

Self-regulation in Adults and Children: A Collaborative Approach

Jolene King

School of Education, Thompson Rivers University

Kamloops, BC

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Abstract

This paper is set within the context of my experience as an educator as well as my learning experiences as a student in the Masters of Education program at Thompson Rivers University. In my roles as classroom teacher and administrator, I have worked with students, colleagues, administrators and parents. When I was embarking on my Bachelor of Education, I was in a self-regulation cohort of student teachers. At that time, I was unaware of its relevance to students. In my first classroom assignment, I was perplexed by the range of issues I witnessed. I was teaching Grades Two and Three students whose academic abilities ranged from Kindergarten to Grade Six levels. I was also struggling with meeting their social and emotional needs. I believe that is when my journey began to learn more about self-regulation and the strategies my students needed to promote continuous success in their lives. I have increasingly become more aware of the importance of teaching self-regulation skills to children in order that they may navigate the rapidly changing world. In this paper, I claim that all staff members must be knowledgeable and competent in self-regulation acquirement in order to contribute to student development of self-regulation. All adults must understand how to manage their affect, be attuned to themselves as well as those around them, be consistent in responses, and have routines and rituals. An application is a school-wide initiative which would involve all adults and give students a solid foundation to increase their abilities in this process. The implications of teaching students how to self-regulate will contribute to students' successes as they are better able to manage their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours.

Keywords: self-regulation, attunement, model, efficacy

Chapter One: Introduction

Children's unfavourable behaviours are a topic often discussed and commonly generalized. Some believe the children are choosing their adverse behaviours. When we tell a child to be calm it is not a skill or a strategy they may be able to immediately perform. Students who are capable of identifying their emotions and implementing strategies to self-regulate are better equipped to manage situations they may encounter. In this chapter, I explore the significance of my journey as an educator from my practicum, my first classroom assignment, the significance of my childhood, to my M.Ed. program through Thompson Rivers University coinciding with my role as vice-principal. I view my journey through the M.Ed. program as a mountain climb. It has taken hard work, perseverance and a willingness to push beyond my comfort zone to reach heights I never imagined I could scale. There have been rolling hills, plateaus and steep cliffs but each step has heightened my sense of accomplishment. I also know that I will never ascend to the top as my journey in education will not end. I will continue my quest and welcome challenges to grow as an educator.

My Journey

When I was embarking on my Bachelor of Education, I was in a cohort of student teachers which was titled self-regulation. The intent of the self-regulation cohort was never explicitly defined. It was a topic that was lightly touched upon and at that time, I was unaware of its relevance to students. Throughout my practicum, I did not explore self-regulation strategies either personally or with my students. My practicum class had established classroom routines and rituals, the teacher was always consistent and she had developed the relationships that were needed to develop self-regulation skills. It was not explicitly taught and upon reflection, I

recognized how the building blocks of the Attachment, Regulation and Competency (ARC) Framework (strategies for self-regulation) contributed to the success of all students.

My first classroom assignment is where I believe I began the self-regulation process, as I recognized I was struggling to meet the social and emotional needs as well as the academic performances of my students. I was teaching Grades Two and Three students but found their academic abilities ranged from Kindergarten to Grade Six levels. During my first year, I had one student that was struggling with his emotions and when he would get angry he would run from the room. I was perplexed by his behaviour and did not have the toolbox of strategies in order to help him be successful.

This is when the counsellor introduced me to the Zones of Regulation program. I immediately made a connection to its content as it referred to the importance of self-regulation. With the support of my administrator, I was given the opportunity to establish a relationship with this student. This was key for building a trusting and safe environment. I taught all of the lessons from the Zones of Regulation and I was equipped to support students with emotional vocabulary, expected and unexpected behaviour, tools and strategies to help students become calm and alert, and how to solve problems using the language 'big problem' and 'little problem'. I knew I was helping all children become more aware of the importance of their self-regulation knowledge.

As a child, I had a subconscious but increasing awareness of emotional instability in my family dynamics. My experiences had lasting effects on my determination to learn how to be successful in managing my emotions, thoughts and behaviours. I resolved to become a role model for children with the hope of achieving a lifelong positive impact on them all the while becoming even more self-aware. The experience of my childhood impacted who I am as an

educator. I understand the importance of time; time to get to know students, time for them to feel safe, time for them to know and trust me and time for them to understand and value themselves.

Fast forward to my tenth year as a classroom teacher and my expanded understanding of self-regulation. In the eight years at my current school, I have been able to observe noticeable improvements in students' self-regulation skills. Working together as a staff to be better attuned to ourselves, having common language and a progressive framework to help students develop their self-regulation skills, has led to their increased ability to manage emotions, sensory needs and problem-solving skills.

I began the M.Ed. program with some trepidation; unsure of how and when I could ascend to the summit. Many of my learning experiences in the M.Ed. program have contributed to my interest in self-regulation. The exploration of my teaching philosophy pushed me beyond my comfort zone and I can confidently say I am grounded in the child-centred methods of Johann Pestalozzi. I learned that many of my beliefs as an educator were grounded in philosophers like Aristotle and his purpose of education, Thomas Aquinas's beliefs of purpose, pragmatist John Dewey's hands-on approach and his genuine sense of community, as well as Nel Noddings' ethic of care. My teaching philosophy encompassed all the building blocks of self-regulation, by building positive relationships with my students, by taking care of myself, being attuned to my students, and having consistent responses and rituals.

Upon establishing my teaching philosophy and affirming my interest in self-regulation, I had the opportunity to develop a self-regulation curriculum with the purpose and intention to "shift our thinking." By exploring the lead learner model and understanding how it could contribute to building capacity amongst staff, my learning experience was able to connect to the school and community. My involvement in educational management grounded my understanding

that supportive leadership and building common language amongst the staff is beneficial for adults and students. I was able to change some aspects of my lifestyle through the knowledge I gained in the Counselling Program. I gained insight into my compulsion to ‘engineer my body’ through a rigid daily exercise routine. Once I changed my perspective, I found I was more relaxed and mentally healthier. I enjoyed this process of learning about myself as I progressed through the counselling course. I have acquired a valuable skill set to strengthen my personal and professional life. I learned how crucial it is to share what is going on in your life and how helpful it can be in expanding self-awareness. I have learned and engaged in reflective practice and will continue to do so as I become more aware of my values and continue to develop my role as an administrator. As I review my course work and written posts, I am mindful that self-regulation has grounded my practice as a classroom educator and a school vice-principal in my community and I fully understand the importance it has for all people in the global context.

My culture is as a white, privileged, English speaking female. I am both a traditional and contemporary woman as I am a caregiver to my children, maintain the tasks within a home and farm with my partner and also work full time as an elementary school vice-principal in Quesnel, BC. I have developed professionally and personally from the courses in the M.Ed. program. Having the opportunity to listen to the perspectives of others contributed further to my understanding of self-regulation. From people sharing their stories or asking questions about self-regulation, I was able to deepen my knowledge and further my interest in the subject; especially in the greater community and the universal environment.

Coinciding with my experiences in the M.Ed. program at Thompson Rivers University, I became vice-principal at the school in which I had been a classroom teacher. While assuming a new role with different expectations, I have been able to experience self-regulation on a different

level. As a classroom teacher, I had implemented programs for teachers to develop a common language and our school's version of the ARC Framework. I have noted that with self-regulated adults, students have shown a far greater ability to problem-solve. As my job involves co-regulating and managing conflict with students, I have been able to successfully mediate students' problem-solving competence. Students are more able to regulate their emotions and listen respectfully to each other when we are meeting after negative interactions. I now often hear students say to one another, "I didn't think of it that way" and apologize for how they reacted.

A transformational learning experience was created in the area of self-regulation when I began critically reflecting on its impact on adults. My previous belief was that only students needed to acquire this skill. Then, as I began to examine self-regulation from a more objective and comprehensive perspective, I was able to acquire further knowledge and apply it directly to my own life skills. Through my research, I have realized how extensive this initiative will be and the transformative impact it should have on all staff and students.

