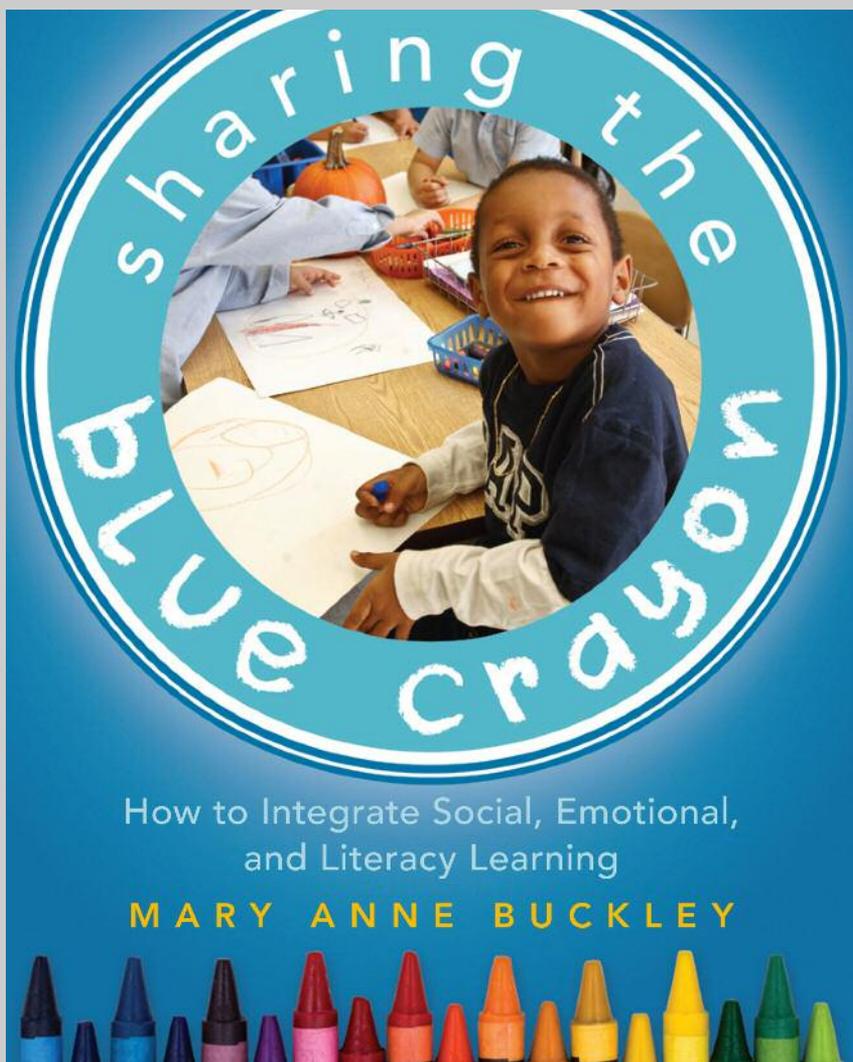


A STUDY GUIDE



How to Integrate Social, Emotional,
and Literacy Learning

MARY ANNE BUCKLEY

 **Stenhouse**
PUBLISHERS

www.stenhouse.com

Sharing the Blue Crayon

How to Integrate Social, Emotional, and Literacy Learning

Mary Anne Buckley

Chapter 1: The Language of Learning

Chapter 1 discusses the importance of oral language in early literacy development as well as the impact stress can have on children. Many children have a difficult time managing the stresses in their lives—let’s be honest; so do many adults—and thoughtful, compassionate teachers seek to understand and minimize these tensions. We must recognize that it’s not just nice to know what might be fueling misbehaviors—it’s also an essential component of academic success. As C. Cybele Raver and Jane Knitzer from the National Center for Children in Poverty tell us, “Across a range of studies, the emotional, social, and behavioral competence of young children—such as higher levels of self-control and lower levels of acting out—predict their academic performance in first grade, over and above their cognitive skills and family backgrounds” (2002, 3).

