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# Student Perceptions of Social-Emotional Learning Through Morning Meetings in a 12th-Grade Economics Classroom

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Student Perceptions of Social-Emotional Learning Through Morning Meetings in a 12<sup>th</sup>-Grade

Economics Classroom

Summer Anguiano

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### **Abstract**

With increased interest in Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), teachers have worked to find ways in which SEL can be brought into the school and classroom community. For this study, the researcher wanted to bring SEL into the classroom and understand how the students perceived it. The study was conducted in an on-level senior Economics classroom where SEL had not previously been introduced into the classroom culture. Data was gathered through a student survey, individual student interviews, and a focus group interview. To analyze the data, the researcher used a constant comparative method of coding to identify the data thematically. From the data analysis, three major themes emerged: the importance of class climate, the powerfulness of student self-reflection, and the importance of compassion and community to learners.

## **Student Perceptions of Social-Emotional Learning Through Morning Meetings in a 12<sup>th</sup>-Grade Economics Classroom**

“I am so stressed.” “I don’t want to be here.” “This year has sucked.” These were all typical statements that I would hear throughout my day within my Economics classroom, a class mostly full of seniors who were about to look the real world in the eyes. They always seemed to have more on their minds than my class and my content. After every admittance of frustration from my learners, I began to wonder, what else was bothering them? How could I better understand my learners outside lives? How could I see my learners face-to-face every day, five days a week and not know what was going on with them? How many of my learners were facing outside struggles that created a struggle within school? What weight were my learners carrying on their shoulders? Was there any way that I could provide a space for my learners to express their thoughts and frustrations without overstepping any boundaries?

### **Purpose**

As the school year started, students began filling the desks of mine and Mrs. Childs’ twelfth-grade classroom (all names are pseudonyms). Some learners came in happy as could be, while other came in downcast and disengaged. One day, I noticed a student had been absent for almost a full week. After getting information about her situation, it came to our attention that she was pregnant. This made me realize that my cooperating teacher and I really had no idea what was happening in the lives of the students who were coming into our classroom every day. Due to this realization, I immediately researched ways to connect with students on a daily basis. With this research, I found programs concerning Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and how to implement these programs into your classroom. One of the programs I found from my research was Morning Meetings.

I was amazed at the simplicity of Morning Meetings and how beneficial they can be for students. Morning Meetings are a time when learners gather for structured conversation that combines academic and SEL (Kriete & Davis, 2014). This inspired me to implement Morning Meetings into my classroom and understand how students perceive this strategy. Did they find it useful to talk about their emotions with their peers? Did they feel like they could come to both Mrs. Childs and I to express any emotion they may be feeling? Did they feel like it was a positive addition to the class structure? With these questions in mind, I designed an action research study to address the following questions:

What are secondary students' perceptions of Morning Meetings when they are implemented in an Economics classroom?

Do students feel like Morning Meetings were a positive addition to their school day? If not, why not?

During my study, I was a graduate student completing a yearlong clinical teaching placement in a 12<sup>th</sup>-grade Economics classroom at Rojas High School. Rojas is located in the West Texas town of Angel, which is off of Interstate 20. Angel Independent School District is home to four high schools, and Angel High School is home to approximately 2,137 students ranging from grades 9-12. Student demographics for Angel High School were as follows: 47.2% of the students were Hispanic, 33.44% were White, 14.8% were African American, 1.4% were Asian, 2.9% identified as Two or More Races, and American Indian students made up 0.3% of the population. The economically disadvantaged made up 69.3% of the student population, English Learners made up 5.2% of the population, and Special Education students made up 11.8% of the population. Class sizes at Angel High ranged in size from 24.2 students per Social Studies class to 14.5 students per English/Language Arts class. The overall school performance

for the 2018 school year Met Standard with an overall score of 83, according to a 2018 TEA report.

### **Literature Review**

SEL is a topic that is entering the field of education with great force. Educators are becoming more aware of the importance of building genuine connection with students and the impacts that it can have on their academics. But what is SEL? The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2015), has defined SEL as a “process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions” (p. 1). Not only do SEL programs work to help students achieve the aforementioned goals, but they also works to engage students’ understandings of five core areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2015). Though there are many different ways in which SEL can be brought into schools and classrooms, for the focus of this study Morning Meetings will be looked at.