Presenting the Argument

I claim that all staff members must be knowledgeable and competent in self-regulation in order to be exemplars of mature emotional behaviour as it will increase student development of self-regulation and thus contribute to increased academic performance. Through self-regulation proficiency, staff members will be models of emotional behaviour, based on evidence by Valiente et al. (2020) where students' emotion-related socialization is impacted by the classroom context, teachers and peers. An increased development of students' self-regulation, grounded on the evidence by Robson et al. (2020), is that students who had higher self-regulation in their

early years of school saw a correlation in lower incidences of depressive symptoms, obesity, aggressive behaviours, use of illicit drugs and smoking in later school years (adolescence).

Self-regulation skills contribute to increased academic performance, based upon corroboration by Khaldi (2019), and that success in academia includes students' capacity to engage in self-regulation. When students are able to recognize their emotions and have the ability to self-regulate, they are better able to attend to the function of school. It was also discovered that the direct assessment of a child's ability to self-regulate in Grade One was a predictor for their ability to comprehend in reading in Grade Five, as well as realize higher math achievements (Lenes et al., 2020).

This paper proceeds as follows: the literature review examines current research on self-regulation and education. It views adults as models of emotional behaviour, the development of students' self-regulation and how self-regulation skills contribute to academic performance. The application of self-regulation, when applied to my professional life has profound effects; as a teacher and a vice-principal, in the classroom, the school and the larger community. In conclusion, I will verify that all staff members must be knowledgeable and competent in self-regulation in order to increase the development of students' self-regulation and increased academic performance.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This literature review examines current research on self-regulation and its relevance to education. There are three key themes that have become apparent in this review and support my claim that all staff members must be knowledgeable and competent in self-regulation. As exemplars of mature emotional behaviour they will increase student development of self-regulation and thus contribute to increased academic performance.

Staff Competence

Lesaux et al., (2015) claim that in order for adults to support children it is just like on an airplane when passengers are advised to put on their own masks before assisting children, “adult caregivers in stressful environments are best positioned to help young children when they have the supports and skills to manage their own stresses and remain in control of their emotions and interactions” (p. 22). Through direct modelling and teaching, adults can impart the necessary skills that children require (Lesaux et al.). When children are learning to self-regulate there is no simple recipe; “children are all different and their needs are constantly changing, to the point where what worked last week may not work today” (Shanker & Barker, 2016, p. 6).

When it comes to teaching children how to self-regulate, it initially requires the strength of adults’ self-regulation (Florez, 2011). Children watch and respond to the adults’ self-regulation and thereby learn to regulate their emotions, thoughts, feelings and behaviours (Florez). In order for children to gradually develop their self-regulation skills, it is important to provide them with many opportunities to practice and experience it with a range of adults and capable peers (Florez, Lesaux et al., 2015). Stran et al. (2020) discuss the implementation of self-regulation interventions within a school environment to increase children’s abilities across

settings and contexts. Adults who practice facets of self-regulation therefore “are enriched to help students grow in self-regulation” (Khaldi, 2019, p. 112).

The competence of adults enhances children’s self-regulation in the classroom and provides scaffolding for children who are less self-regulated (McClelland & Tominey, 2015, as cited in Lenex et al, 2020). Some children may require more self-regulation targeted intervention and be explicitly taught in a small group or individually (Harrington et al., 2020). Valiente et al. (2020) suggest positive self-regulation of teachers contributes to socialization of students. In a study by Brown et al. (2010), they perceived emotional abilities of teachers were connected to processes in their classrooms that were high-quality by the end of a school year.

Florez (2011) states there are three strategies which are critical to scaffold “children’s development of self-regulation: modeling, using hints and cues, and gradually withdrawing adult support” (p. 49). Khaldi (2020) suggests that more research is required when looking at educator interventions and their ability to enhance students’ success internally. He wonders will they then have the ability to endure life challenges and reach life success? It is important that educators recognize their knowledge as being influential in both their practice and engagement with professional learning (Vasseleu et al., 2021). Booth et al., (2019) describe children’s accounts:

Depicted their classroom teacher and friends as important influences on their self-regulation. Teachers helped children to navigate the school environment but also acted as referees, “*you have to tell the teacher in the yard [playground] if people won’t let you play with you*”, and provided comfort, with one child describing feeling safe “*...cause of the teacher ...*” Most children described positive relationships with their teacher, “*cause teacher does loads of fun stuff with them and they love their teacher*”, although a few

children described instances where their teacher was not available to attend to them as he or she was busy or not present. (p. 517)

In the study by Cadima et al. (2016) they examined the teacher and child relationships and determined that when children experienced a closer relationship with their teachers they showed significant gains in self-regulation. George and Solomon (1996, as cited in Jennings & Greenberg, 2009) indicate the importance of teachers understanding how they express and process their negative emotions as this contributes to the quality of student-teacher relationships. According to Blair and Diamond (2008, as cited in Cadima et al., 2016) supportive teachers facilitate children's capacity to self-regulate by providing them with opportunities for self-directed behaviours and "are likely to model child's behaviors supporting the internalization of appropriate self-regulation skills" (p. 14). Also, the Cadima et al. (2016) study is among the first to provide evidence that supports the classroom climate and teacher-child relationships are important for the development of self-regulation. Within the limitations, however, they discuss how the classroom sizes were small and when they conducted their observations on children it was done in December and it could be possible that children were already benefiting from a teacher-child relationship (Cadima et al., 2016). Howard et al. (2020) suggest that future studies would be beneficial to look at the qualifications of educators and their experiences, "whereby different types and levels of support may be needed at varying levels of behavior challenges and educators' skills to address these" (p. 13). A current and contemporary framework is the Attachment, Regulation, Competency (ARC) intervention that is flexible and components-based for children and adolescents that have experienced trauma (2016). The ultimate goal is to support caregivers, adolescents and children in being effectively engaged in the world (2016). The base layer of building blocks for the ARC Framework includes caregiver affect management,

attunement, consistent response, and routines and rituals which is known as the attachment domain (2016). The attachment domain focuses on strengthening the adults' attunement skills on many levels including: physiological, behavioural, emotional and cognitive to better support children (Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2010). The second domain is regulation and it focuses on developing children and adolescents' awareness and skills in identifying, understanding and managing their feelings, thoughts and behaviours (2016). By looking at each block individually, the foundation for self-regulation can be built and successfully incorporated into any learning environment. The third domain is competency with goals that include having choice, empowerment, effective decision-making and self-identity (2016). Staff members who are knowledgeable and competent about self-regulation are aware of their affect and understand their roles as models of emotional behaviour.

Models of Emotional Behaviour

Adults must frequently regulate their emotions as they interact with students (Rupprecht et al., 2017). Rupprecht et al. states;

Teachers developed more skills in coping with negative emotions in the classroom, namely accepting negative emotions and embodying emotions. An elementary school teacher was able to pause and stop herself from reacting in an unhelpful way: "When it is so loud in the classroom that I notice the urge to scream so everybody calms down, I was now able to pause and remember that this is not the right way of doing it." Another teacher described that taking a couple of deep breaths helped when struggling with a similar challenge...One teacher explains: "I gained more self-confidence just by having a greater awareness of my body. It's not that I am doing a specific exercise, I just feel I can

take more space and I am generally more present with my body in the classroom. It's just a small change but it means a lot to me.” (p. 577)

It is important that adults instruct and model social-emotional behaviours that are contextually and culturally appropriate (Valiente et al., 2020). The classroom provides an opportunity for teachers to model self-regulation for students. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) assert teachers are role models who play an integral role in encouraging and responding to students and their emotional reactions. There are many opportunities throughout the day for educators to label their affect and provide exposure to emotion words (K. A. Blair et al., 2004; Boyer, 2009, as cited in Harrington et al., 2020).