Many of us have one or two favorite methods for creating a peaceful and relaxed state of mind. My shoulders tighten and my lips are in a permanent scowl if I miss my morning meditation. Even a five-minute mindfulness breathing exercise can shift my mood and refocus my priorities. These are the very skills we can instill in our students to increase their social and emotional awareness.

Reflection Quote

Calm mind brings inner strength and self-confidence.

—Dalai Lama

Reflection Questions

1. When entering a new job site, conference center, or restaurant, what makes you feel comfortable? Clear signage, good lighting, a friendly face available for directions? What makes you feel nervous and unsure? Too many choices, unclear directions, not knowing who is “in charge”?
2. With those reflections in mind, consider how you could help your students feel comfortable on the first days of school. You might create colorful or whimsical representations of their names on their cubbies, ensure that you have easy and highly interesting texts available to read during down times, or plan games and songs as mini-breaks. At the same time, anticipate things that might be causing students to feel nervous or unsure. What steps can you take to ease their anxiety?
3. Discuss ways to implement daily supports that can help release tension and nervousness. Talk with your school’s special education teachers—they often have established routines such as frequent breaks throughout the day to redirect angst or excessive energy. Simple arm movements such as Lace-Ups (crossing your hands, intertwining your fingers, and pulling them under your chin) and Lazy Eights (drawing the infinity sign in the air with your fist while following it with your eyes) can offer independent calming techniques. The website Gonoodle.com provides a series of physically active and calming “Brain Breaks,” which can be used with the whole class to help with transitions. Many classroom teachers also are incorporating simple yoga stretches and poses to help students release tension and gain emotional balance.

Reinforcing Lessons at Home

It’s important to understand that our students will have experienced a wide range of family dynamics before they join our classrooms, and not all of those interactions will have prepared them to work well with other children and adults. This is not to blame their upbringing but to recognize that we may need to establish or add to their foundation for academic learning.

As the Rice University School Literacy and Culture Project reminds us, “The established connection between what a parent says and what a child learns has more severe implications than previously anticipated. . . . [T]he immense differ-

ences in communication styles found along socio-economic lines are of far greater consequence than any parent could have imagined. The resulting disparities in vocabulary and language development are of great concern and prove the home truly does hold the key to early childhood success” (Rice University Center for Education 2014).

When parents are actively involved in their children’s education, children make significant gains, both academically and socially. Helping parents feel comfortable and capable of guiding their children’s learning is an important part of our job to boost students’ success. The following section offers some approaches for strengthening communications between school and home, which can reduce stress and support children’s developing literacy skills.

Reflection Quote

It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.

—Frederick Douglass

Reflection Questions

1. Discuss the language make-up of your classroom. Reflect on dialogues you have heard among students on the playground; do the students shout directives, cajole their peers, or passively follow any leader? Beyond parent-teacher conferences, how do you communicate with your students’ families? Do the parents seem comfortable chatting with you, or are your interactions with parents more formal? Do they ask questions or share opinions easily?
2. How can you support families in understanding the importance of talk in their children’s literacy development? Try connecting your academic content to a “Talking Homework” project. Ask the parents to tell a story that relates to your read-aloud of the week. If you are reading *Wemberly Worried* by Kevin Henkes, for example, ask the parents to tell of a time they were worried about starting something new. If you are studying the four seasons, ask the parents to tell a story about their favorite season.

Bailey’s Elementary School in Fairfax County, Virginia, held family reading nights for many years to engage parents in their children’s literacy development. Parents and caregivers would come to school and enjoy pizza and soda while socializing with teachers and other families. Teachers would hold a mini-lesson for the parents using the students as models. The parents then

read with their children and practiced the new lesson. Partners in Print (<http://www.pacificlearning.com/p-4955-partners-in-print.aspx>) is a fee-based program designed to connect literacy learning between home and school.