Morning Meetings are time within class for structured conversation in which “social, emotional, and academic learning is an integrated experience...” (Kriete & Davis, 2014, p. 16). During a meeting, there are four components that Kriete and Davis (2014) described as the most important, which are the following: “greeting, sharing, group activity, and the morning message” (p. 31). When the students are gathered together they have a chance to develop different foundational skills which are directly tied to the five areas identified by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2015). These foundational skills can be identified by two categories: thinking skills and language skills (Kriete & Davis, 2014). Skills such as actively

listening, speaking clearly, asking thoughtful and purposeful questions, and agreeing or disagreeing respectfully are all practiced within Morning Meetings (Kriete & Davis, 2014).

Many schools are utilizing the benefits of SEL through classroom meetings to help students build relationships, as well decrease misbehavior and violence (Mirsky, 2014). This can be seen in the schools of Philadelphia, where Circles have been used as a form of restorative practices to help build a framework for all the relationships that can be a part of a school community (Mirsky, 2014). Circles also benefit the student by removing the concepts of classroom authority and punishment and allow for the class to open up to one another without fear of criticism (Gunn, 2018).

SEL and Morning Meetings also provide a time for students to understand how to express and regulate their emotions. According to Valosek, et al. (2019) there was a significant decrease in “psychological distress in middle school students” when SEL was done in school (p.111). Other factors that can take a toll on a student’s mental wellbeing such as family structure, family income, academic difficulties, lack of academic support, and more contribute to the dropout of many students (McKee & Caldarella, 2016). However, high risk and at-risk students are some students who have shown to benefit greatly from SEL programs (Castro-Olivo, 2014). Most SEL programs have a focus on mental health and ways that this can be addressed within the school community along with the classroom community (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2018). It is with these SEL programs that students begin to form communities of trust within their classroom and their peers (Castro-Olivo, 2014; DePaoli, Atwell, Bridgeland, & Shriver, 2018; Gunn, 2018; Mirsky, 2014).

Due to these formations of trust that occur in schools, students who have previously felt isolated or left out in school have now found a place of belonging (DePaoli et al., 2018). When

learners do not have access to, or do not feel helped by the school community, they may choose to drop out and pursue another track of life (Englund, Egeland, & Collins, 2008). Due to this, Kriete and Davis (2014) urge schools to adopt some form of SEL by saying the following:

Feeling connected to a school community is an important factor in a students' success.

Students who feel connected to school report that they like school, feel they belong, have friends at school, and believe their teachers care about them and their learning. (p. 14)

According to a report done by CASEL (2015), students who have been made aware of SEL and have a strong SEL program in school report a more positive social climate and learning environment. Creating a space where students can interact with another without fear allows for students to build trust, mutual understanding and shared values, and behaviors (Costello, Watchel, & Watchel, 2010). Communities of trust are one of the few successes that directly impacts a student's success and school attitude.

Overall, there has been quite a bit of research done in elementary and middle schools to demonstrate the importance of integrating SEL into a school culture (Castro-Olivo, 2014; Denham, Bassett, Zinsser, & Wyatt, 2014; Dix, Slee, Lawson, & Keeves, 2012; Rutledge, Cohen-Vogel, Osborne-Lampkin, & Roberts, 2015; Tan, Sinha, Shin, & Wang, 2018; Valosek et al., 2019). However, there has been little research considering the perceptions of Morning Meetings within a high school Economics classroom. My study will contribute to this lack of research by showing how students themselves perceive Morning Meetings, not simply looking at the benefits that come from implementation of SEL in a classroom.

### **Methods**

This study took place in an Economics classroom over the course of four weeks. For the study, I worked to understand how students perceived SEL through the use of Morning Meetings



in relation to its implementation into the classroom routine. Previously, the classroom routine was very mundane. Students would come into class and listen to the academic content being given to them. However, once the Morning Meetings were introduced, students were able to communicate to Mrs. Childs and me on a more personal level, which allowed us to further understand them as learners and help us create more thoughtful lessons.

### **Participant Selection**

Participants for this study were gathered from four periods of Mrs. Childs' Economics classroom. Before the study began, I informed my students that later on in the year, they would be asked to participate in the study, but participation was completely optional and would not affect their classroom grades.

Students in Mrs. Childs' classes were aged 16-18 years old. Across all four class periods, Mrs. Childs had 108 students. Males outnumbered the females in the classes, with 54.6% of the total students being males and 45.8% being female. Demographically, 54.6% of the students were Hispanic, 22.2% were White, and 23.1% were African American. Of these students, 8.3% were identified as needing special education accommodations, 3.7% were identified as having 504 accommodations, and 6.48% were identified as needing LEP accommodations.