To help children become more emotionally competent, adults can support children through emotion coaching; “(1) realize that they have emotions, (2) identify their different emotions, (3) learn to appropriately express their emotions for certain contexts, and (4) talk about how they feel when they express their emotions” (Boyer, 2009, as cited in Harrington et al., 2020, p. 50). Teachers must use self-regulation skills to a high degree and model effective strategies themselves in order to provide children with opportunities for growth (Lesaux et al., 2015). Teachers who are high in self-regulation are able to create learning opportunities for students to develop their abilities to manage their emotions, thoughts, behaviours and relationships (Raver, Blair & Li-Grining, 2012, as cited in Valiente et al., p. 581). It is also important to note from Lavy & Eshet (2018) and Raver et al. (2012, as cited in Valiente et al.) that

teachers low in self-regulation often cannot adequately supervise and manage classroom goals, resulting in a chaotic classroom, poor student support, and risk for burnout; these teachers may experience more frequent and intense conflict with students than their

colleagues, and they can lose valuable instructional time engaging with disruptive students. (p. 581)

In order to cope with the demands of the profession, teachers need self-regulation skills to sustain better health outcomes and perform well as teachers (Rupprecht et al., 2017). Educators who are confident in their self-regulation skills have the self-efficacy to reflect this in their interactions with children.

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy, when applied to the teaching profession “is conceptualized as teachers’ belief that they can bring about desirable changes in student achievement” (Guo et al., 2012, p. 5). Teachers who have a strong sense of efficacy sees themselves as being able to positively affect student learning and welcome the responsibility to motivate students and continually improve their skills in teaching until students make progress (Newman, Rutter, & Smith, 1989, as cited in Guo et al).

Guo et al. (2012) indicates that further research should be conducted “in the field of teacher quality” and to “investigate specific features of the teaching context that may make a difference in the formation and enhancement of teachers’ self-efficacy and their classroom practices” (p. 21). Steinbach and Stoeger (2018) state in the implications from their study to further develop instructional behaviours of teachers that are positive and lasting is to expand programs to inform, measure and further develop their attitudes. To encourage positive attitudes towards self-regulation it is important to ensure that preservice teachers have the opportunity to work and teach self-regulation (Steinbach & Stoeger). Vasseleu et al. (2021) look at pedagogical attitudes of educators and how it impacts children’s development:

For instance, educator endorsement of child-centred learning (i.e., children as having shared authority and reciprocity in learning, vs. their passive reception of knowledge and

instructional Hur et al., 2015), is associated with organized classroom structures (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2009) and the promotion of children's autonomy and decision-making (McMullen et al., 2006) - both of which are associated with enhanced self-regulation. (p. 3)

Staff who have a strong self-efficacy are able to organize and implement self-regulation strategies in their classroom and contribute to the development of students' self-regulation.

Development of Students' Self-regulation

Self-regulation is important at every stage of an individual's life; it begins at birth and expands and develops as one grows (Liman & Tepeli, 2019). Lenes et al. (2020) suggest that early self-regulation helps children do better on subsequent self-regulation; therefore "when children are highly regulated in the class they, for example, work independently, execute goals and stay on tasks, and do not get distracted by peers" (p. 619). Sawyer et al. (2015) concluded that preschool children who lacked self-regulation skills were found to have more behavioural problems in the primary school years.

In elementary-aged children, there has been numerous research conducted that contributes to our understanding of students and their ability to self-regulate. Cadima et al. (2015) findings support that teachers who perceived that children who were more behaviourally engaged in learning had higher self-regulation skills. Their study appears to support "self-regulation skills, such as paying attention, waiting for his/her turn, inhibiting off task behavior may help children to respond to the demands of the classroom" (Cadima et al., 2015, p. 9). There have been a few studies that "have examined the role of early self-regulation on academic achievement in the later elementary school years" (Duncan et al., 2007; McClelland, Acock, & Morrison, 2006, as cited in Lenes et al., 2020, p. 612).

Students who have good self-regulation skills have been found to perform well in school regardless of their relationships with their teachers (Savina, 2020). When students with weaker self-regulation skills are paired with a supportive teacher they perform the same as their peers without self-regulation difficulties (Savina). Supportive teachers will recognize that more demanding self-regulation skills are needed when students are introduced to new and challenging tasks (Savina, 2020).

Booth et al., (2019) reported the importance of children having friends as an important source of emotional regulation and overall emotional well-being. Engaging in positive or challenging peer interactions contributes to the development of children's self-regulation (Booth et al.). It can be a problematic for children as they have to manage their own responses with the actions of those who are not able to do so (Booth et al.). The correlation between children and their peers is significant;

Children's pairing of happiness and friendship were captured by their simple yet effective explanations: "*because she is happy when she is with all her friends*"; "*she feels happy if she has these friends to play with*". A small number of children also spoke about the practical support that friends could offer "*I guess ... they ... do a plan and they get good at it and sometimes they good at it, they just need some help from their friends.*" (Booth et al., p. 517)

It is important to keep in mind the level of children's' self-regulation skills when structuring the classroom environment.

Environmental. To foster self-regulation, the organization of the classroom environment is integral (Savina, 2020). Cadima et al. (2016) emphasizes children are more engaged in a well-organized classroom with established predictable routines, minimized distractions and effective

transitions. Cameron et al., (2005, as cited in Cadima et al., 2015) explicitly states a “well-managed classroom can also support children’s internal management of their own behavior by setting up consistent routines and well-organized tasks” (p. 3). A classroom environment that is chaotic is characterized by low levels of routines and structures, has too many changes and has high levels of noise (Maxwell, 2010, as cited in Day et al., 2015).

Booth et al., (2019) found “children’s accounts demonstrated how their self-regulation was scaffolded by a range of environmental and social supports that guided their behaviour, helping them meet the demands of school” (p. 517). It explored how children have to be flexible to move between activities and settings, such as moving between group activities and individual work, to play, line-up, as well as moving between the classroom and the playground.

Children engage in self-regulation as they transition through their day, “as they need to disengage from the activity underway, follow the teacher’s directions and avoid distraction to begin a new activity or move to a new setting” (Diamond, 2013, as cited in Booth et al., 2019, p. 510). Booth et al. study suggest;

That the school environment challenges multiple aspects of children’s regulatory skills in terms of their emotions, cognition and behaviour. Children also depicted school as a dynamic environment that requires self-regulation both within and outside of the classroom, as well as navigating complex interactions with their peers who may be struggling to regulate their own responses. Children’s distinction between the regulatory demands of the classroom and the playground evidences their implicit awareness of self-regulation as a core requirement in school. (p. 518)

A limitation that was disclosed in the Cadima et al. (2016) study was they had small sample size and that it prevented them from assessing the effects of interactions between child

behaviours and characteristics of the classroom. In the study by Day et al. (2015) was limited in that they did not code all of the students that were in the classroom, they did not examine how teacher's instruction and organizational skills would have been impacted from their teaching training and it was impossible to evaluate teachers' organizational abilities. Educators must explicitly promote self-regulation in the classroom and on the playground.