3. Work with your math, science, music, and art resource teachers to design simple after-school classes that bring the joy of literacy to all learners. Consider hosting a math game night or a science video afternoon or creating a song and poetry book with nursery rhymes to share together.

Chapter 2: Teaching Students Self-Regulation Skills

Chapter 2 sheds light on how the brain reacts to stress and how these changes can affect students' behavior in the classroom. I am mindful of this research when I consider how quickly I can become unglued in unfamiliar situations. For example, when I'm driving in a new area and I have to read a dozen highway signs or I take a wrong turn in a new city, my palms get itchy, my eyes narrow, and I have a hard time thinking clearly. I have to turn off the radio and eliminate other distractions so that I can concentrate on the task at hand. Much like my student Mario, I cannot process two things simultaneously when my emotions are running on high.

The Franklin Institute (2004) shares that “stress reduces the brain's ability to retain working memory while heightening the emotions. Simply stated, stress blocks our capacity to hold on to factual information while it increases the emotional sensations of fear, worry, and anxiety.”

We want school and learning to be invigorating and challenging but not to the point of making children fearful and anxious. Self-regulations skills can help students learn how to “turn off the radio.” Children can use these skills when they need to feel more confident, capable, and in control.

Reflection Quote

People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in their true beauty is revealed only if there is light from within.

—Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

Reflection Questions

1. Think of times when you have felt overwhelmed by stimuli. How does your body react? Does it become quiet and tense or animated and agitated?
2. Reflect on times when students have had heightened energy. What were their bodies doing? Were they more fidgety or more lethargic? Were their responses “snappier” (short, sharp comments), or was their involvement more apathetic? In my case, when I’m lost in my car I often jump to the conclusion that I will run out of gas and be stranded forever, despite knowing that I have a cell phone and other tools to guide me to my destination. Brainstorm activities that would help your students discover their own “navigational powers.”
3. What thoughts race through your mind when you feel challenged or stressed? Do you feel anger, frustration, helplessness? What steps do you take to calm down and adjust your thinking? Talk with colleagues to create simple movement breaks, phrases, or songs to help students when they are feeling overwhelmed.

Chapter 3: Friendship Workshop Format

Chapter 3 introduces the Friendship Workshop format and the components of the lessons. Setting your purpose and designing a workshop that fits your schedule are the first steps to implementing Friendship Workshop. There are dozens of self-regulation skills, and determining which your students need and when to introduce them is vital to the success of Friendship Workshop.

Reflection Quote

Let's talk. Let's all talk. What we don't talk about hurts us all.

—Teaching Tolerance Project

Reflection Questions

1. Create a grid for the seven skills that are part of Friendship Workshop. Quickly and intuitively jot down the names of students' you believe would most benefit from learning each of the skills. For example, Yohana calls out regularly in class, so maybe you jot her name in the “self-control” column. When you have finished, swap grids with a colleague. Have your colleague randomly pick a student and ask why you placed him or her in that specific column. Take turns describing behaviors, sharing insights, and making adjustments.
2. Establishing a consistent time for Friendship Workshop each week helps students understand the importance of the lessons. What time commitment will you make to Friendship Workshop? Where does it fit into your schedule? Will you do weekly lessons or biweekly sessions with mini check-ins? How and when will you reinforce the lessons?

Chapter 4: Extending Friendship Workshop to Literacy Lessons

The power of Friendship Workshop really shines through when the students hear, use, and celebrate the skills in the academic arena. Chapter 4 briefly explains how to connect each skill to a literacy unit. Embedding the social and emotional components into your content areas may seem daunting until you realize how the skills improve the flow of instruction and assessment in the classroom.

Reflection Quote

Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.

—Martin Luther King Jr.