Once the study began, the students were informed about the study again, with time for questions to be asked. Students then received an informational letter that they could take home to their parents. With the informational letter, students also received a consent form for their parent or guardian to sign if they were interested in participating in the study. Consent forms were also given to students who were already 18 years old and were required to be signed by their parent or guardian as well. Once students returned the consent forms, they were then given an assent form

to sign. After all the appropriate permission forms were signed, there was a total of 26 willing participants, and all participants received copies of the documents for their own records.

### **Data Collection**

For the study, I collected data in four separate forms: a survey, individual interviews, a focus group interview, and observations. Once the Morning Meetings had been implemented for three weeks, all students received a survey with eight Likert scale questions and two open-ended questions (Hubbard & Power, 2003). The survey asked students about their feelings regarding class and Morning Meetings (see Appendix A). Though the survey was given to all students, data was only gathered from those who returned both the consent and assent forms. Once the perceptual data had been gathered, I was able to determine how students on average felt about our classroom Morning Meetings (Hubbard & Power, 2003). After the survey data had been gathered, I was able to identify the six semi-structured interviews with students who felt like the Morning Meetings were a positive addition, a so-so addition, and a negative addition to the classroom. I was able to identify the six students who would be participants of the focus group interview, and these students were a more thoughtful representation of the overall classroom demographics.

Students were observed two times a week before, during, and after our class Meeting took place. The Meetings took place within our four separate Economics periods, on Tuesdays' and Thursdays', and began at the beginning of the period and lasted for approximately 10-15 minutes. To guide the Meetings, the participants were given different topics to discuss—some related to in-school stresses and successes, while others related to personal stresses and success. During these Meetings, I wrote down field notes noting who spoke, a brief summary of what they talked about, and the class responses (Hendricks, 2017). I also took note of any new

information that a student shared that could help Mrs. Childs and I better serve them within the classroom.

### **Data Analysis**

The data that was gathered from the interviews, focus group, and observations were analyzed using the constant comparative method with initial coding followed by the identification of major themes with supporting level 1 and level 2 codes (Hubbard & Power, 2003).

Level 1 codes, as described by Tracy (2013) are codes that can be found in the data, while level 2 codes further synthesize and explain the collected data. For the first 20% of my data, I coded my data by creating level 1 codes. After the first 20% of data was coded, I used those level 1 codes to code the remaining 80% of my data. From these codes, I was able to identify three to five level 2 codes within the data. Additionally, I created a codebook (see Appendix B) where I listed all of the codes, their definitions, and an example from the data. Memos were also written regarding each level 2 code in order to further understand the findings and themes within the data (Tracy, 2013).

In order to quantitatively examine the data from the survey, descriptive statistics were used. Overall percentages of each Likert question were used to demonstrate the students' survey responses (see Appendix C).

### **Findings**

Based on the data that was collected and analyzed, the following main themes emerged: the importance of class climate, student self-reflection, and how compassion and community play a role in a classroom. These themes were developed after the student survey, individual

student interview responses, and field notes that were collected during the implementation of the Morning Meetings.

### **Class Climate**

The discussion of the classroom climate after the implementation of the Morning Meetings became a major theme once the data was analyzed and I noticed that the learners had been more aware of the differences within the class climate. The participating students all noted that class interactions had increased, they enjoyed getting to share with their classmates, the content benefits, and more. This was not something I had expected to come from the implementation of Morning Meetings, but it was not something I could ignore. Though my research had a specific focus on the perceptions of the Meetings, it was clear that the Meetings appeared to affect more than my learners' perceptions of SEL within the classroom.

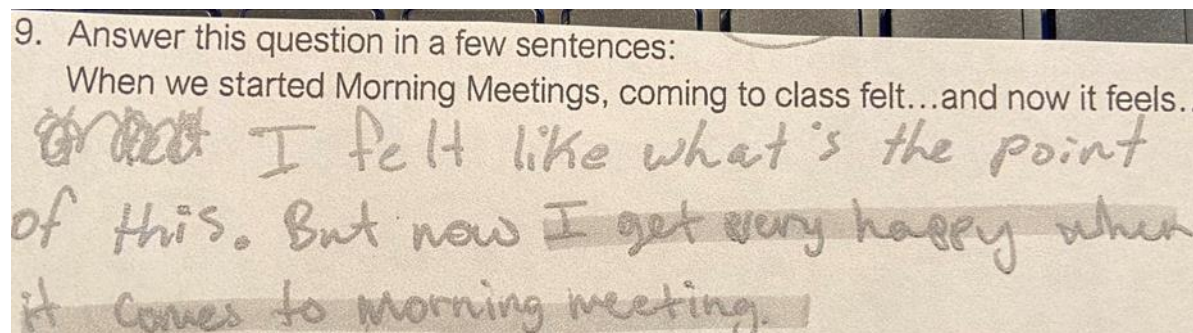
Before the implementation of the Morning Meetings occurred, class time was not a place where my learners were able to discuss outside topics. Were they discussing real world topics and their relevance to our class content? Yes, of course. Yet, they were not given a space to discuss the things that were impacting their learning.

