**Project 3-Leadership Vision and E-Learning Plan**

**An E-Learning Plan for Social Emotional Learning in Schools: BASE Education**

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**Introduction**

Emotional well-being is a core concern within several research disciplines, including mental health, education, and psychology. The assertion is that psychological or emotional well-being is relatively stable but not fixed (Geertshuis, 2019). Thus, psychological well-being can be affected by changes in environmental, mental, and emotional conditions over days, weeks, or months (Geertshuis, 2019). Conceptions of well-being within education have mainly focused on students' increased incidence and severity of depression and anxiety. With the change in education from traditional classroom settings to online learning, now back to the classroom elevates levels of anxiety and distress. Thus, the importance of incorporating mindfulness practices and social-emotional learning (SEL) for the well-being of students post Covid-19 and in determining effective educational outcomes is fundamental for academic success.

This proposal aims to recommend BASE Education, an e-learning platform approved by The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), a trusted source for knowledge about high-quality, evidence-based SEL practices in education (CASEL, 2021). BASE Education will provide students and educators in Charter Schools, K-12 campuses located in Passaic, New Jersey, an urban charter school organization, with approximately 3,000 students combined from four campuses a variety of SEL implementations, impactful social-emotional skills, and offer over 100 courses on topics including coping strategies, digital citizenship, bullying, and equity. The e-learning will incorporate BASE Education as a digital platform that empowers students to control their emotions and behaviors, improve relationship skills and social awareness, and exercise critical decision-making to plan for their futures (Edmentum, 2021).

**Vision**

Social and emotional learning (SEL) and mindfulness are an integral part of education and human development. The Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Development revised what constitutes success in our schools. Scientific evidence demonstrates that social, emotional, and academic development are interconnected in the learning process (Immordino-Yang et al., 2018). Mindfulness practices have also become one of the most critically essential practices followed in education during the Covid-19 pandemic. Mindfulness maintains a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment with openness and curiosity (Browning et al., 2020). Through mindfulness practices and SEL, children and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to develop mindfulness, healthy identities, manage emotions, show empathy for others, maintain healthy relationships, and achieve personal and practical goals (Ergas, 2019). Mindfulness and SEL practices also cultivate attention, including self-awareness and self-knowledge of thoughts, feelings, sensations, and how they affect one's actions. It is a promising approach to teaching educators and students’ self-awareness and self-regulation skills associated with school success and adulthood (Browning et al., 2020).

As a school leader, my objective is to create a school culture and climate that promotes the ongoing improvement of learning and teaching for students and staff while ensuring school safety for all stakeholders. I believe in bringing the community together and sharing a variety of diverse leadership skills. If we develop a community that focuses on individual well-being and improving instruction through data-driven goals, all of our students will succeed. I am motivated to improve my school organization by increasing academic achievement and developing mindfulness through social-emotional learning and growth mindset research-based pedagogy and practices. Together, we can transcend our commitment and dedication to ensure that all students receive a safe, innovative, equitable, and student-centered educational experience. In providing various strategies, methods, and models in making learning accessible, learning can be fun and tailored to meet the needs of all learners. As the vice-principal for seven years at a Charter School, I am involved with implementing the curriculum, assessment and instruction, data disaggregation and analysis, teacher evaluations, student discipline, well-being, and managing our yearly needs assessment.

With student safety, physically and emotionally, and aggregating student learning loss due to Covid-19, being mindful of students' social-emotional needs and incorporating innovative digital learning platforms have become the forefront of education. Comprehensive programs with student-centered hands-on investigations that facilitate growth in students through productive struggle, risk-taking, creativity, and recognition are on the threshold. Thus, many educational companies are creating and implementing innovative digital e-learning platforms, such as CASEL, Edmentum, and BASE Education, to aid in student academia and well-being. Educators integrate these research-based practices and adapt the lessons to fit the needs of individual students, students working in groups, or implementing strategies schoolwide to foster a safe, healthy, and positive school culture and climate (Browning et al., 2020). With the notion of student well-being in mind, mindfulness strategies and SEL lessons can help relieve daily stressors students are experiencing due to Covid-19, which will help ease the transition back to the classroom and increase academic achievements.