Reflection Questions

1. In a small group, discuss some of the social skills you wish your students walked in with on the first day of school. Narrow the list to three items. Then discuss the literacy skills you want your students to walk out with on the last day of school. Narrow this list to three, as well. Next, discuss why these skills are important. How do you envision your students using these skills in the future? Can you see correlations or carryovers between the self-regulation skills and the academic skills? Are there any natural bridges of support?
2. Choose three students (try to select students with a mix of social skill levels) and talk with their specialist teachers (music, art, etc.). How do these teachers describe the students? What do they see as their strengths and social or emotional needs? How could you work together to build these self-regulation skills? Examples: How could you and the Reading Recovery teacher use perseverance lessons to support your emerging ELL readers? How could you and the science teacher explore kindness lessons to engage a reluctant writer? Sometimes a fresh perspective on students' behavior, combined with another caring adult supporting the students in their social growth, can make a world of difference.
3. To help see how these skills are alive in your classroom, work with a colleague to choose one social or emotional skill and imagine that that is your curriculum. Use the textbooks and curriculum maps as resources. Design a two- or three-week unit around the skill. For example, think of giving and getting feedback as a college course in public speaking and the science curriculum or reading standards as goodies you found on Pinterest. What lessons would you create that ensure your students can give and receive feedback respectfully?

Chapter 5: Getting Along: Being Part of a Group

Chapter 5 discusses the importance of belonging to a group. When we feel connected to something larger than ourselves, we feel safe and confident. Creating a sense of community in the classroom takes purposeful planning.

Many research studies are showing the benefits of creating strong communities in public schools. Students who feel connected to the adults in their schools and believe they are important members of the community tend to do well academically, act with honesty, take responsibility for their actions, and have fewer incidences of drug use or violent behaviors (Schaps 2003).

Reflection Quote

It's relationships, not programs, that change children.

—Bill Milliken, founder of Communities in School

Reflection Questions

1. Think of a time when you joined a new group, such as a sorority, a book group, or a grade-level team. What did it feel like to be the “new kid”? Were you quiet or bold when introducing yourself? Did you hang back and watch others, or did you ask questions right away?
2. What activities helped you feel as if you belonged? Or, conversely, which factors caused you to feel left out? Share specific ways you find connections within various communities, including school, neighborhood, or church. How you can purposefully create that sense of belonging for your students?
3. When I taught multiage students with three other teachers, we wanted our students to have a sense of identity that bonded them together. We discussed with the students that we didn't want them to be “Ms. Buckley's class” or “Mr. Miner's class,” because they don't belong to us—we didn't own them. We were going to be a community that learned and worked together. The students voted on animal names and then researched and created posters identifying themselves as “The Owls in Room 234” or “The Otters in Room 231.”

Brainstorm ways to create a sense of community with your students.

4. Most social studies curricula at the beginning of the school year focus on communities (e.g., “Me and My World”) and the people and jobs that make communities work successfully. For example, our school playground was also the community playground, and it was often littered with trash. My class had

listed “trash collector” as a community job, and we discussed the importance of that work. We wrote thank-you letters to the workers they saw on the trucks on Thursday mornings. The class then realized that Mr. Mills (our custodian) was the helper who cleaned our room, and they wrote him a thank-you letter as well. From there, they identified themselves as the playground Cleanup Crew, and before coming in from recess everyone had to pick up one piece of trash to help keep it clean.

How can you connect your students to the larger neighborhood community?

5. Most elementary students love to study the world around them, and investigating ant colonies is a great way to show them community building in action. A short study of ants can reveal the various jobs within a colony and how the roles support the group, how the ants work together to create a safe community, and the responsibility of each ant doing its job properly. Can you think of other animal studies that might provide opportunities to discover the components of a safe and caring community?

Chapter 6: Empathy

Chapter 6 discusses empathy. For me, empathy means having deep understanding of another’s emotional state. It allows us to remember our own joy or pain and realize we are all connected.

According to Vicki Zakrzewski, education director at the Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley, “Scientific research is starting to show that there is a very strong relationship between social-emotional learning and cognitive development and performance” (Ó hÉochaidh 2013).

Reflection Quote

Empathy is about finding echoes of another person in yourself.