“We would just walk in, sit down and, I don't want to say bland, but it was just a normal class,” shared Ella during her individual interview, and she was right. Class, before the implementation, was nothing more than a place where we focused on the content and the work that had to get done. The learners walked in, sat at their desks, talked to their friends, and waited for the lesson to begin. They were never really able to talk, and this was highlighted multiple times throughout the individual interviews that were conducted. Throughout the six individual student interviews and student surveys, the learners highlighted the lack of excitement that engulfed the classroom. However, once the Morning Meetings had been brought into the

classroom, these feelings shifted. Students were now feeling like the overall classroom climate was more positive and interactive. During his individual interview, Noah stated that after the Morning Meetings had been implemented he felt like the class “was more together, like we bonded more.”

This shift within the classroom climate was truly noticeable. My learners came into class with a more positive attitude once the Meetings had been implemented, and more positive on the days that the Meetings were actually taking place, which was every Tuesday and Thursday. One learner even shared that she liked coming to class on our Meeting days because she “knew the start of class would be more fun and a nicer environment.” This shift in the class climate appeared to be a direct result of the implementation of the Morning Meetings and resulted with the positive perceptions from my students towards the Morning Meetings.

In relation to my research, I found that this shift in the class climate was only possible because of the positive perceptions that my learners had with Morning Meetings. An example of this can be seen in Figure 1 through a sample of a student’s response on their survey.



*Figure 1.* Zoe’s response on her student survey. “I felt like what’s the point of this. But now I get very happy when it comes to Morning Meeting.”

This positivity is a complete response to my initial research question. From my participants, it was clear that the implementation of Morning Meetings within an Economics classroom was not a crazy idea. It was not a classroom where SEL had to be excluded. Instead,

my participants enjoyed the implementation of the Meetings and had an overall positive reaction to them.

The positive reaction to the Meetings could be attributed to the fact that I gave my learners topics that not only revolved around their school lives, but also their personal lives. I gave them a chance to speak on every aspect of their lives that could be a possible stress factor for them, and this seemed to be the biggest help for those that were participating. Noah stated within his interview that his positive feelings for the Meetings stemmed from the fact that they were “about our lives, so it actually matters.” It surprised me that giving my learners a chance to just talk about themselves had such an impact on the overall classroom environment, along with their perceptions of SEL. One of the participants even stated they wished we had been able to start them at the beginning of the semester, as opposed to the middle of the semester.

My learners were hesitant at first to participate with the Meetings, some stating that it was hard for them to share with their classmates, while others shared that they wished someone else shared first so that they wouldn't feel pressured to share, but once we got into the rhythm of the Meetings, it became clear that my learners were enjoying the time to relax. Some even compared their class interactions to the class interactions from last semester. Since Economics is a semester-long class, my learners were taking Government the previous semester, and they stated that they did not interact nearly as much as they did now. I believe this is a direct result of the Morning Meetings—as they were being given a chance to talk, they learned to lean on one another and truly interact with each other.

However, this shift within the class climate was not the only surprising outcome from the Meetings. My learners' willingness to look within themselves and learn new things about themselves was the next code that emerged from my data collection.

**Student Self-Reflection**

With the opportunity to speak to their peers and myself, my learners began to learn more about who they are as people. Again, this was not a theme I had expected to emerge from my data collection, as my focus was on my students' perceptions of the Morning Meetings, yet the recurrence of similar themes was too large to ignore. My learners surprised me as well. In spite of the implementation being a new part of the classroom routine, my learners were not scared to participate. Hesitant at first, of course, but once they got over those initial feelings of nervousness, they participated head on.

From this self-reflection that occurred, my learners realized that they truly were not alone in what they were feeling. They realized that they could share their thoughts and feelings in a space that was free of judgements and with people who genuinely wanted to know what was going on in their lives. As a result of the Meetings, my learners found that they had a voice within the classroom. They began to feel like they did not have to put on a mask for Mrs. Childs' and me, and they knew that we cared about what was going on in their lives.

The theme of student self-reflection, for me, occurred because the learners were able to feel acknowledged within the classroom. They began to realize that even though they had these external battles that they were fighting, they did not have to fight them alone, because their classmates were there to help them in any way that they could. If they were struggling with college, which many were, they knew that they weren't the only ones. It was quite amazing to see how many students began to realize that what they were experiencing was not a phenomenon. Being able to have a voice was something that many of them appreciated, stating that it helped them feel more relaxed within the classroom. How could it be that simply giving students a place to share could help them in so many ways?