**E-Learning Plan**

Horton (2012) explains e-learning as the use of electronic technologies to create learning experiences. In constructing an effective e-learning plan, design (what we do) and development (how we carry out those decisions) are involved and provide students with a wealth of information and knowledge. The proposed e-learning plan, BASE Education, is an effective e-learning curriculum that inspires students to think and formulate inquiries based on their discoveries, findings, creativity, and self-expression, allowing for increased intrinsic motivation and academic development. Its digital social-emotional learning curriculum allows faculty, counselors, and administrators to connect. Assigned employees can access student work, identify any immediate danger, and collaborate with students. The CASEL approved SEL and mindfulness lesson plans and activities embedded in the program can help students build rapport through evidence-based best practices while allowing educators to customize their learning experiences (BASE, 2021).

A study conducted by the pioneers of BASE Education, with the assistance of Excelsior Youth Centers, examined the impact of BASE Education on student's well-being and academic coursework. The research indicates that 87% of students feel successful when doing BASE coursework, 71% of students reflect on BASE coursework on their own time, 77% utilize what they have learned from BASE in their everyday life, and 81% of students say that BASE empowers them to discuss personal matters with their therapist or counselor that they could not before utilizing the program (BASE, 2021). The global BASE Education SEL interactive courses and videos enable students to determine and exhibit their values, knowledge, and behavior as aligned to the topic being explored. BASE Education was created to offer students an outlet for personal growth and provides a private and safe space to share and reflect. The respectful therapeutic approach encourages students to make discoveries about themselves while giving them a sense of hope for their future (Edmentum, 2021). Every detail of the program has been built with the students' experience in mind. Vivid imagery is carefully selected to illustrate concepts and guide them through storytelling. The calming design allows for thoughts to be deeply explored, and each screen has minimal text to engage the brain's emotion center actively. The result is a non-academic look and feel to evoke optimal engagement. Its unique model gives students autonomy to share yet provides a way for educators to quickly connect with and understand their students better (Edmentum, 2021).

Lastly, BASE Education is the only SEL program that can be utilized entirely online or in the classroom and can track potentially harmful language with real-time response monitoring. Given the vast challenges in the instructional day, educators rarely have the time or resources to give every student the one-on-one attention they deserve. This program will allow educators to know their students deeper, hear their stories, and provide them with the individualized support they need. The human element is vital, and BASE Education does not seek to replace this; instead, it provides an efficient pathway for educators to learn more about their students. Students need committed adults who are willing to work with them and provide insight into their lives. Research reports that students who utilized BASE Education as a part of their curriculum felt cared for and heard (Edmentum, 2021). Whether it is utilized in group instruction or one-on-one online, practical and complex social-emotional and mental-health lessons are coping strategies that are put in place for forward-thinking and meeting the needs of today's learners.

**The Impact of Mindfulness and Social-Emotional Learning**

The pandemic has forced disruptions in traditional education which have caused families, students, and educators moderate to high levels of stress and anxiety. Understandably, this wave of learning innovations is not always convenient, especially given that the transition has been abrupt rather than gradual. Thus, parents are concerned about the challenges that remote learning has brought for them and their children. Remote learning requires the availability of computers and the internet as needed and at exact hours. Any technical issues with the internet connection could result in a loss of instructional time (Bhamani et al., 2020). Research suggests that mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) offer the potential for addressing a wide range of both teacher and student stressors (Wigelsworth & Quinn, 2020).

There is emerging evidence demonstrating the benefits of mindfulness for individuals of all ages in physical and mental health and education (Browning et al., 2020). Zimmerman (2018) advocates that the power of mindfulness rests because, as humans, we cannot always control what our lived experience is. Thus, it is important to practice mindfulness in our everyday lives, especially during these trying times within the education system. With this notion, many schools are implementing mindfulness and SEL into their curriculum. Mindfulness practices are complementary to SEL, as self-awareness and self-management. Studies show that SEL delivers long-term improvements in skills, behavior, and academic performance while reducing anxiety and depression. Schoolwide SEL helps students excel academically, builds stronger relationships, and leads happier, healthier, more fulfilling lives (Browning et al., 2020).

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) promotes SEL as a critical element to students' academic, social, personal, and professional success. CASEL addresses five broad and interrelated areas of competence and highlights. Examples of each are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These competencies can be taught and applied at various developmental stages from childhood to adulthood and across diverse cultural contexts (CASEL, 2021). Additionally, SEL provides authentic school-family-community partnerships to establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing evaluation (CASEL, 2021). Lastly, SEL can help address various forms of inequity, empower creativity in schools, and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities (Browning et al., 2020). Many education systems globally utilize mindfulness practices and SEL in their curriculum to increase academic achievements, aid in school engagement, focus on health and wellness and fulfill interpersonal goals (Ergas, 2019).