—Mohsin Hamid

Reflection Questions

The birth of a healthy baby, the unexpected death of a friend’s spouse, a job promotion for a colleague—these are the times I have felt a deep connection with another person. When we know the background story of people’s emotions, we are better able to relate to them. Empathy is about remembering that everyone has a background story, whether we know the story or not.

1. How do you learn and remember the background stories of your students? One year, Christy and I started the kindergarten school year by asking them to write their biographies. We made a simple template for the students and left a blank spot at the top for their photos. The students told stories about birthday parties, trips from their home country to America, and other family events. Some students drew pictures, others wrote basic words, and some needed us to transcribe them. These stories taught us about the triumphs and struggles we had all been through and helped us feel more caring toward one another. Think of other literacy components you can use to build empathy: read-alouds that focus on character traits, a “family share” (where parents come in and teach a skill, such as how to make tortillas or draw a blueprint or play guitar), or personal narrative writing that focus on a feeling (disappointment, surprise, etc.).
2. Think of a time when you felt frustrated because a student’s behavior stopped the learning in your classroom. Describe how you felt and how you reacted. Now imagine that you knew the student’s pet had died that morning. Would you have reacted the same way? Brainstorm alternative reactions, language, and coping skills you could put in place.
3. Pair up with another classroom to share background stories, and graph the similarities and differences. Have a monthly read-aloud where your classes come together and do an activity based on the emotions in the selected book (e.g., create a mural, blog about their connections to the emotion, act out an important scene, etc.).

Chapter 7: Kindness

Chapter 7 discusses how simple acts of kindness are powerful stepping-stones to building an emotionally healthy classroom community. Whether instilling the expectation that we always say “please” and “thank you” or stopping a lesson when seeing an unkind action, we must explicitly teach students how to create a climate of kindness that builds trust and honesty.

Reflection Quote

Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.

—Mark Twain

Reflection Questions

Studies have shown that performing acts of kindness increases peer acceptance and well-being and can help decrease bullying behavior (Layous et al. 2012). In January many schools start a “100 Days of Kindness” project to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day. A wonderful idea—but why wait? Discovering kindnesses every day can provide powerful learning opportunities in the beginning of the school year.

1. Imagine that the school secretary saved a Reese’s peanut butter cup for you because they’re your favorite candy, a stranger held the door for you, and a neighbor told you that you left your porch light on all night. Collectively these small moments help you feel happy and connected. Reflect on the acts of kindness that you personally have experienced and how you felt about them.
2. Think of the “unsung heroes” of our schools: cafeteria workers, custodial staff, and secretaries, for example. The students come into contact with these staff members every day but may not realize how important they are to the school. Brainstorm ways for your class to regularly be kind to these workers, such as by sending thank-you notes, cleaning up after meals or activities, sharing treats, and so on.

3. Brainstorm ways to end your day with a sharing of gratitude. You could share around the circle, write in a classroom journal, or conduct a video blog with another class. How can you create “kindness detectives” in your room?
4. High school students are required to perform a certain amount of volunteer hours before graduation. How can you instill the joy of volunteering now? What small jobs could your class do to help the school? Could you schedule a family picnic to repaint the playground benches, weed the science gardens, and wash the front windows?
5. The books *Owen & Mzee: The True Story of a Remarkable Friendship* by Isabella Hatkoff, Craig Hatkoff, and Dr. Paula Kahumbu; *Unlikely Friendships: 47 Remarkable Stories from the Animal Kingdom* by Jennifer Holland; and *Random Acts of Kindness by Animals* by Stephanie LaLand and Doris Day all depict the natural instinct of animals to extend kindness to others. How can you use these high-interest books to develop kindness rules with your students?

Chapter 8: Peacefulness

Our students are just as bombarded by technology and activities as we are (maybe more so!). Chapter 8 invites you to slow down and find peace and quiet in your often hectic and active classroom.

Peacefulness is an active process, requiring individuals to move from competitive to cooperative relationships and create and maintain mutually beneficial agreements (Johnson and Johnson 2010). When students identify, choose, and implement peaceful strategies, a positive interdependence is created in the classroom.