One of my learners even shared that the implementation of the Morning Meetings had helped him realize what he wanted to do with his future. With the interactions he had been having with his classmates, he realized that his path was not a traditional one, but it was one that was going to bring him the most happiness—which was something that was stressed multiple times in every Meeting, doing what would make you the happiest. Was this something I expected to happen from the implementation of the Meetings? Absolutely not, but I was so glad to see that my students were realizing life is what they make of it, and it was their choice to make themselves happy.

Another learner shared that through the Meetings she realized she had done more than she was giving herself credit for. She knew she was an accomplished student, but with the constant stress of school, she had not realized how much she had actually done. Yet, this was realized through the Meetings. Being able to share her success with her classmates made her feel proud of herself, and she knew that her classmates were not jealous of her but were actually happy for her.

When I thought about understanding my students' perceptions of Morning Meetings, I did not expect for them to also understand more about themselves, but it happened, and this is such a positive towards what SEL implementation can do for learners. They not only felt positively about the Meetings, but the Meetings helped them in more ways than I expected. The learners began to realize that sharing their hardships and successes was not the result of complaining and gratefulness, but rather the result of being resilient. Ella had shared that she did not talk to her parents about her school life, because they simply did not understand what she was going through, but by being able to talk to her peers, she realized that she had a place to share her struggles with people who understood.



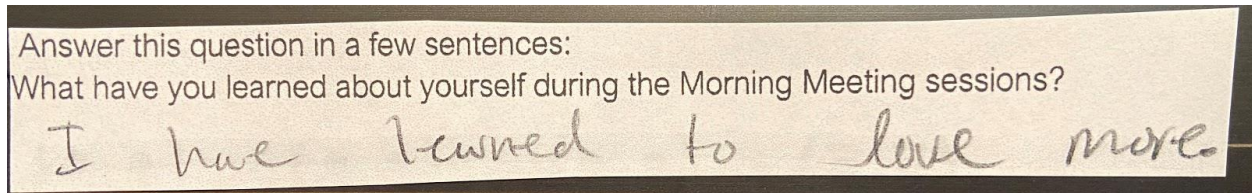
The self-reflection from my learners that occurred because of the Morning Meetings would not have been possible without their unbiased participation. Though they were hesitant at first, it became quite clear that once they got used to the Meetings, they were able to let down their guard and wholeheartedly participate. This letting down of their guard allowed them to let their classmates in on their struggles, and realize they were not alone with what they were going through. It was clear that their participation was a direct reflection of their positive feelings with the Meetings, and even though they were being implemented within an economics class, it was not hard for them to share. Since they were encouraged to share, they did not feel like we did not care about them—it was quite the opposite, they felt like we cared about them as people, and not just students.

This feeling of knowing that we actually wanted to understand our learners reflected largely within the last theme that was prominent within the data: compassion and community.

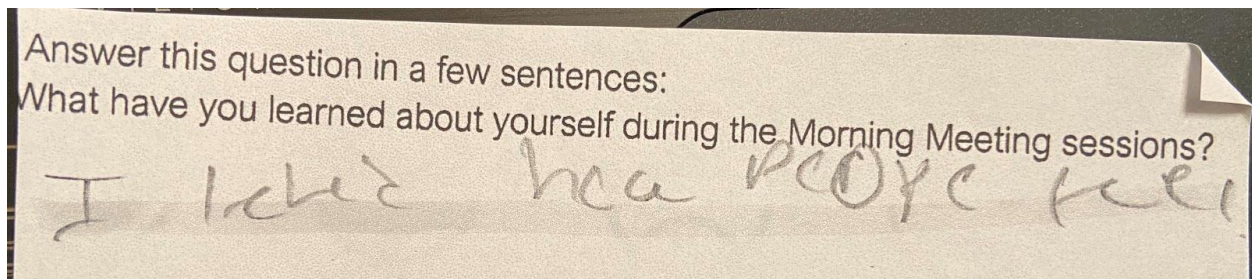
### **Compassion and Community**

The compassion and community aspect of the data was one that I felt could not stand apart from another. Without the compassion that my learners had shared towards one another, the community aspect of the classroom could not have been possible. In this instance, the classroom community is different from the classroom climate. In the earlier theme, class climate, we discussed the overall feel of the class routine and class interactions before and after the implementation of the Morning Meetings, but for this theme, class community deals with the overall classroom dynamic that shifted due to the meetings. Community for this theme deals with how the class was able to shift their focus from individuals to a whole, which could not have been without the compassion that was shown from the learners. It was clear to me that these two could not have been one without the other. If there had not been any compassion from the

learners, there could not have been any form of classroom community. An example of these feelings of compassion can be seen in Figures 2 and 3 through a sample of two students' responses on their survey.