**Student Academic Achievement**

While there are many potential contributing factors to personal anxiety towards learning, a shift from traditional in-class education to full-remote learning requires further evaluation. However, mindfulness practices have been frequently associated with stress relief and improvement in academic achievement. The Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) (2020) explains that without face-to-face interactions among students and teachers, education will suffer. Nonetheless, educators delivered instruction—including new content—as effectively as possible under unprecedented circumstances. Some district leaders set a grading policy that limited how much a student's grade could drop during the closure. Some middle school students would retain their third-quarter grade if they showed competency in the final quarter (CRPE, 2020). If students failed to show competency, their grades could only be reduced by one level. Some districts launched formal instruction but avoided real-time teaching. School districts wanted to make remote instruction easier for teachers, many of whom had children at home and maximize flexibility for parents and students. Depending on the district, teachers were provided additional time to prepare for their online classes (CRPE, 2020). Regardless of the district, the school system works closely with families to ensure safety and the best possible education for all students.

**Funding Proposal**

As the implementation of the current curricula continues for the 2021-2022 school year, supplemental programs are on the rise to support student academics and well-being. Our needs assessment from 2020-2021 indicated a need for student-centered instructional and emotional support. Reading and Math data from STAR and Renaissance presented a learning slide due to the pandemic. With little time and lack of proper training, teachers had to adjust to integrating full-time digital instructional resources. Additional Chromebooks and iPads were requested due to the imbalance of available technology resources between school and home. To ensure that students are receiving the best possible education for the 2021-2022 school year, board members and school principals from Charter Schools in Passaic, New Jersey will work collaboratively to allocate funding for specific digital platforms, technologies, and qualified professionals to train teachers on the proper implementation of the specified mindfulness and SEL e-learning platforms.

As my vision is geared for an urban school setting, the capital will be determined by our needs assessment and Title I funding. The budget allocation is determined by the collected data from our needs assessment, which indicates the amount of funding required and where it will be distributed (trained professionals for professional development, educational technologies, and the implementation of the specified e-learning SEL platform). The Title I funding will specifically be geared for school improvement by providing professional development on the e-learning platforms and technologies. While an essential part of student success, teachers lack the training required due to budgetary constraints. E-learning platforms are either pushed aside or provided with little to no guidance or support, which causes inadequate program implementation.

  The BASE Education e-learning program will be monitored by teachers, counselors, and school administration and assessed through continuous teacher and student feedback. The feedback will be utilized to assess the continuation of the e-learning platform for the following fiscal school year. Opportunities for feedback about BASE Education and the community of practice will be provided throughout the year, including surveys and discussions during monthly staff meetings. Finally, the BASE Education dashboard will be utilized to determine the level of student engagement, as the data will display course completion and accuracy. An increase of positive responses would demonstrate success. It would indicate that the provided professional developments for BASE Education and the implementation of the e-learning platform increased student motivation, improved grades, and aided in mental health and well-being.

**Conclusion**

While academia is vital for student success, well-being and mental health are the core to motivation and engagement (Geertshuis, 2019). Decades of research demonstrate that education promoting social and emotional learning (SEL) attain positive results. The findings are congregated from multiple fields of sources, including student achievement, neuroscience, health, counseling, classroom management, and the prevention of negative behavior (Ergas, 2019). While there are many potential contributing factors to personal anxiety towards learning, a shift from traditional classroom settings to online learning, now back to the classroom, requires mindfulness practices, frequently associated with stress relief and improvement in academic achievement (Ergas, 2019).

With this notion in mind, this proposal aims to recommend BASE Education, an e-learning platform approved by The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). BASE Education will provide students and educators in Charter Schools, K-12 campuses a variety of SEL implementations, impactful social-emotional skills, and courses on coping strategies, digital citizenship, bullying, and equity. The e-learning will include BASE Education as a digital platform that empowers students to regulate their emotions and behaviors, develop relationship skills and social awareness, and exercise critical decision-making to plan for their futures (Edmentum, 2021). The budget allocation will be determined by the collected data from our needs assessment, and the Title I funding will specifically be geared towards providing professional development on e-learning platforms and technologies. Lastly, BASE Education will be examined through continuous feedback, which will be utilized to assess the continuation of the e-learning platform for the 2022-2023 fiscal school year.

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