Reflection Quote

Each one has to find his peace from within. And peace to be real must be unaffected by outside circumstances.

—Mahatma Gandhi

Reflection Questions

1. Where do you find peacefulness? Walking in the woods, spending time at the ocean, reading a good book? Share the places and activities that bring you peace. When you are feeling tense or stressed, how do you decompress and relax?
2. Share ways to bring moments of peacefulness into your classroom. What music, art, read-alouds, or routines could you put into place every day?
3. Read the book *What Does Peace Feel Like?* by Vladimir Radunsky and pair up with a buddy class (two to three grades older than yours works well). Consider ways for students to use technology to capture moments of peace in their lives. Discuss ways to use technology—digital photos, video shorts, and slideshows are examples of media that challenge students to think creatively. How can you collaborate with your art and music teachers to help students define and express peacefulness through the arts?

Chapter 9: Responsibility

Chapter 9 discusses the many facets of responsibility. Academic conversations, accountability, and independent decision-making are all ways students need to show responsibility for their learning. These can be tricky concepts to grasp.

Reflection Quote

The truth is that, if we want children to take responsibility for their own behavior, we must first give them responsibility, and plenty of it. The way a child learns how to make decisions is by making decisions, not by following directions.

—Alfie Kohn

Reflection Questions

1. How do you define responsibility? Discuss your expectations for your students. Are they age appropriate?

2. What scaffolding do you put in place to help them achieve those expectations? How much independent decision-making do you allow, and how do you gradually release your support?
3. Election Day, Arbor Day, and Earth Day are wonderful opportunities to authentically combine the curriculum and responsibility lessons. Pair up with a cyberclass (called “pen pals” in the good old days) and research these special days. Compare how the citizens in different states are responsible on these days. How can your students document and teach about voting, planting trees, or recycling?

Chapter 10: Self-Control

Chapter 10 discusses how self-control in students requires them to evaluate the pros and cons of a situation and make a deliberate choice (rather than react impulsively). Studies have indicated that students need explicit instruction in what self-control means before they can begin to exert it independently.

Reflection Quote

The child's development follows a path of successive stages of independence, and our knowledge of this must guide us in our behaviour towards him. We have to help the child to act, will, and think for himself. This is the art of serving the spirit, an art which can be practised to perfection only when working among children.

—Maria Montessori

Reflection Questions

1. Reader’s theater is a fun way to introduce self-control. Students have to learn to take turns, listen for pauses, and speak fluently and with expression. Record your students’ interactions and then view the video with the focus on behaviors of self-control.
2. Poetry is an opportunity to talk about self-control in writing. Word choice, line breaks, and white space are some of the craft moves that call for the

author to rein in his or her free-flowing verse and think in a more controlled style. Reading Paul Fleischman's *Joyful Noise* and his other books in the *I'll Read to You, You Read to Me* series can help you start a dialogue on what self-control means.

Chapter 11: Perseverance

Children who believe that their success or failure depends on how much effort they put forth are more likely to persevere in similar tasks at a later date. In her book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck (2006) explains that success is not determined by innate talent or intelligence. Instead, success depends on believing you have the power to nurture your intelligence and grow your abilities. Perseverance through both social and academic challenges can provide opportunities for students to strengthen their perceived mind-sets.

Reflection Quote

If you're going through hell, keep going.

—Winston Churchill

Reflection Questions

1. Reflect on a time when you wanted to give up. What did it feel like to be overwhelmed by circumstances or obstacles? What—or who—helped you persevere? The fourth and fifth graders at Bailey's regularly interviewed their parents and grandparents for stories of perseverance. Consider extending that idea into a letter-writing unit. Students can write letters of gratitude to people who have helped them when they wanted to give up.
2. Think of people you admire and the motivation you gained from reading their stories. Biography studies are a fabulous opportunity to authentically bring lessons of perseverance into the classroom. Connect with your school or local librarian to discover new tools for research that can bring those stories of perseverance to life for your students.