Instructional. According to Savina (2020) promoting self-regulation includes strategies to improve inhibition control, support voluntary attention and to build and maintain mental representation. To help improve children's inhibition control and foster children's verbal self-regulation is to teach children how to reflect on their task performance (Savina, 2020). According to Espinet et al. study (2013, as cited in Savina) "demonstrated that helping preschoolers to reflect on task rules and giving them regular feedback lead to better response inhibition, fewer errors, and more effective use of rules, including switching from one set of rules to another" (Savina, 2020, Strategies to Improve Inhibition Control section, para. 2). To promote voluntary attention the use of verbal coaching is one strategy and includes:

Securing students' attention before introducing a task (e.g., "I need your attention because we are going to learn something new") and directing children's attention to important information (e.g., "I am going to say something very important to you, so you have to pay attention"). Teaching students to select important information and filter irrelevant information also prevents working memory overload which optimizes opportunities for learning. (Savina, Strategies to Support Voluntary Attention section, para. 1)

As time progresses, students will eventually internalize this strategy and be able to use it to direct their own attention (Savina, 2020). To actively maintain mental representation students

should verbalize their actions and then compare their performance to the intended outcome (Savina). Teachers need to repeat rules, strategies and goals as well as have them readily available for students to keep them active in their working memory (Savina). A current and contemporary approach to self-regulation is a program called The Zones of Regulation. This curriculum uses a cognitive behavioural approach and the lessons are geared to help students be able to recognize when they are in a different state which is called 'zones' (Kuyper, 2011). There are four zones, each characterized by a different colour showing varying states of arousal. Students are given the opportunity to strategize and to help them progress their emotional zones with sensory supports, cognitive strategies or calming techniques (Kuyper). The goal is to promote an awareness of one's feelings and to recognize the perceptions and emotions of others. It explicitly teaches students when and how to employ regulatory tools and to effectively problem solve (Kuyper, 2011). When students are given the opportunities to engage in movement activities, games, mindfulness and growth mindset it gives them predictable routines and they are therefore able to internalize self-regulation.

Behavioural. By incorporating behavioural self-regulation interventions such as movement activities, mindfulness, game-base intervention and growth mindset it supports children's development of self-regulation (Savina, 2020). Several studies have been completed that provide evidence that movement activities are beneficial for self-regulation (Best, 2010, as cited in Savina, 2020). It is recommended that 10-15 minute movement breaks be incorporated into students' daily routines to increase their arousal levels and focus on their work (Howie et al., 2014; Janssen et al., 2014, as cited in Savina). Cadima et al. (2015) found children with higher levels of self-regulation also demonstrated higher levels of behavioral engagement for learning in the classroom, as perceived by their teachers. A limitation described in the study by Cadima et

al. (2015) was they had small sample size and it prevented them from “examining the interactive effects between child inhibitory control and dyadic and classroom-level attributes” (p. 10).

Mindfulness practice is another intervention to help improve children’s self-regulation through sustained, focused attention on an activity or target object (Savina, 2020). Mindfulness involves awareness of sensory experiences, thoughts, feelings, movements and awareness of breath (Savina). Flook et al., (2010) concluded that students who were lacking in self-regulation skills benefitted the most from mindfulness. It can be noted by Flook et al. that:

An analysis of individual subscales showed that both teachers and parents reported improvement in children’s abilities to shift, initiate, and monitor. These are central skills practiced by engaging in mindfulness exercises; that is, first bringing attention to the breath (initiate), then watching the breath and noticing whether the attention has wandered (monitor), and when the mind wanders bringing attention back to the breath (shift). (p. 79)

A current and contemporary approach to mindfulness is a program called MindUp. This program is evidence-based and has fifteen lessons to enhance psychological well-being and social and emotional awareness and promote academic success (Scholastic, 2011). Students gain insight into their own brain functions and behaviours as well as those around them (Scholastic). A classroom that engages in the MindUp lessons “is an optimistic classroom that promotes and develops mindful attention to oneself and others, tolerance of differences, and the capacity of each member of the community to grow as a human being and a learner” (Scholastic, p. 6). The Core Practice is attentive listening and deep belly breathing and is repeated throughout the school day (Scholastic).

Cognitive games also facilitate self-regulation (Savina, 2020). Studies have been conducted where children engaged in game-like activities saw improvement in working memory, inhibition control and delayed gratification (Savina). Savina et al. (2017, as cited in Savina, 2020) found when children followed the rules of a game it improved their knowledge of rules conduct, controlled their verbal impulsivity and increased their ability to listen to instructions.

Growth mindset has been studied by Carol Dweck, a professor of psychology, for over thirty years, “children with a growth mindset show better behavioral self-regulation, as they embrace challenges as learning opportunities to grow and improve their abilities” (Molden & Dweck, 2006; Burnette et al., 2013; Compagnoni et al., 2019, as cited in Compagnoni et al., 2020, p. 2). Mrazek et al. (2018) suggest that prompting a growth mindset of self-regulation has the potential to change an individual's perception to allocate their effort in making progress with valued goals and facilitate perseverance. Children with a fixed mindset have a harder time taking on a challenging task and lack in behavioral self-regulation (Dweck and Leggett, 1988; Dweck, 2017, as cited in Compagnoni et al.). Mrazek et al. states:

A growth mindset of self-regulation may inspire individuals to appraise effortful self-control as a useful process for developing their underlying ability to persevere. Given that self-regulation underlies such a variety of cherished goals, it could be of great value to examine a mindset intervention that directly targeted individuals' beliefs about their ability to develop and exert such self-regulatory control. We propose that individuals' mindsets regarding their ability to exert self-regulation—as an ability that is either fixed or malleable with practice—may play an important role in the success or failure of their self-regulation attempts. (p. 166)

To reach our most valued goals it is imperative to recognize self-regulation can be improved through practice (Mrazek et al., 2018). Through Mrazek et al. study they suggest “the possibility that even brief interventions promoting a growth mindset of self-regulation might have enduring effects, particularly if they lead individuals to allocate greater effort in ways that further reinforce the mindset in a virtuous circle” (Dweck, 2006, as cited in Mrazek et al., p. 177). Research by Mrazek et al. believes “it would be informative for future research to identify the type (multifaceted vs. narrow) and length (intensive vs. brief) of growth mindset intervention that provides the most advantageous and long-lasting effects” (p. 177). Awareness and its connections to self-control in any given moment and how that plays a role in future success of self-regulation must be examined (Mrazek et al.). By incorporating behavioural methods of self-regulation into daily routines and expectations, students will be able to more easily attend to the academic tasks that are required of them as learners.

Self-regulation Skills contribute to Academic Performance

Students, classroom environments, and educators are all fundamental to the goal of social and academic performance positivity. When students are able to recognize their emotions and have the ability to self-regulate they are better able to attend to the work of school. Khaldi (2019) states “success in academia has long included capacity of students to engage in self-regulation as they manage time, prioritize daily activities, and devote energy and resources to course assignments” (p. 102). As student’s progress through school, each year ultimately continues to build upon skills of the previous year. According to Best and Miller (2010, as cited in Savina, 2020) early childhood and primary school years are crucial times to acquire self-regulation skills. Savina explains that poor self-regulation in the first years of school can lead to problematic behaviours and difficulty developing academic skills. Lenex et al. indicates the importance of

promoting self-regulation and academic skills in children in the Norwegian kindergarten and first grade may potentially have the ability to provide an important base for children to successfully develop reading comprehension and math achievements throughout their elementary school years.

Robson et al. (2020) concluded in their study that children in preschool who had higher self-regulation were related to having better social skills as well as better performance in math, literacy and vocabulary, in their early years of school. Early childhood is considered “a period of great vulnerability but also one of great opportunity and we encourage continued research in self-regulatory processes and how developing these skills might help children attain their full development potential” (Robson et al., 2020, p. 346).

An article by Lenés et al. (2020) focuses on the children’s ability to self-regulate in kindergarten and was a predictor of their math skills in first grade. It was also discovered that the direct assessment of children’s ability to self-regulate in grade one was a predictor for their ability to comprehend in reading in grade five as well as higher math achievements (Lenés et al., 2020). When assessing the ability of children’s self-regulation skills in kindergarten and Grade One it corresponded with the achievements in Grade Five (Lenés et al., 2020).

As students’ progress through school, each year ultimately continues to build upon skills of the previous year. It has been found “the differences in academic focus in kindergarten and first grade may require high levels of the cognitive processes involved in self-regulation to cope with new math tasks and concepts introduced in first grade” (Lenés et al., 2020, p. 619). In the context of math, according to Birgistottir et al. (2020), their findings suggest the important role self-regulation plays in basic math skills in Grade 1 and advanced maths skills in Grade 4.

