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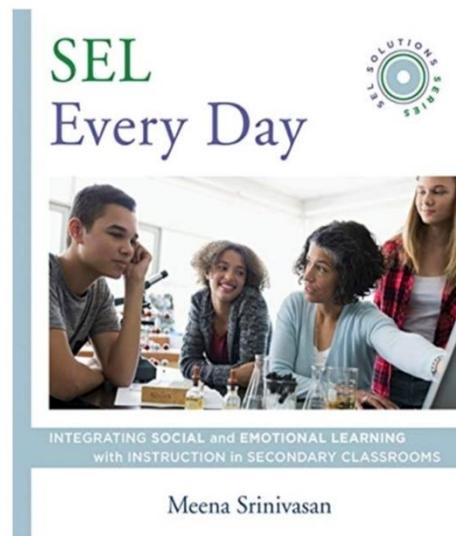
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In her latest book, *SEL Every Day*, author Meena Srinivasan presents practical and accessible guidance for secondary school educators looking to integrate social and emotional learning (SEL) into their practice. With over a decade of experience working with social and emotional learning and mindfulness in a variety of academic settings, Srinivasan knows firsthand the importance of SEL in adolescents. She has contributed to broadcasts and publications relating to social emotional learning and authored the book *Teach, Breathe, Learn* (2014) about mindfulness in schools. She studied and trained in mindfulness with renowned organizations in the United States and abroad, such as UMASS Medical School's Stress Reduction Clinic and the Ahimsa Trust. This compact and straightforward guide is one of the latest books in The Norton Series on Social Emotional Learning Solutions (Jennings, P.A., Ed.) and complements the series by providing useful SEL resources for this crucial developmental period.

SEL Every Day presents practical tools and strategies for educators delivered in a well-sequenced format with clear, conceptual explanations. Srinivasan describes the current, mostly neglected state of SEL in U.S. schools, but counters with detailed examples and practical stories of successful SEL curriculum implementation. Concrete examples and reproducible forms for learning and reflection are included to facilitate implementation. The ideas presented center on the importance of human relationships and fostering loving



connections with students in environments where “...students feel seen, safe, free, appreciated, and loved.” (p.164). This central theme aligns with the pillars of servant leadership, such as listening, empathy, healing, awareness, and building community (Northouse, 2018), and focuses on helping teachers best serve their students.

Srinivasan begins by providing the reader with a brief history and précis of the scholarship regarding SEL in education and the critical importance of such curricula in adolescence. The SEL framework created by Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is referenced throughout the book. This framework has five core competencies (self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, relationship skills, and social awareness), which are foundational to the strategies the author presents.

The transformative possibilities of SEL are key to Srinivasan’s message. She recalls how her school district, Oakland Unified School District, expanded their definition of social and emotional learning in an attempt to address inequities by adding the following statement: “Through strengthening our SEL competencies we are better able to connect across race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, learning needs, and age” (p. 17). Strong SEL practices coupled with an understanding of critical race theory (CRT), she argues, should promote inclusivity and begin to disrupt inequitable practices. These ideas support Shield’s (2010) definition of transformative leadership, which states that “Transformative leadership begins with questions of justice and democracy; it critiques inequitable practices and offers the promise not only of greater individual achievement but of a better life lived in common with others” (p. 559). Srinivasan acknowledges that although she fails to comprehensively discuss the equity aspect of SEL; current SEL research is focused on equity and social justice, particularly the implications for the CASEL’s five competencies and the opportunities and concerns these might pose to educational equity.

In order to implement effective SEL practices in the secondary classroom, Srinivasan contends that we must start by building communities centered on relationships. She reminds educators that responsible teachers and administrators must first see to their own well-being through mindfulness and presents practices to achieve this. She suggests the use of restorative practices for creating and maintaining community: the creation of community circles and class agreements, and a predictable class routine that includes welcoming, engaging and dynamic lessons, and closure.

The book outlines three, staged lesson routines, with a focus on lesson planning. Each routine is articulated with complete examples and scenarios while providing a ready to use lesson planning template. Srinivasan references Stephen Covey (2004) and Grant Wiggins (1998) in suggesting that planning is best done with the end goal in mind and includes inquiry-based instructional strategies, “enduring understandings and essential questions” (p. 132).

