had the information displayed on electronic banners inside campus buildings.

In supporting this community initiative, students thus worked on improving the four domains of language—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—as well as on research skills, collaboration, problem-solving, and communicating professionally with stakeholders.

See [Course Bibliography](#) for additional sources related to this session.