Khalidi (2020) suggests that more research is required when looking at educator interventions and

their ability to enhance students' success internally and will they then have the ability to endure life challenges and reach life success.

Valiente et al. (2020), suggest that “more work must test why teachers’ social-emotional functioning is associated with student outcome (e.g., indirectly via emotion-related interactions or the classroom context) and especially for whom (e.g., differentially depending on child, teacher, or context characteristics) relations exist” (p. 582). The study by Harrington et al. (2020) concludes that future research is needed to establish measures to compare emotional regulation across all ages and to specifically determine what aspects of emotional regulation are most predictive of academic outcomes.

Summary

This literature review demonstrates the significance of all staff members being knowledgeable and competent in self-regulation. By first understanding their own self-regulation and being exemplars of mature emotional behaviour for children, they are able to convey this knowledge. An educator's ability to portray appropriate self-regulation strategies plays a role in the capacity to which students develop their self-regulation. When adults are regulated, their ability to co-regulate students is more effective. When environmental, instructional and behavioural initiatives are effectively implemented, it intensifies students' self-regulation and academic accomplishments. A practical setting that has significant importance to supporting my argument is my performance and accomplishments in the school as a teacher and currently as a vice-principal.

Chapter Three: Application to my Professional Life

This chapter will describe my experiences as a classroom teacher and the impact of being knowledgeable in self-regulation in support of my students, the classroom and the school community. I will also describe my experiences as a vice-principal and how I am a role model to staff and students. The literature review supported my claim of all staff members must be knowledgeable and competent in self-regulation. When adults understand their emotional behaviour and have high levels of self-efficacy it increases student development of self-regulation and thus contributes to their increased academic performance. Self-regulation is an essential component to my professional life. As an experienced educator, I have been able to model appropriate contextual and cultural social-emotional behaviours (Valiente et al., 2020). My highly regulated self-efficacy has generated student development of self-regulation and I have witnessed an increase in their academic performance. My experience as a vice-principal supports my claim that understanding my emotional behaviour is paramount when working with students, staff and parents. I believe educators must lead by example every day, and in my role as vice-principal, I aspire to be a positive role model for staff and students. I am passionate about self-regulation and strive to be motivational to staff members to have them engage in their self-awareness and regulation. My interactions and involvement with students in times of discord have resulted in positive implications for students' social development.

Teacher Experiences

I have been a classroom teacher for ten years and I have learned the importance of self-regulation for myself as well as all children. My first classroom assignment was a Grades Two and Three class and I was perplexed by the numerous social and emotional needs of my students as well as their diverse academic levels. At times, I can remember feeling extremely anxious as I

did not know how to respond to the environment. I believed students did not need to recognize my anxiety and frustration and therefore continued teaching the curriculum. At this time, I had one designated behaviour student who would get extremely angry and run out of the classroom and on a handful of occasions, from the building.

While he never left the school grounds, I can still remember feeling as if I were failing this student. I worked closely with the school counsellor and with support from my administrator, I was able to attend workshops to learn about the Zones of Regulation program, a framework to foster emotional control and self-regulation (Kuypers, 2011). That year, I was able to teach all of the lessons from the Zones of Regulation and I became equipped to support all students with a range of capacities. Emotional vocabulary, tools and strategies to help students become calm and alert propelled my students toward internalization of what specific strategies worked for them, expected and unexpected behaviour, and how to solve problems. This also inspired me to look at my own self-regulation abilities and I learned alongside my students. I firmly believed that when I was a classroom teacher, I taught with the intent to create student engagement. My ultimate goal was to transmit knowledge to my students rather than expecting them to memorize information for testing purposes. This resulted in higher engagement and contributed to what we all learned.

My first classroom assignment was pivotal in my career as an educator. Subsequent years would increase what I had learned my first year and with a strong self-efficacy I was going to make monumental changes in student achievement. When I would organize my classroom, I took into consideration who was to be placed in my class and made the necessary adjustments for their individual success. I always had consistent routines and rituals; my students knew coming

into my classroom exactly how the day would progress. I sent my weekly schedule to parents and guardians for their information.

Each day began with a 'soft landing.' I would have children who would arrive late; perhaps having missed breakfast, or simply having had an occurrence they needed to talk about. By giving children an opportunity to eat or talk, they were ready to be successful for the day.

I could not imagine coming to school hungry and not being able to eat until recess. As an adult, I know how to address my feelings and work through them on my own. Children need to be coached to learn the process to be able to do so. That is why I feel it is incredibly important to acknowledge students immediately upon their arrival at school and determine if they have any issues which require attention. This can be a monumental step to determine their success for the remainder of the day. By building a trusting relationship, I learned more about each student's identity which helped me to guide them in pursuing goals that pushed their limitations and encouraged growth. I am aware of the needs of children; in particular, a sense of belonging, power and a feeling of safety. I believe I tried to assure them of this in my dealings with them. Being knowledgeable in self-regulation, I understand my emotions and I am able to handle my reactions in stressful situations. I am therefore competent to support students in developing their self-regulation skills, by expanding their emotional vocabulary, encouraging the use of strategies to regulate their arousal levels and how to effectively problem solve.

When I changed schools, I noticed a larger student population with low behavioural regulation. I knew that this school was transient and there were few consistent adults from year to year. One year really stands out for me and that was when I had twenty-three students and four supporting adults besides me. In September, it did not matter how organized I was, with predictable routines and rituals and consistency in my responses. The classroom environment

remained chaotic with a high level of noise. I persevered and continued with my strategies of self-regulation, as a model of positive emotional behaviour, growth mindset and many movement breaks (Flook et al., 2010; Rupprecht et al., 2017; Savina, 2020). We continuously worked through the social behaviour map for expected and unexpected behaviours for everything we did; morning routine, lining up to leave the classroom, walking down the hall, Daily 5, movement breaks, eating time and times on the playground. By December, students were beginning to show personal growth in their self-regulation skills and were able to identify how they were feeling. Teachers who possess a high level of self-regulation skills can create learning opportunities that help to develop students' abilities to manage their thoughts, emotions, behaviours and relationships (Raver, Blair & Li-Grining, 2012, as cited in Valiente et al., p. 581). As the Cadima et al. (2016) study observed in regard to children being more engaged in their learning through a well-managed classroom, I can confidently say that my students were internalizing management of their own behaviour through my established consistent routines and well planned tasks at their levels of capability.

I always acknowledge the feelings of children. Like Boyer (2009, as cited in Harrington et al., 2020) it is my job to help children become emotionally competent and I have been able to do that through emotion coaching, by first recognizing they have different emotions, teaching them how to effectively express their emotions for a range of contexts and openly talking to them about how they feel. When children are expressing their feelings, they need the opportunity to interact further with an adult. Emotion coaching is more than just labelling mad, sad, tired, etc. (Boyer, 2009, as cited in Harrington et al., 2020). It is exploring the range of emotions that one can feel at any moment.

It is integral for children to recognize when they are feeling calm and ready to learn, and adults can support this by explicitly telling the student you look calm and in a place that means you are ready to learn. Encouraging adults to continually acknowledge children's emotions, will result in a child's ability to recognize their feelings. The Savina's (2020) study suggests that continually having strategies readily available for students to use will keep them active in their working memory which eventually will lead to strategies being internalized. Some children are not able to do this independently and this is why it is so important for adults to be knowledgeable and competent about self-regulation. To be regulated, objective and non-reactionary as an adult contributes to the development of children's self-regulation. Children watch and respond to adults' self-regulation thereby learning the necessary skills to regulate their behaviours, emotions and thoughts (Florez, 2011). This skill contributes in children's abilities to monitor their time and prioritize activities and thus enables their academic success (Khaldi, 2019).