*Figure 2.* Leo's response on his student survey. "I have learned to love more."



*Figure 3.* Zane's response on his student survey. "I learned how people feel."

As you can see, from the figures, the learners had been able to understand more about their classmates and more about themselves. The response from Leo was not one that I had been expecting, but it blew me away. He had learned to love more because of the Meetings. Due to the Meetings, he was able to understand more about his peers and show compassion towards them. He did not see the Meetings negatively; instead, he was able to grow in compassion for his peers and extend a loving hand towards them. From Zane's response, you can see that he was better able to understand what his classmates were feeling. He was able to get a better look at what his classmates were going through, and in turn, better understood how they felt. These two responses were just some of the ones that highlighted the compassion aspect of this theme. Neither of these two learners bragged about themselves, but instead shared how the Meetings impacted

themselves internally. This understanding of themselves and their classmates led to better understanding of their classmates and how they could help them out.

From the Morning Meetings, my learners were able to understand how their classmates were feeling and understand how their own problems could help their classmates. In many different instances, my learners shared positive words of encouragement or words of advice to those that needed it. They began to understand that their classmates had struggles that may be similar to their own, and they realized that they could help them through their struggles. Or, as Ella stated, “I like knowing that other people are in the same boat as I am, and if I can help them, well then, I’ll help them out...” This compassion for their classmates was seen through and through. It did not start and stop with one student but happened with almost every participant.

With this growing compassion for their classmates, my learners were able to better understand those around them, and from this a tighter classroom community emerged. No longer were my students disconnected from one another. They were all able to interact and help one another, leading to a classroom where no one was a stranger, but all were friends. “Now, I can talk to everyone and we’re all friends in this classroom, and it’s really nice knowing that,” stated Ella. Was this expected from the implementation of the Morning Meetings? Absolutely not, but I could not deny the community that was forming. My learners were able to let one another in, help one another through any problem they may have had, and it resulted in a place where everyone became an integral part of the classroom.

To me, this was the emerging theme that most directly answered my initial research question. Yes, my secondary students felt like the implementation of Morning Meetings in a 12<sup>th</sup>-grade economics class was a positive addition to their day, and their overall perception of this implementation was positive. The Meetings gave them a place where they could be

themselves and share what was weighing on them. It did not matter that it was taking place in an economics classroom, what mattered was that their teachers were giving them a place to speak and be more than a student. They began to feel like we, their teachers, cared about their wellbeing and this greatly impacted their attitude towards our classroom. They began to come to class with more positivity and hope after the Morning Meetings were implemented, and this led to a larger impact on the overall classroom community. The Morning Meetings *created* a classroom community through the compassion the learners showed one another. With the positive attitudes that my learners had towards the Meeting, their participation was greatly impacted. Their positive feelings allowed for them to create their own space to be heard and welcomed, which in turn created the classroom community.

Overall, my participating learners all shared positive feelings towards the implementation of Morning Meetings, and all felt like it was a positive addition to their school day. Through the change in the class climate, the emergence of their self-reflection, and the compassion and community that was created, the implementation showed more than just positive feelings. It showed that when we give a place for our students to talk about themselves in a stress-free, judgement-free zone, they will open up to us.

### **Implications for Teachers**

The concept of SEL was not one that I was familiar with before my action research study, nor was it one that was heavily discussed within my educational career. However, from the moment I was made familiar with it, I knew it was something that I would take with me into my own future classroom. The intentionality of SEL was what drew me to this educational framework and is what made me fall in love with the practice of Morning Meetings. Though my study was focused on high-school-aged learners, it is still valuable to teachers of all age levels.

The need for a safe space for communication does not start and stop at a certain age or grade; all students need to be aware that their educators care for them in more ways than academics.

From the implementation of the Morning Meetings, I learned the importance of genuine conversation with my learners. Greeting them at the door and discussing with them briefly before class started, or after a lesson had been completed was not nearly enough to understand just exactly what was going on internally. I learned that shifting my focus from being content-driven to student-driven had more of an impact on the willingness of my learners to engage with the classroom content, as well. Not only did my learners understand that I expected to perform at a certain level, but they also began to realize that they were not alone in what they were experiencing in their at-home lives. By giving my learners a place to talk, I began to realize that sometimes, school really is the last thing on a learner's mind, but it is how I approach the learning that can help bring them back to a school-centered mindset.