Finally, teacher reflection is presented as the key to acquiring and considering student feedback – a powerful tool for informing future planning. Reflection, the author asserts, also aids in assessing the efficacy of the SEL

instruction. The final section of the book includes useful forms for classroom and schoolwide reflection as well as brief guidance on what constitutes SEL effectiveness.

Srinivasan has produced a well-organized and practical book on an important topic in secondary education: well-being for both students and teachers. One hopes her ideas will move administrators and governments closer to focusing on the day-to-day wellness of those in our nation's schools. The information and resources she compiled easily allow readers to extend their learning. The almost pocket-sized book is unintimidating and concise, inviting busy teachers to engage and allowing readers to use the tools and strategies presented at the moment or return to them later.

In addition to these practical and accessible aspects, Srinivasan guides the reader to consider how students will translate these competencies from a level of awareness to action, from skills practiced in a structured classroom to skills transferred to the broader school community and beyond. The author also challenges educators to teach culturally-associated competencies, to “understand social cues”, for example. Such competencies are dynamic, contextual, and particularly challenging if students have limited intercultural experience or have additional learning requirements or impairments. Undoubtedly, educators will need to differentiate these SEL learning standards.

Although Srinivasan presents reasonable and practical methods for teaching SEL to students, her suggestions for improving teacher wellness fall short. She could have addressed the systemic issues that cause teacher burnout and compromise well-being: inadequate or underqualified workforce, increased high-stakes performance criteria, and increasing instructional expectations (including SEL curriculums, such as this), for example. The book does present some ways for teachers to cope and engage in mindfulness. The author suggests the “Three T’s”: tea time, transitional time, and toilet time (Srinivasan, p. 49). Sadly, this scheme ignores the material reality in schools, where schedules either fail to include breaks or where student needs quickly consume any allocated break time. Additionally, many areas in the United States struggle with inadequately staffed schools (Sutcher et al., 2016), which can result in teachers conceding their planning and lunch times to cover staff absenteeism or supervisory duties. These additional duties cause teacher stress and over-burden experienced teachers, whose stress is compounded by efforts to support the needs of uncertified, untrained, and temporary teachers. Further, it is widely known that staffing shortages occur predominantly and disproportionately in disadvantaged schools.

Srinivasan acknowledges the limited coverage of social justice issues in SEL. One might argue that, teacher well-being, working conditions, and equity in education are inextricably linked; therefore, proper advice on teacher well-being should hinge on addressing social injustices; if not considered, such advice is only for those with the privilege to be well. Though probably well-intentioned, suggesting that teachers resort to meditating while on the toilet is, well, sorely inadequate. The suggestions seem like a last-ditch effort to help teachers cope with stress in a system that devalues them. If we care about student and teacher

well-being we must listen to and respond systemically (Public Policy Associates, 2020). Layering mindfulness practices and additional social and emotional teaching standards on top of already overburdened teacher loads will likely worsen their well-being.

Despite this criticism, Srinivasan presents timely and essential provocations to the profession: how can we improve student and teacher well-being in schools? And, how are we preparing students to cope with modern demands and be well, lifelong? Cities and states across the United States have adopted or created SEL learning standards and are working to help teachers implement these. Ethical educational leaders must now assess how best to implement and refine these standards and practices while helping teachers to regain or retain well-being. Further qualitative research and the use of reflective practice could help educators consider the relationships between systemic injustice, well-being, and social emotional learning. In addition to expanding on the current research and developing our SEL practice, educators need to engage in deeper dialogue toward change. Joel Spring refers to this Freirean-type dialogue in the book *Wheels in the Head* (2008). He states that this type of dialogue is aimed at helping district level administrators, governments and teachers understand the economic, social, and political forces that have shaped our systems (Spring, 2008). Reflection that considers contextual implications at these deeper systemic levels will likely benefit the effectiveness of SEL practices. Srinivasan has provided much to consider toward this end: the correlation between SEL and well-being, the importance of context in supporting teachers and students, and the need to learn more about factors impacting social and emotional learning and well-being--important considerations guiding efforts to create welcoming, loving, inclusive, and safe learning environments.

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