I always give students the time they require to be ready for learning. One example that comes to mind, is when I had a student arrive late to school and he chose to sit on the bench outside my classroom. I checked on him and let him know that I was happy to see him. His response was a shrug of his shoulder. At that moment, I knew it was not directed at me and that he just needed time to regulate. I was unsure of how much time he needed but was starting to get worried after thirty minutes. At this point, I checked on him again and let him know that when he was ready for his morning work, I would bring it to him. After forty five minutes from his arrival, he entered the classroom and said he was ready for his morning work. I believe that had I insisted he enter the classroom to begin his work upon his arrival, he may have become quite emotional which then may have resulted in some misbehaviour. My experiences as a teacher have taught me to take care of myself, be attuned to my affect, use a range of strategies to keep

myself regulated and most of all explicitly teach children these skills to be successful in school and life (Cadima, 2016; Khaldi, 2019; Lenes et al., 2020). By practicing facets of self-regulation I am enriched to aid students' growth in self-regulation (Khaldi, 2019). The organization of the classroom is essential in the teaching profession. My classroom was a contributing factor in developing students' self-regulation.

The Classroom

My classroom was created in a manner that minimized distractions through having limited information on my classroom walls and the use of neutral colours. Each student had a laminated file folder that contained a word wall for writing and a multiplication chart. The arrangement of my classroom encouraged children to work independently as well as in partners and groups. I always made sure students had an opportunity to work with one another at different times throughout the year. Booth et al. (2019) validates the importance of students having peer interactions that contribute to their development of self-regulation. Students who work in partners and/or groups have to be able to manage their thoughts, emotions and behaviours. By giving students various opportunities to work in the classroom, it gives them the freedom to practice their skills while adults in the room can be circulating to encourage expected behaviours as well as assist children navigate unexpected behaviours (Florez, 2011; Lesaux et al., 2015). There are three strategies that are critical to the scaffolding of children's development of self-regulation which includes "modeling, using hints and cues, and gradually withdrawing adult support" (Florez, 2011, p. 49). The work in the classroom around self-regulation can be transferred to other settings in the school and the playground. The classroom learning environment is reciprocal as it "influences children's development and, in turn, children in the

classroom influence the environment and their classmates' development" (Skibbe et al., 2012, as cited in Day et al., 2015, p. 410).

Savina (2020) discussed mindfulness as being an intervention to improve children's self-regulation. In the classroom, I used a program called MindUp to teach children the skills they required to regulate their emotions and stresses. It also contributed to formations of positive relationships and an ability to act with compassion and kindness (Scholastic, 2011). My students looked forward to learning about the brain and participating in the core practice of deep breathing exercises multiple times throughout the day. Scholastic (2011) states "that social and emotional skills, such as the ability to manage one's emotions and get along with others, play an integral role in academic and life success" (p. 8). This was the ultimate goal for my students.

The Students

Early in my career, I learned the value of providing my students with movement breaks. I had discovered that using them for transitions helped to settle my students for a subsequent activity. I incorporated an average of twenty minutes a day for movement breaks and it is important to note that not all of them were used to strengthen a child's arousal level; some were used to bring their attention to their breath, to be mindful and present in the moment.

Whether in the classroom, hallway, playground, coaching or on supervision, I have the opportunity to instruct and model self-regulation for children. I believe I have high self-regulation skills and therefore I am able to create opportunities for students to develop and manage their own emotions, behaviours, thoughts and relationships (Raver, Blair & Li-Grining, 2012, as cited in Valiente et al., 2020). Staff must be knowledgeable and competent in self-regulation to be able to recognize opportunities that contribute to students' development of self-regulation. When I coached the cross-country running team, I used a growth mindset approach to

help children embrace challenges, to keep going when it got hard, and shared inspirations from the success of others. I learned a lot from coaching students from Grades Three to Seven. They expanded their ability to develop perseverance and demonstrated an improvement in their self-regulation skills. We practiced together for three months and built a strong team; one that encouraged each other and engaged in their growth mindset no matter the difficulty of the run.

Engaging all staff and students on a whole school project was an amazing endeavour. It required adults to model emotional behaviour and encouraged students to develop their self-regulation skills through environmental, instructional and behavioural means. It was called Voyageur's Most Magnificent Thing and this project allowed students to analyze, question and develop their plans. Students brought or were given a cardboard box and then were given the opportunity to design the most magnificent thing. They analyzed the dimensions of the box and decided what they wanted to build. They then constructed and labelled their design. When it came to creating the most magnificent thing, students learned to be imaginative, to persevere, and to strategize when difficulties arose. From an environmental perspective, the organization of the classroom was integral to support students internal management of their behaviour. The most magnificent project was well-planned, organized and expected all students to demonstrate strong self-regulation skills. Instructionally, the most magnificent project taught children how to reflect on their task performance and see what they could do differently to make their idea come to life. All students were highly engaged and maintained mental representation. Behaviourally, a growth mindset was used throughout this entire project as students embraced challenges and improved their abilities. By prompting a growth mindset throughout the entire school, students had a shared experience with the development of making their most magnificent thing.

As a role model of emotional behaviour, I have always shared my feelings with my students. I found that acknowledging my frustrations and sharing the steps I would use to regain my composure were extremely helpful for my students. After lunch one day, I was extremely upset and when I came into the classroom one of my students stopped me and said “You look very sad. I know what you need, a hug and...a cup of coffee.” This moment brought tears to my eyes as this student was able to recognize someone else's emotions and suggested strategies that I could use. The effect of my connections with students contributed to my passion to share my knowledge with staff and parents.

School Community

In this paper I claim that the concept of self-regulation needs to be included in school guidelines as it will not only promote the success of children, it will also encourage teacher education institutions to focus their attention on the importance of self-regulation (Lenes et al., 2020). Research by Liman and Tepeli (2019) indicates a self-regulation skills program is an effective means to increase children's self-regulation skills.

I developed a self-regulation curriculum to “shift our thinking” and build capacity amongst staff. With a focus on the first four building blocks of the Attachment, Regulation, Competency (ARC) Framework, it provided staff with a base for best practice. Adults understand the importance of building connections and relationships with students that contribute to a positive shift in our school environment. It is a deliberate approach, aimed at improving the adults' ability to self- and co-regulate which, in turn, will help the students in their ability to learn to better self-regulate (Flores, 2011). Many students are not equipped with the proper strategies to deal with dysregulation in their daily lives, so by working together, on a school-wide level, common practices and languages will be threaded throughout our school.

The sequence of workshops was designed to build upon each other, to ultimately understand the base of the ARC Framework and how it is necessary to support student development of self-regulation. The first building block of the ARC Framework is the caregiver affect management, so ultimately it is all about you. How do you take care of yourself? What do you do if you feel overwhelmed during the school day? The importance of understanding ourselves will better equip adults in understanding self-regulation and teaching it to children. The next building block is attunement. What is attunement? “Attunement is the capacity of caregivers and children to accurately read each other’s cues and respond appropriately. The capacity requires that the caregiver be attuned on many levels: cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and physiological” (Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2010, p. 65).

Attunement is a moment to moment, day to day process and it is important to be attuned to the feelings of others. Attunement skills include active curiosity, becoming a ‘feelings detective,’ observing and validating children’s experiences and identifying children’s triggers and their signs of being triggered. The importance of taking the time to talk to children is crucial when working on one’s attunement skills. Listening and understanding where they are coming from is the first step in building a relationship with them as well as assisting them with their self-regulation. Teacher and child relationships studied by Cadima et al. (2016) determined that children who experienced closer relationships their teachers showed significant gains in self-regulation. The last two building blocks for Attachment in the ARC Framework are consistent response and routines and rituals. Consistent responses are to be unchanging. I stressed this by using the example of being all warm and caring with your students one day and then not being available the next day. Consistent responses allow students to be able to predict and feel safe in

their environment. Children are more engaged in well-organized classrooms that have established routines, effective transitions and minimized distractions (Cadima et al., 2016).