A student-centered approach to a classroom, does not mean to forget about your classroom curriculum, but rather, present your classroom in a way that is truly meaningful to the lives of your learners. Take time to let your learners take over the class time, and you will learn some valuable information about your learners that can greatly impact how you view and understand the hearts that are sitting in your room. Now, this may seem like a hard thing to implement within a secondary classroom; there is so much content to cover within a short timeframe, but it can be done. When implementing the Morning Meetings within my own classroom, I allowed two days out of the week for them to occur, and I did not set an end time for them. They ended when the students no longer wanted to share and discuss the topic I had given them, and this seemed to work out great for my classroom. Depending on the length of the Meeting, content was still able to be introduced to the class and did not mess up the flow of the

scoping sequence. Two days a week, for about a month, was all it took for my learners to create a classroom community. This community was formed from the conversations that my learners led themselves; it did not happen because I forced it—my learners created the community. If you find yourself in a position where you see your classroom disconnected from one another, and you realize you have not been able to connect to your learners, practice the implementation of a Morning Meeting. Allow your students time to talk to you and to one another in a stress-free, judgement-free way, and the result may be a better classroom environment.

From this experiment, I learned how to be more conscious of what my learners may be going through, because even if they do not verbalize it, they may offer support to a learner who did. My learners learned how to be more compassionate to their classmates after they realized most of them are all going through the same thing. Not once, during my Meetings, did I hear a learner scoff or laugh at the words spoken by another classmate. Instead, they always offered words of advice and help. They always wanted to let their classmates know that they were not alone in what they might have been feeling or going through, and this is what surprised me the most. My research was focusing on the individual perceptions of Morning Meetings from my learners, but from this implementation, came a way for my learners to lean on one another. The classroom cliques started to disappear, and everyone became involved with one another. I learned that positive connections do not start and stop with the teacher-learner connection but must also include student-student connections. The learners are the ones who make up the class, so their connections with one another are going to greatly impact the Meetings.

However, my data may have shown different results if my participant group was larger. Out of my total 110 students, only 26 students had received the necessary permissions to be a part of the study. This was the largest limitation I faced during my project. Along with this small

group of participants, I was also not able to fully gather my data due to the coronavirus outbreak. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, my clinical teaching placement was cancelled as schools shut down, so I lacked data on the remaining three scheduled Morning Meetings and was not able to complete the larger focus group interview. I am wondering if these factors, if not had happened, would have revealed different information that would have impacted the findings of my data. Would the focus group have shown me different viewpoints of the Meetings? I would have interviewed six different students for the focus group, so would the perceptions of the Meetings have held a different meaning if these students had been able to be interviewed? From my small sample size, the reactions towards the Morning Meetings were mostly positive, but would this have been different if I had more students to gather data from? Would the responses from my participants be similar to other students if this project had taken place in a different content area?

Lastly, from my research project, I realized that the social and emotional aspects of learning are not two separate entities. They must be intertwined with one another to create an environment where learners want to be in and succeed in. My teaching practices will forever be changed from this project. I now realize that even though content is important, getting to better understand the hearts in your classroom is equally as important. Therefore, if you are a teacher who has never heard of SEL, I encourage you to research it and the benefits that it has on learning. My study focused on the implementation of Morning Meetings in a high school setting, but there are many different ways that SEL can be implemented within a classroom. There is not one standard way of implementing this into your personal classroom, so implement SEL in a way that suits you and your classroom best. Even if that means talking to your students for a full class period just once a month—do that. You will see changes in your students, and you will build more positive connections with the learners in your class. Whether they are five-year-old learners

or 18-year-old learners, they will appreciate the effort you put into getting to know them in more ways than just them as a learner.



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## Appendix A

## Morning Meeting Survey

1. How did you feel coming to class before we started class Morning Meetings?



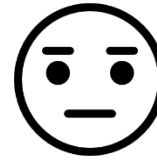
Very Happy



A Little Happy



A Little Upset



Very Upset

2. How did you feel coming to class when we started class Morning Meetings?



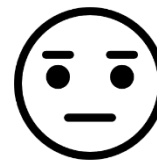
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Very Upset

3. How do you feel after we have a class Morning Meetings?



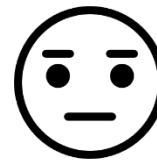
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A Little Happy



A Little Upset



Very Upset

4. How do you feel on the days that we do not have a class Morning Meetings?



Very Happy



A Little Happy



A Little Upset



Very Upset

5. How do you feel when you are asked to share during a class Morning Meetings?



Very Happy



A Little Happy



A Little Upset



Very Upset

6. How do you feel about the classroom environment during a class Morning Meetings?



Very Happy



A Little Happy



A Little Upset



Very Upset

7. How do you feel about the classroom community after starting class Morning Meetings?



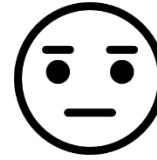
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8. How would you feel if we did class Morning Meetings for the rest of the semester?