- Using the monkey bars example from the book, pair up students to “coach” each other through simple physical challenges (e.g., how to pump on a swing, how to throw a football, or how to jump rope). Working with an encouraging peer can strengthen the motivation and celebration when persistence pays off.

Chapter 12: Giving and Getting Feedback

Chapter 12 speaks to the need for students to reflect on work (their own and others’) with objectivity and kindness. The purpose of feedback is to evaluate a performance or situation and make changes to improve it. Feedback can be formal (through assessments or rubrics) or informal (through discussion and peer conferences). Studies have shown that regular and immediate feedback can bring about significant improvement (Samuels and Wu 2003).

Reflection Quote

He has a right to criticize, who has a heart to help.

—Abraham Lincoln

Reflection Questions

- Consider some of your personal mistakes and the feedback that helped you improve. Was it self-reflection, a friend’s encouraging words, or a tough comment from a supervisor? On the flip side, discuss some of the ways feedback has been detrimental to your improvement. Was the feedback unsolicited? Focused only on the negative? Did it lack opportunity for your input? Discuss obstacles that might get in the way when your students receive feedback.
- Let students know that making—and accepting—mistakes is how we learn. Brainstorm ways to celebrate mistakes. Teachers may want to practice some goofy celebratory claps, whistles, and comments. Incorporate them into your classroom when a student hears feedback and makes changes.

3. During Morning Meeting, have students share times when they needed help, the feedback they got, and what they learned from the experience. It may be a story from home, a sports team, or the playground. Ask students to illustrate and write a description of that event and post it in the classroom.
4. How do you manage peer conferences? What successes and stumbles have you had in implementing them? Besides the idea of using rubrics like the ones in Chapter 12, how can you help support peer feedback? What scaffolding needs to be in place? Talk with teachers from upper grades to learn what they do, and adapt their ideas to fit your objectives for peer conferences.

References

- Dweck, Carol. 2006. *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. New York: Random House.
- The Franklin Institute. 2004. *Stress on the Brain*. Resources for Science Learning: The Human Brain. The Franklin Institute.
<http://www.fi.edu/learn/brain/stress.html>.
- Johnson, David W., and Roger T. Johnson. 2010. "Peace Education in the Classroom: Creating Effective Peace Education Programs." In *Handbook of Peace Education*, ed. Gavriel Salomon and Ed Cairns. New York: Psychology Press.
- Layout, Kristin, S. Katherine Nelson, Eva Oberle, Kimberly A. Schonert-Reichl, and Sonja Lyubomirsky. 2012. "Kindness Counts: Prompting Prosocial Behavior in Preadolescents Boosts Peer Acceptance and Well-Being." *PLOS ONE* 7(12): e51380.
http://www.skatherinenelson.com/uploads/2/7/1/7/27172343/layout_et_al._2012.pdf.
- Ó hÉochaidh, Roibín. 2013. "Schooling Teachers on Social-Emotional Learning." The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley.
http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/news_events/announcement/schooling_teachers_on_social_emotional_learning.

Raver, C. Cybele, and Jane Knitzer. 2002. *Ready to Enter: What Research Tells Policymakers About Strategies to Promote Social and Emotional School Readiness Among Three- and Four-Year-Old Children*. New York: National Center for Children in Poverty.

http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_485.pdf.

Rice University Center for Education. 2014. "The Thirty Million Word Gap." Rice University School Literacy and Culture Project.

<http://centerforeducation.rice.edu/slc/LS/30MillionWordGap.html>.

Samuels, S. Jay, and Yi-Chen Wu. "The Effects of Immediate Feedback on Reading Achievement." Paper, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Minnesota.

http://www.tc.umn.edu/~samue001/web%20pdf/immediate_feedback.pdf.

Schaps, Eric. 2003. "Creating a School Community." *Educational Leadership* 60(6): 31–33.