This is also the same for students' expected behaviours. It is advisable to step away from a situation to compose yourself before reacting. The importance of praise and positive reinforcement is another layer in consistent response. It increases positive caregiver-child interactions, positive behaviour and attunement. Routines and Rituals are the first steps in developing self-regulation. By providing students with predictable routines, they are better able to organize their world and feel safe in their classroom and ultimately be ready to learn.

Parents also significantly contribute to the development of children's self-regulation. To inform parents about the self-regulation program, I created a short but impactful presentation which I introduced at a parent advisory council meeting. I gave parents real-life scenarios where their children are learning how to self-regulate and ways they can support their children in developing their self-regulation. With parent involvement, it further reinforces the learning in a wider context including home and community. Adults play an integral role in the development of self-regulation and by working in unison, we can support and improve the comprehensive development of children. I believe all children deserve an education which supports their future success and a continued zest for learning. My professional goal is to continue to support capacity building with adults using the ARC Framework and developing self-regulation skills that will contribute to students' development of self-regulation and increase their academic success. The ultimate goal of the ARC Framework is to support children, adolescents and caregivers in being effectively engaged in the world (2016).

Vice-principal Experiences

The school where I work has 210 students and I know all of them by their first names. I always make sure that I greet most of them in the morning and touch-base at recess and lunch with the majority of them, and if I am not in a meeting, I am outside on supervision as the students leave for the day. Since becoming an administrator, I have witnessed and been part of numerous perspectives. Not all teachers are the same; as individuals and educators their expectations and applications vary. When I was in the classroom, I would only send students to the office in the most extreme negative behavioural issues. For example, if a student was putting other students in danger or their behaviours needed further measures, I would consider having an administrator engage in the situation.

I believed that the best way to develop relationships with students was to deal with their problems at the classroom level and teach them the importance of the size of the problem. I had also learned throughout my years of being in the classroom that children are not ready to learn if they are dealing with a negative or emotional situation, so by taking a few minutes to help solve their problem, it allowed them the freedom to pursue their studies. As an administrator, I have been expected, from classroom teachers and support staff, to deal with what I believed to be minimally serious situations. Upon reflection, some of these situations may have been due to a period of adult self-regulation disengagement; the result of which may have been a classroom that was chaotic and had poor student support (Lavy & Eshet, 2018 and Raver et al., 2012, as cited in Valiente et al., 2020). Some have been almost amusing in their context. For example, I had three boys sent to the office because they were fooling around in the bathroom. When I was in the classroom, this would have been determined to be a small problem and I would have handled it on my own. I would engage the children in making the decision for what their

consequence should be. It was always interesting to hear what their ideas were; sometimes, they were harsher than what I would have implemented. I always found a way to an agreement.

When I have a student in the office, I have a wonderful opportunity to spend more time on problem solving than I did when I was in the classroom. I find it effective to listen to the child and let them express how they are feeling. I am also able to give them time to think when we are working on problem solving and what they think we need to do in order to solve the problem. I find when students come to the office with a problem, the issue can range in the level of seriousness. It is interesting to note their perceptions of the significance of the problem. It becomes my job to walk a student through a recognition of the gravity of each situation; generally, we are able to reach a positive conclusion. Overall, when I am able to check in with students after problem solving, we discuss how big their problem was and they are generally able to see it logically as the program Zones of Regulation explicitly teaches students to effectively problem solve (Kuyper, 2011).

As I have been at the same school for seven years, I have taught many of the students who are now in Grades Six and Seven. We have a good relationship and they seek me out when they are having problems. One day, we had a lockdown drill and I was extremely nervous about announcing the process on the PA system. I started talking and omitted the word drill. When I went outside for supervision, one of my former students said “I know you are the vice-principal and you are just learning, but you did not say it was a drill. Do you know where my mind went?” I apologized and confirmed that I would include the word drill on the paperwork. He also said to me, “And do you know how nervous you sounded? Next time, it might help to take a few deep breaths before you start talking on the announcements.” Wow! All the work around self-regulation in my class and the whole school has made an impact. This student had engaged in

MindUp lessons and the reminder of the Core Practice of deep belly breathing was a strategy that was practiced often (Scholastic, 2011). This student used a growth mindset, modelled appropriate emotional behaviour and reminded me of an appropriate self-regulation strategy.

This year, I was given the opportunity to work at three other schools; two elementary schools and an alternate school. While working at the alternate school, I was overwhelmed with their process of when to remove students from the school. When working in an elementary school, I have been programmed to problem solve with every child that comes into my office. At the alternate school, when a student is removed from their classroom for being disrespectful to the teacher, swearing or skipping class, it was my job to tell the student to go offsite and to try again the next day. One day, I had a student who had not been at school for a while as I was told he had had a baby. He was struggling with this change and was not living at home. In the fifth block of the day, he threw a rock at another student in a different class. When his teacher asked him to go to the office, he became extremely disrespectful. I knew his emotions were heightened and it was my job to be a role model and respond to his emotional reactions. When I asked him to go off-site, he got extremely angry. I remained calm and said “tomorrow is a new day”. He stormed out of my office and went to telephone someone to get a ride home. I followed him, as he did not leave the building. When he went to leave, he stopped and thanked me for remaining calm. Having the confidence in my self-regulation skills reflected in this interaction with this student. As a staff role model, I will share my values, attitudes and behaviours to support staff self-regulation.

Staff Role Model

As a vice-principal, I am a role model for staff. Using the ARC Framework as the foundation to build capacity for adults and their self-regulation skills has contributed to a

positive school culture where staff are encouraged to take care of themselves, be aware of their affect and attuned to themselves and children as well as create an environment where children have consistent routines and responses. I model my caregiver affect management skills on a daily basis. I am able to manage and regulate my emotional responses to a variety of different scenarios. In times of high stress I am able to remain calm and effectively de-escalate situations.

Working with all staff, I am able to engage in dialogue that promotes the foundational building blocks of ARC which helps to build staff competence in self-regulation, improves adults' ability to be models of emotional behaviour and encourages strong self-efficacy. This promotes student self-regulation behaviourally, environmentally and instructionally and therefore can impact students' academic success. As the study by Guo et al. (2012) found, positive connections between educators' self-efficacy and their practices were required to effectively implement and support self-regulation development. Ultimately, I can work with staff to positively affect student learning and encourage a strong sense of efficacy (Newman, Rutter, & Smith, 1989, as cited in Guo et al).

I am always available to help with difficult situations in the classroom, school or playground. I am a support for staff when their emotions may become heightened due to frustrations, anxiety, or personal issues. When I go into a classroom, I am there to help staff to further develop their skills to manage their emotions and to effectively implement strategies they need to return to the 'green zone' of calmness. For example, in one instance, in the school hallway, I witnessed an Education Assistant struggling with returning a student to the classroom. I could tell the adult was extremely frustrated and asked if she would like me to take the student for a walk. So I said to the student, "You look like you are feeling wiggly. Let's go for a walk."

The student and I went for a walk and when I noticed he was walking in a calmer

manner, I asked him how he was feeling. He responded with “I feel more relaxed.” I said to him “I can see that. You are not as wiggly as you were before. Do you feel ready to go back to class?” This example shows that by being attuned to adults, I was able to help both adult and student. Like the reference by Lesaux et al., (2015) when on an airplane, I had my mask on and was in a good position to help the adult and the child because I was in control of my emotions. Shanker and Barker (2016) established an understanding that all children are different and their needs are ever changing, so what may have worked the week before may not work today. I constantly remind myself of this because I know each child is unique with a variety of needs. Being ever mindful of the individual, I will be a positive influence on the self-regulation growth of all.