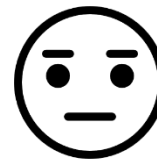
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9. Answer this question in a few sentences:

When we started class Morning Meetings, coming to class felt...and now it feels...

10. Answer this question in a few sentences:

What have you learned about yourself during the class Morning Meetings sessions?

**Appendix B**  
**Codebook**

Level 2 Codes:	Level 1 Codes:	Code Definition:	Example:
<b>Class Climate</b>		Factors that helped create a change in the overall feel of the class.	"I feel like our class was more together, like, we bonded more."
	Class Interactions	The ways in which the learners began to interact with one another that helped create a tighter class bond.	"We, like, actually, want to know about each other's days and stuff...we don't say it just to say it."
	Positivity	Positive feelings towards the Morning Meeting implementation.	"Cause it's about, like, our lives, so it actually matters."
	More Class Discussion	The wants of students to have more active participation for the majority of the class.	"What I dislike, is, I want more people to be involved in it."
	Struggles with Sharing	How certain students felt too nervous to share, thus making them lack participation.	"To be more open and share. Even though I haven't shared, I'm encouraged to."
	Enjoyment with Sharing	How those who shared, felt with the sharing process.	"Um, I don't really say this a lot, but I am an overachiever at times, and when I talk good about myself, it makes me feel really good..."
	Pre-Morning Meeting Class Routine	Students described how the class worked before the implementation of Morning Meetings and how it made them feel.	"Um I felt like it was any other class...it was just like a normal class."

	Focus with Content	Learners described how the implementation of Morning Meetings helped them also focus on content.	“I pay attention more in class since the Meetings catch everyone’s attention.”
	Being able to talk	Students express how the Morning Meetings have given them a chance to have a voice.	“I get to put my word in this class, and people get to hear what I have to say, instead of me barging into conversations.”
	Semester Differences	Learners compared how the implementation of Morning Meetings created a different class dynamic from last semester.	“This semester, I think it’s more about everyone, rather than those one or two people...that’s definitely the shift I’ve seen.”
	Suggestions	Learners offered ways in which the Morning Meeting could better serve the class.	“I think we should make people write down three things and then we can call on people.”
<b>Student Self-Reflection</b>		Ways in which the learners began to understand themselves better.	“I learned that I am getting a lot done this year.”
	Outside Stresses	The things that our learners brought to class from their outside life.	“I don’t know what I’m going to do in my life yet, that’s what stresses me out.”
	Be Strong	The ways in which learners had to be strong for themselves.	“I gotta be a man...I got a lot of people who need me.”
	Personal Motivation	How Morning Meetings helped show students what they can do.	“I learned I needed to try harder and achieve what I put my head to.”

	A Mask	How students cope with their stress.	“I know I’m loud and obnoxious at times, but I realized that’s just me trying to cope. That’s just me trying to mask everything.”
	Feel More Relaxed	How the Morning Meetings began to help learners relax in life.	“When we get to class and we get to talk about it all, knowing you’re not the only one..it has just been a good stress reliever.”
<b>Compassion and Community</b>		How the implementation of Morning Meetings helped learners be more in tune with their peers and create a class community.	“I have learned to love more.”
	Similar feelings as classmates.	The ways in which students were able to relate to another on different topics.	“I like knowing that other people are in the same boat as I am, and if I can help them, well then, I’ll help them out...”
	Connect to Peers	How the class has been able to connect with everyone, not just cliques.	“Now, I can talk to everyone and we’re all friends in this classroom, and it’s really nice knowing that.”
	Want for other classes.	Students expressed that they wished this was something done in their other classes.	“I wish it was like that in every class.”
	Actually Care.	This refers to the care that Mrs. Childs and I showed our students within the classroom.	“It’s nice to know that we’re not just seen as students...you obviously care about



			us and you want to get to know us better.”
	Excitement	This refers to the excitement shown by the peers of the students who shared their initial responses.	“From the Meeting, you would think Noah’s enthusiasm was for his own accomplishment, but he was so happy for Ella that he wanted to share her news with the class.”

Appendix C

Quantitative Data from Survey Results (Overall Percentages)

