

Emotional Security in Schools

Strategies to Protect Children and Promote Learning

A Graduate Course

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Course Description

What comes to mind when you hear the words: Safety in Schools? Most people respond with answers related to security systems, building updates, or police presence in schools. These physical precautions to safety are often the focus of schools when trying to keep staff and students secure. We must not ignore though, a key component in keeping our schools safe: **emotional security**. How students feel when they are in school shapes learning and student development. Educational research has shown that a positive school climate is connected to academic achievement and positive peer relationships. The emotional security component is often overlooked in the quest for physically safer schools. The reality is emotional security needs to be a priority as well. It needs to be deeply embedded into the culture of a school, both for staff and students. By effectively addressing emotional security in schools, students will be more open to and engaged in learning, staff will be more cognizant of the individual needs of students and risk prevention strategies will automatically be in place.

This course is designed to develop an in-depth framework of emotional security in schools. In addition, this course will provide clear and effective strategies for implementing emotional security into a school system for all students and staff.

Objectives

- Discuss the definition of emotional security in schools.
- Determine current barriers leading to the decrease of emotional security in schools.
- Assess how emotional security of school staff translates into their work with students.
- Develop an awareness of how school climate affects emotional security.
- Evaluate positive and negative links to physical security as they impact emotional security.
- Compile and select effective relationship building strategies for student to student, staff to student and staff to staff relationships.
- Explain the importance of creating emotional security for traumatized students.
- Evaluate research findings related to positive outcomes of emotional security in schools.
- Create clear steps and strategies to promote emotional security in school.

Curriculum Design

Emotional Security in Schools is a forty-five-hour, three-credit graduate level course completed over a two-weekend period. The following methodologies are used during the course: lectures, readings, group discussions, and assignments.

Course Materials

The required textbook for this course is *The Emotionally Connected Classroom: Wellness and the Learning Experience*, by Bill Adair.

In addition to the required textbook, links to supplemental reading material will be provided. Students will need to bring either a laptop, tablet, or notebook/pen to class in order to complete in-class assignments.

Module Outline

Introduction

Objectives: Introduce yourself and begin to get to know other course participants.

- Explain why this course is of interest to you and how it connects to your current or desired professional role.

Module 1: Overview of Emotional Security

Objectives:

- Begin to develop a working definition of what emotional security is.
- Identify why emotional security is vital for school staff and students and how it differs for each.
- Detail the differences between physical security and emotional security.

Module 2: Why is Emotional Security so Important Right Now?

Objectives:

- Compile research detailing the escalation of violence in schools.
- Assess how bullying and cyber-bullying affect a student's feelings about school.
- Evaluate the impact of teacher evaluations, in connection to their emotional security.
- Compare the connection between the lack of a student's emotional security at school and their decision to drop out, or engage in self destructive behavior.

Module 3: Barriers to Emotional Security In Schools

Objectives:

- Discuss ever increasing academic demands and standards.
- Assess the impact emotional security implementation has on school budgets.
- Identify parent push back: when a parent feels it's not the schools job to work on the emotional components of their child's development.
- Explore and evaluate the strong emphasis on physical security in schools.

Module 4: School Climate

Objectives:

- Develop a working definition of school climate.

- Research the different comprehensive assessments used to evaluate school climate.
- Appraise the major components of school life that are integral for the existence of a positive school climate: Safety, Relationships, Teaching and Learning, Environment and Organizational Patterns.

Module 5: Social Emotional Learning Competencies

Objectives:

- Develop an understanding of Core Social Emotional Competencies
- Explain how self awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making skills specifically affect emotional security.

Module 6: Crisis Preparedness and Response

Objectives:

- Explain the way in which crisis “practice,” (lock down drills, fire drills), impacts staff and student’s emotional security.
- Defend the importance of an effective crisis team at school.
- Recommend appropriate roles and responsibilities of the school crisis team.
- Evaluate response strategies after crisis and the impact of those strategies on students and staff.

Module 7: The Traumatized Student

Objectives:

- Develop strategies for identifying traumatized students.
- Explain the importance of assisting traumatized students.
- Determine sources of trauma (home, school, community or globally).
- Assess impacts of trauma to the identified student, that student’s teacher and to that student’s class.

Module 8: Strategies to Promote Emotional Security

Objectives:

- Determine strategies that have a positive impact on development of emotional security for each individual at the school as well as the school as a whole community.
- Compare components of Character Education Programs, Conflict Resolution Programs, Check in/Check Out Programs, and School Wide Positive Behavior System Programs.

Module 9: It’s All About Relationships

Objectives:

- Determine why healthy relationships are at the CORE of emotional security.
- Explain the need for every student in a school to have a positive connection with at least one adult and one peer in their school.
- Discuss how empowering students and staff will help them to make healthier connections.

- Recommend quick and easy skills that go a long way in the development of positive relationship building in schools on a daily basis.

Module 10: Moving Forward

Objectives:

- Create a realistic emotional security implementation plan for your school. This will include rationale for all aspects of the plan (the final project for this course).

Student Requirements:

1. Participation: actively participate in all course meetings and activities.
2. Complete all reading, group work, talking points, reflective responses, and journal entries.
3. Complete the final project.

Grading Criteria

| Assignment | Points |
|----------------|--------|
| Talking Points | 25 |
| Reflections | 25 |
| Journal Log | 25 |
| Final Project | 25 |

Grading Scale

| | |
|--------|---|
| 93-100 | A |
| 85-92 | B |
| 77-84 | C |

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