Student Role Model

I play an integral role in responding to students and their emotional reactions (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). Emotion coaching, in times of intervention, takes on a whole new perspective as a vice-principal, as students are often not in a calm state or according to the Zones of Regulation, in the green zone and ready to learn. I do get to acknowledge the emotion(s) they have experienced and provide further exposure to emotion words (K. A. Blair et al., 2004; Boyer, 2009, as cited in Harrington et al., 2020). With a high degree of self-regulation skills, I can provide students with opportunities for growth by supporting effective strategies that help them regulate (Lesaux et al., 2015). Teaching children to self-regulate first requires the strength of adults’ self-regulation (Florez, 2011). Children learn to regulate their emotions, thoughts, feelings and behaviours by watching and responding to the adults’ self-regulation (Florez). Time is irreplaceable. I understand the importance of time; time to get to know students, time for them to feel safe, time for them to know and trust me and time for them to understand and value

themselves. I do not wait for students to come to the office, I go to them and check in with many students on a daily basis. This consistent routine is important for those students and I value the time I get to interact with them. It is a great feeling to be able to make those connections and continue working with students.

I believe to foster self-regulation it is important to have an organized school environment as children transition to a variety of different settings throughout the day; the library, music class, the gym and the playground. As the study by Booth et al. (2019) discussed, children's self-regulation is scaffolded by a range of social and environmental supports to meet the demands of school. My school is organized to support self-regulation. There are minimal distractions in the hallways and signage is in place to remind students to slow down and look as well as when to stop. We also have areas that have sensory floor stickers where children can go to take a movement break or use when transitioning into class. There is a log where children are encouraged to balance, jump, wave, stomp, criss-cross, spin around and tap the floor. I often see children using these spaces in an expected way and when they are done they are able to calmly transition into class. I have been able to witness tremendous growth in peer engagement in many students in the eight years at my school. I recognize the importance it plays in children developing their own self-regulation skills. The overall information on self-regulation that has been gained through research, suggests students who are able to effectively self-regulate have higher academic success (Khalid, 2019; Lenes et al., 2020). I have been able to witness tremendous growth in many students at my school, as I have been at the same school for eight years.

Summary

From the moment that children enter school and throughout their school career, self-regulation is a contributing factor to their achievements. Through my experiences as a teacher and a vice-principal, I have been able to develop and support children's self-regulation skills through education (Liman & Tepeli, 2019). Working with staff members to support their awareness of self-regulation through the ARC Framework has increased their abilities to self-regulate and therefore effectively be attuned to students and their emotional needs. Working with students as effective emotion coaches contributes to increasing the development of children's self-regulation skills which ultimately leads to their improved academic success. The power to influence positive change in the lives of children begins with the awareness of all adults.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

In this paper, I make the claim that to increase student awareness and development and realize the benefits of self-regulation, adults must be exemplars of mature emotional behaviour. The self-regulation knowledge and competence of all staff members will generate an increase in student academic performance. This chapter will summarize the three preceding chapters and explain how they are connected to each other as well as explain the success of my argument. This will, as well, address the implications of my paper to self-regulation and to the practical setting.

Summary

In Chapter One of my paper, my life experiences generated a need to find my purpose as an educator. I explored my childhood perceptions, classroom teacher experiences, my journey through the M.Ed. program and my experiences as a vice-principal, all of which have contributed to an increase in my understanding and appreciation of the self-regulation program. My first classroom assignment was pivotal in deepening my knowledge of self-regulation as I had struggled to meet the needs of my students. My desire to be a positive role model for all children and lead as an exemplar of mature emotional behaviour expanded into my passion to fully comprehend the intent and practice of the program. Each year, students continually progress and build upon their skills from the previous year. The recognition that self-regulation is a valued goal and can be improved on through practice is imperative (Mrazek et al., 2018).

My journey through the M.Ed. program has impacted my development professionally and personally. My engagement in reflective practice has expanded my self-awareness and enhanced my level of knowledge about self-regulation. Grounding my teaching philosophy

made me further my connection to the Attachment, Regulation, Competency (ARC) Framework as it encompassed all the building blocks of self-regulation; being attuned to and building positive relationships with students, maintaining consistent responses and rituals and ensuring personal well-being. I engaged in many reflections about my life, personally and professionally, and will continue to do so as I become more aware of my values and continue to develop my role as an administrator. My interactions with students in my current position of vice-principal have validated my belief in the merits of the program.

In Chapter Two, the Literature Review, I demonstrated the significance of all staff members being knowledgeable and competent in self-regulation and how it contributes to the development of student self-regulation. It needs a supportive adult who is capable of managing their own stress as well as remaining in control of their interactions and emotions in order to best support children (Lesaux et al., 2015). When environmental, instructional and behavioural initiatives are effectively implemented, they intensify students' self-regulation and promote their academic accomplishments. Adults with strong efficacy and favourable regulation skills contribute to student development of self-regulation and increased academic success (Guo et al., 2012).

In Chapter Three of my paper, Application to my Professional Life, my explorations grounded my research from the literature review and successfully advanced my argument. My range of experiences from the role of classroom teacher to that of vice-principal has provided me with a multitude of examples to promote the necessity for the development of self-regulation in both adults and children. I have witnessed improved academic performances in many students since the inception of the program at my school. Working together on a school-

wide level provides adults with common practices and languages that promote their awareness and contributes to children's overall development of self-regulation.

My three chapters are unified within the context of an educational setting. My learning experiences throughout my professional career have been based on a solid foundation of self-regulation; from taking care of myself, being attuned to my affect and successfully being an emotion coach for the benefit of students. My passion led me to research self-regulation which then connected my learning to literature that supported my claim as well as informed me of any limitations. The practical setting as an elementary school classroom teacher and a vice-principal has established the importance of explicitly teaching self-regulation skills to adults, in support of children who must successfully navigate and adapt to their future circumstances.

This paper, through my research, has successfully advanced my argument that in order for students to embrace self-regulation in their lives, the adults with whom they interact must themselves be knowledgeable and competent in these skills. The literature reiterates and reinforces that when environmental, instructional and behavioural initiatives are effectively implemented, they intensify students' self-regulation and, ultimately, their academic accomplishments. My personal insight and a multitude of references are connected to the literature and addressed my claim.

Implications

I believe the implication of this research study is to create an environment in the education system which incorporates the critical importance of self-regulation in adults and children. The impact of this power on students' personal and academic fulfillment is crucial to their development. With self-regulation continually being developed, children will eventually internalize the necessary strategies they need to be regulated and will model this at home and

in other social settings. It will become a way of life and in turn they will become representatives of rational emotional behaviour. The objective is for children to realize and adjust their heightened emotions whether it is when watching a movie or playing sports or in an unfavourable peer interaction. The ultimate goal is one of investment in our society; one in which people are able to develop and maintain healthy, successful relationships, in school, the workplace and their personal lives. They will be happy, mature, responsible, contributing citizens who will transform the world for themselves and others.

Ultimately, the goal is for educators to be supportive, knowledgeable and competent about self-regulation. Every day, educators are given the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of students and by using the ARC Framework as the building blocks to build positive relationships, the skills for self-regulation will be understood as a day-to-day, moment to moment process; not simply isolated to the classroom. It occurs in all student interactions and must be patterned by adults. I believe it is important for educators to attend to their demeanor and be attuned to their affect in order to better handle demanding situations. Being attuned to our students helps us to accurately read cues and respond to underlying emotion(s).

Through the use of established expectations and consistent responses to conduct, children will be assured of a predictable, safe environment which is fundamental to establishing an ability to self-regulate. My desire is that the self-regulation program will become a universal doctrine, wherein it would provide empowered citizens a chance to view themselves with self-respect and dignity and thus offer them the chance for lives of purpose and fulfillment. My belief would be that it will contribute to a compassionate, well-functioning society.

There were obstacles in my path; not the least of which was balancing the time I devoted to my family and work life. It seemed an almost insurmountable quest but with the support and encouragement of my family and others, I managed to reach my goal. In the analogy of my mountain climb through the M.Ed. program, I have finally ascended to the summit. The view allows me to vividly recall the pitfalls and frustrations and the nervousness and tension I felt as I wound my way to the peak. The hours and days lead to months but I now see before me a promising landscape and endless possibilities.

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